

STATEMENT

by

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Mr. President,

On behalf of the Finnish delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the 46th General Conference. I would like to assure you of the full support of the Finnish delegation in the fulfilment of your important task this week. Let me also welcome the three new members of the IAEA: Eritrea, Kyrgyz Republic and Seychelles.

Mr. President,

I associate myself fully with the statement made by the honourable delegate of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. In the following, I would like to touch upon only two topics related to the work of the Agency, which are of special interest to my delegation: firstly, the development of the 2004 and 2005 programme of the Agency, and secondly, the issue of nuclear terrorism. And finally, Mr. President, I will briefly describe the process that led to the recent decision by the Finnish Parliament on additional nuclear power in Finland.

Mr. President,

As for the programme and budget for 2004 and 2005, my delegation believes that this time the new programme and budget should not be based on fine-tuning of the previous programme, but more radical changes are needed. Constructive development of the regular programme has for a long time been biased by the balance issue which has led to the situation where the financing of the most important statutory activity - the verification - has been based on huge voluntary contributions. Still, there have been many identified important activities which could not be implemented because of the lack of resources. This is not a sustainable solution.

In view of my delegation, the funding of the mandatory activities, which are based on the Statute of the Agency, should be ensured from the regular budget. As the overall priorities of the various activities change over the years, this should be reflected in the programme development accordingly. Therefore there should also be enough flexibility in transferring resources to new priority activities as needs arise, also between major programmes. It is inevitable that, in order to maintain the credibility of the effective safeguards system, a fair amount of additional financial resources are to be allocated for the safeguards budget line.

Mr. President,

Security has already been on the agenda of this Agency for several years now and since the horrible crimes of last September, security issues have occupied central positions on this agenda. As it is often said, the threat of terrorist acts is a concern of all nations in the world, not only of those who have been openly threatened. In the nuclear field this is realised more clearly than in many other fields, since a successful attempt of sabotage or other malicious act against a nuclear installation or use of radioactive materials in order to cause damage or fear would immediately have an effect on the whole global nuclear community.

It is regrettable that the work of expanding the scope of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material is proceeding in very small steps only, if at all. However, it should not prevent us from seeing that there is also plenty of work to be done as far as the security of radioactive sources is concerned. The past innocence has left the

global community with a legacy of orphan and unaccounted sources. We commend the work of the Agency in assisting in efforts to remedy the situation. In order to help avoid similar situations in the future, the Agency for its part should, when assisting Member States to acquire radiation sources or to develop radiation facilities, take into account the security plans and practices of the recipient.

Mr. President,

In our statements to the General Conference, we have very seldom referred to the events in our own country. This time I have a good reason to make an exception.

Finland is one of those countries that believe that nuclear energy will have its place in the energy production of the future. To be more exact, Finland has explicitly decided not to exclude nuclear power from its energy mix. This was manifested last May when the Finnish Parliament accepted in principle, with 107 votes against 92, the proposal to build an additional nuclear power plant unit in Finland. It was not an easy decision and most of the political parties were internally divided on the issue.

The decision was not taken hastily. It took about four years from the official start of the environmental impact assessment process to arrive at the Parliament's decision. During this time, and actually already before, an intensive dialogue, both formal and informal, took place between different stakeholders. The nuclear safety authorities provided factual information, but did not otherwise participate in the discussion which was both thorough and comprehensive. I do not think any aspect or argument presented somewhere in the world for or against nuclear power was missing from the preparations of the decision.

I should also say that this decision was not taken in isolation. Almost simultaneously two other important related topics were amply debated in Parliament and by the whole Finnish society. The option of building additional nuclear capacity was a recurrent theme in both debates.

One of the topics was a different nuclear project, namely a decision-in-principle to construct a final disposal facility for spent nuclear fuel in Finland. The Parliament took such a decision almost one year before the decision-in-principle by the Government on

additional nuclear power was passed to Parliament for final approval. Consequently, the debate on the management of radioactive waste and spent fuel from the new nuclear power plant unit was considerably attenuated.

The other debate concerned the national strategy for achieving our Kyoto target in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In this strategy, energy issues occupied centre stage. Due to these other debates, Parliament and the public at large were well aware of the framework in which the decision on the new nuclear power plant unit had to be taken.

Nuclear safety was of course one of the main themes in the discussion, but actually less prominent than expected. It is obvious that the excellent safety and operational record of the Finnish nuclear power programme has been conducive in building up the trust in the safety authorities' and power companies' ability to control this difficult nuclear technology. The safety authorities and nuclear power companies, even in a small country like Finland, have to have their own expertise to rely on. However, in building this expertise, international co-operation is of great importance. In building the required expertise, the Finnish authorities, research institutes and power companies have, during several decennia, extensively used the learning possibilities the IAEA offers in the form of codifying best practices and organising fora for exchange of experiences.

It should be recognised that without the Agency's role and work in the area of safeguards the project to build a new nuclear power plant unit in Finland had hardly emerged at all. The often hinted link between peaceful use of nuclear power and nuclear weapons was, of course, mentioned but not pursued in the Finnish debate.

Finally, Mr. President, my delegation welcomes Cuba's decision to ratify the Tlatelolco Treaty and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Thank you, Mr. President.