

STATEMENT

by

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Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission,

Head of the French delegation

at the 46th General Conference

of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Vienna, 16 September 2002

Mr. President,

On behalf of the French delegation I wish to offer you my warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of this forty-sixth session of the IAEA's General Conference and to assure you of our full confidence and cooperation in ensuring the success of this delicate task.

Mr. President,

I am pleased to welcome the delegations from the State of Eritrea, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of the Seychelles, following their recent membership of the Agency.

The French delegation associates with the statement made by Ambassador Christensen, head of the Danish delegation, on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. President,

In September of last year, the previous general conference opened immediately following the terrible events of 11 September. One year on, we can be satisfied with the reaction of the international community to the terrorist threat, notably in the nuclear field. The governments, who are responsible for defining and implementing security policies, re-evaluated the threat of nuclear terrorism and reinforced their protection systems against such acts. They also developed international cooperation, which is vital in supporting national efforts, coordinating international responses and assistance and defining common frameworks for national policies. The IAEA, which naturally has an essential role to play in this cooperation, mobilised to propose rapid reaction. We are pleased that in just a few months, the Agency was able to define and secure approval for the broad outlines of a comprehensive, well constructed program for protection against nuclear terrorism.

France not only globally approved this program, but intends to support it financially, as well as by mobilising her expertise and resources. In terms of our contribution in kind, we proposed to the Director General a plan comprising 20 concrete actions that France intends to conduct in cooperation with the Agency. These actions target the highest priority activities of the anti-terrorism program, and aim at obtaining quick and tangible results. They more particularly concern:

- physical protection, for which we will be make a full-time cost-free expert available to the Agency, representing a contribution of 250,000 dollars,
- controlling and securing radioactive sources, which represents one major risk area, where protection and security need to be strengthened. We have thus increased our contribution to the search for orphan sources and with the Secretariat have organised the removal from the Ivory Coast of a high-activity source which was no longer in use. For this particular project, France will make a total contribution of 200,000 dollars,
- finally, the promotion of international instruments.

I am pleased to announce that, in addition to her in-kind contributions, France intends to make a payment in the order of 300,000 euros to the Nuclear Security Fund.

With respect to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, we follow with great interest the work of the group of legal and technical experts convened to prepare a draft amendment, defined in accordance with the orientations approved by the previous General Conference. Although we regret that the group could not conclude during its latest meeting at the beginning of this month, we hope that the consensus that seems to be at hand on these bases will be rapidly confirmed, so that a diplomatic conference can be convened at an early date. In strengthening the provisions of the Convention, the international community has an opportunity to confirm its determination and take a significant step forward in the prevention of acts of nuclear terrorism.

Mr. President,

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons is and must remain the basis for the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this respect, the first session in New York last April of the Preparatory Committee for the 2005 Review Conference was the opportunity for a substantial and constructive exchange of views and demonstrated the effectiveness of the strengthened review process, as revised in 2000, and of the preparatory committees. The success obtained during this committee should enable the international community to continue with balanced and gradual preparation for the 2005 Review Conference, and progress towards full and complete implementation of all the goals of the Treaty, whether in terms of disarmament, non-proliferation and safeguards, or the development of peaceful uses for nuclear power.

In this context, France wishes to recall its desire to see the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the beginning at the Disarmament Conference of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, based on the Shannon report and the mandate therein.

Mr. President,

The IAEA's safeguards system remains a central instrument in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The international community must mobilise to ensure that it progresses towards universal application, consistent with safeguards undertakings of Member States, and thus achieves full effectiveness. It is worrying that nearly 50 Member States party to the NPT have yet to meet the obligation they accepted under article III of the Treaty, to sign with the Agency a comprehensive safeguards agreement. The French delegation thus calls on all those States to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the AIEA as soon as possible.

Improving the system of IAEA safeguards, resulting from the combination for a State of a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol, represents a major progress for the credibility of the verification of the Treaty. France fully associates with the declaration of the European Union to welcome the completion of the definition of the conceptual framework of the integrated safeguards system and expresses its support to the Secretariat for its implementation.

France calls on all states who have not yet done so to sign and implement an additional protocol as rapidly as possible. With the desire to achieve real progress in this direction, she supports the efforts of the Agency and last spring undertook regional action in Africa and the Indian Ocean to promote comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols, and to encourage signing by the states in this region. Therefore, we welcome with great satisfaction the recent signatures by Niger, Mali, and South Africa.

Furthermore, the French additional protocol ratification bill has been brought to the Parliament and should be adopted before the end of the year.

Mr. President,

With respect to the situation in Iraq, French authorities recently had multiple opportunities to make statements on the matter, most recently when the Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed the United Nations General Assembly. I shall therefore focus

my remarks on the activities of the IAEA, to salute its constant efforts to fulfil the role it was entrusted by the Security Council. France firmly supports the action of the Director General to allow the application of all current Security Council resolutions concerning Iraq.

Mr. President,

France regrets the fact that in June last, after having accepted the principle during a visit to the country by representatives of the IAEA, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has reversed its position and refused to discuss the modes of application of its safeguards agreement with the Agency. With construction of the light water reactors officially launched in North Korea on 8 August last in the framework of the KEDO, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by its undertakings pursuant to the NPT and to revise its position, so as to enable the IAEA to perform its duties.

Mr. President,

The Agency budget for 2003, based on zero real growth in relation to that of 2002, reveals the problems faced by the Agency with finding the resources and funding needed to meet its statutory duties in the field of safeguards.

Although firmly attached to the principle of cost neutrality in real terms, France's constant position has been to ensure that the Agency has the resources needed to perform its statutory duties, within its regular budget. Moreover, meeting new needs must not be to the detriment of these statutory duties. France deems that all Member States must be ready to respond to these requirements and ensure appropriate funding of the safeguards budget, not only for the sake of peace and international security, but also of the development of peaceful applications of the atom.

Indeed, Mr President, if the primary goal of IAEA's verification activities is nuclear non-proliferation, and if they are meant to contribute to maintaining peace, they are also an essential element allowing the dissemination of nuclear knowledge and technologies to countries which have a legitimate need for them, and thus allowing the development of peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

As you know, France has always strongly supported the Agency's Technical Cooperation activities. She has always paid in full her contribution to the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF), which in 2002 amounted to more than 4,500,000 US dollars. My country also finances a number of so-called "footnote a" projects and continues its support for the action taken under the AFRA and ARCAL regional agreements.

To address the needs for technical assistance at the local level, we place particular emphasis on expert missions. At the same time, we are continuing our policy of welcoming overseas trainees. Finally we firmly maintain our commitment to training, notably in radiation protection, which is one of our areas of strongest expertise.

The French delegation wishes to congratulate Ambassador Hughes, President of the Board of Governors, for the effectiveness with which he conducted the consultations leading to an agreement on the amount of the TCF for 2003 and 2004. Nonetheless, increasing the resources available for Technical Cooperation requires primarily an effort by all donor countries, so that they pay their contributions in full. We therefore call on all Member States to make their full payments to the TCF. In addition, the Agency should not substitute for Technical Cooperation beneficiaries to compensate for the recoverable expenses, which must also be paid in full.

Mr. President,

In the field of nuclear safety, France actively took part in spring of this year in the second peer review of the reports from the Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety. We are pleased with the progress achieved, since the first meeting in 1999, in a number of fields. France noted with satisfaction the undertakings made to implement the improvements still needed. We therefore encourage the Member States with nuclear installations and who are not yet a party to the Convention, to ratify it as soon as possible.

The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management entered into force on 18 June 2001. France is actively preparing her participation in the first review meeting scheduled for 2003. It is only with

the broadest possible adherence that we can give the international community greater confidence in the quality of management of the back end of the fuel cycle. We therefore call on all States who have not yet signed or ratified this convention, to do so as soon as possible.

I think that it is also important to mention the action of WENRA, the association of Western European nuclear regulators. With the long-term aim of achieving a common safety approach, its members restated in January 2001 their determination to work together, using a methodology making extensive use of IAEA safety standards, to compare the practices in member countries. We are convinced that this pragmatic approach will be of considerable value in improving further the safety of European facilities.

Ensuring the highest possible level of safety for the transport of nuclear and radioactive material is also a goal to which France devotes constant effort. In this field, she has more than thirty years experience of completely safe transports, with 300,000 transports currently organised every year, from radioactive pharmaceuticals to spent fuel. International regulations developed by the IAEA and incorporated by the organisations with competence for the various modes of transport, are strictly applied in France, whatever the mode of transport and the material transported. In a spirit of progress and transparency, we have just submitted to the Agency a request for a TranSAS mission in France in 2003.

With respect to international transports, France and its partners have been engaged for several years in dialogue in order to ensure the greatest possible transparency and to give to those countries who so wish the desired assurances and certain useful information. This practice was welcomed by General Conference resolutions. Our actions in this area must however satisfy the basic requirements of physical protection and must not undermine the provisions of sea Law.

In this respect, we warmly welcome the organisation next year by the Agency of an International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material. We intend to actively contribute our expertise to the work of this conference, in a spirit of experience sharing and transparency. We are confident that this work will lead to fruitful technical

exchanges and achieve progress towards even greater safety, if possible, in the national and international transport of radioactive material.

In order to further integrate nuclear safety and radiation protection, and to strengthen their capabilities, France early in this year reorganised her national safety and radiation protection control system. On the one hand, the recently created Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nucléaire et de la Radioprotection (DGSNR) is now the sole authority with the role of overseeing both nuclear safety and radiation protection in France, on behalf of the State. On the other hand, setting up the Institut de Radioprotection et de Sûreté Nucléaire (IRSN) created a major safety and radiation protection expertise and research organisation, providing the DGSNR with technical support.

Mr. President,

I would now like to mention the prospects for nuclear power and would stress that the international nuclear picture shows renewed interest in nuclear power in those countries which have opted for this energy source to ensure the sustainable development of their economies.

I would like to mention three determining factors in this respect.

It was first of all concerns over the security of energy supplies which led to the place of nuclear power in energy strategies to be reconsidered. Since the publication of the Green Paper on the security of energy supplies, in November 2000, the European Commission has carried out extensive consultations, the conclusions of which were adopted in June 2002. The final report established that nuclear power, which covers 35% of electricity production in Europe, constitutes "an inseparable part of the debate" and that the range of energy choices should remain as wide as possible.

It is not up to me to review the energy policies of the various member states of the IAEA, but secure supply constraints underpin the considerations and the strategic plans made public over the last two years by the United States, Japan, Russia, Finland, Korea, China and India, to name but a few.

For 25 years, France has implemented a responsible energy strategy largely based on nuclear power, in order to provide a high degree of energy independence. In 2001, the 58 reactors in operation accounted for 76.2% of our electricity production. The French government recently made it known that on the subject of energy, a wide-ranging public debate would be initiated and an orientation law would devote more place to renewable energies but also recognise the role of nuclear power.

In parallel with energy supply constraints, new concerns linked to the environment—particularly global warming—have appeared. In this context, the virtues of nuclear power— an energy source with no greenhouse gas emissions— are indisputable. The European Commission evaluated at 300 million tons of CO₂ the emission reductions generated by the reactors in operation, or the equivalent of half the emissions from all cars in the European Union.

In that connection, we salute the political will, expressed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September last, to confirm the principles and commitments of the Rio Summit, follow their implementation, and launch new initiatives, in particular with respect to access to water and energy. New forms of development and cooperation between public and private partners in the North and South will thus come into being, and we call on all actors in the nuclear field to work in this framework in a perspective of sustainable development. In this respect, we are pleased that IAEA's actions have been highlighted at the Summit through its achievements in the fields of nuclear technology transfer, human health, food and agriculture, water and environmental protection.

Finally, the recognition of the benefits of nuclear power in terms of energy supply and the fight against climate change is also accompanied by extensive reflexion on the competitiveness of this energy source, a fact in particular recognised in Finland.

Over the last two years, the use of nuclear power has been widely reconsidered in the light of its advantages in terms of secure energy supply, contribution to fighting climate change, competitiveness and price stability.

It is in this world context, which is on the whole favourable to nuclear power, that we are continuing our research, including through numerous international cooperative programs. We are in particular participating actively in the Generation IV initiative, with a view to designing a new generation of nuclear systems, more competitive, even safer, generating less long-life radioactive waste and more resistant to proliferation. France is also closely following the development of work in the INPRO project, conducted at the initiative of the Agency. We consider that the complementarity and synergy between these two projects should be further encouraged.

Those systems should also enable electricity generation to be combined with other applications such as the production of hydrogen or desalination of seawater, a field in which we are actively participating in the cooperative programs conducted in connection with the Agency.

We are convinced that the research conducted will lead to proposals of effective and competitive technical solutions to meet both the world's energy needs and the concerns of the public regarding the environmental impact of nuclear activities, thus improving their acceptability.

Knowledge management is also an important part of our actions. The development and transfer of nuclear technologies require well-considered actions for the management of knowledge and expertise in order to preserve the know-how and train the specialists who will be needed by research and industry, by adapting training programs to meet future needs. France, who has been for long working in that direction, will closely follow the debates of the Scientific Forum to be held on the occasion of the 46th session of the General Conference, and is ready to provide active and substantial participation to the steps taken in this field under the aegis of the Agency.

Mr. President,

I would also like to take this opportunity to recall the significant changes France made to its nuclear research and industry in 2001, and which we can today see were fully justified. This involved grouping the research skills of the Atomic Energy Commission in four major centres (nuclear, defence, fundamental research and technology) considerably

enhancing its efficiency, consolidating and rationalising our nuclear industry within the AREVA group, the world's leading nuclear player, with its two primary centres of interest which are on the one hand nuclear technology and services, and on the other information and communication technologies.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I would like to restate my country's full confidence in the ability of nuclear technology to make a broad contribution to world progress within the framework of sustainable development, for the benefit of both mankind and our planet. The role of the IAEA leads it to make an essential contribution to this goal, through its actions contributing to international peace and security, enabling a growing number of countries to benefit from peaceful applications of the atom. Rest assured of France's firm and unwavering support to the Agency in accomplishing this mission.

Thank you, Mr President.