

STATEMENT

by

the Head of the Delegation of the

Republic of Hungary

Dr. József Rónaky

Director General of the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority

at the 46th General Conference

of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Vienna, 16 September 2002

Mr. President,

I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to you on your election to this high office and assure you of the full support of the Hungarian delegation. I am convinced that with your outstanding skills you will steer the present conference to a fruitful conclusion.

The Hungarian delegation shares the position that has been expressed by the distinguished Ambassador of Denmark, H.E. Mr. Torben Mailand Christensen who spoke on behalf of the European Union as well as the associated countries, including the Republic of Hungary. Our co-operation with the European Union in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy has further deepened in the past year and we have good reason to believe that this co-operation will also contribute to a smooth and timely accession to the Union.

We are happy to note that since its last General Conference the IAEA has received and considered new applications for membership. We would like to welcome Eritrea, the Republic of Seychelles and the Kyrgyz Republic as new Member States.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The year 2002 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the controlled nuclear fission and the forty-fifth anniversary of the IAEA. In December this year the 60th anniversary of the world's first controlled nuclear chain reaction will be celebrated. A very effective and fruitful but at the same time a hazardous technique was launched sixty years ago. Ever since mankind has had to face the dual challenge of the nuclear energy the question remains how to preclude its military use and how to exploit safely its peaceful potential.

The IAEA has been assigned a major role by its Member States in both these regards. Over the last 45 years the IAEA has shown itself to be a viable and versatile instrument, and we, the Member States have benefited from the work of the Agency regardless of our priorities. While realising the success in our common efforts we also experienced a number of challenges which led us to a great deal of knowledge and insight.

The events of the last General Conference were overshadowed by the terrorist attacks against the United States of America. Apart from the general feeling of sympathy and solidarity that were shared by all good-willing people throughout the world, the attack drew the attention to the special responsibilities of the nuclear community for protection against nuclear terrorism – a task that should be implemented by simultaneous national and international efforts.

We commend the leading role and rapid response of the IAEA to the threat of nuclear terrorism resulting in new and expanded measures to supplement the Agency's existing activities. In spite of strict budget constraints, the Hungarian Government seriously considers the possibility of our financial contribution to the newly established Nuclear Security Fund. In Hungary, detailed analyses on the security of our nuclear installations have been carried out. This study revealed that there is no need to substantially improve the physical protection of our nuclear sites and devices. This conclusion, however, does not mean that we do not see the areas where further steps should be taken to improve the security of nuclear installations. We note with great satisfaction, that the number of reported cases of illegal possession and illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear material in Hungary and in the neighbouring countries has significantly decreased. In spite of this, we share the view that improving the physical protection of nuclear material and combating illicit trafficking remain key issues in the fight against global nuclear

terrorism. In this context we regret the slow progress, and urge the soonest conclusion of the work on the elaboration of a draft Amendment of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and will continue co-operating with the Agency and the international community.

Mr. President,

Hungary has a long-standing reputation of being a firm supporter of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and its cornerstone, the Treaty on Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The new NPT review cycle made an encouraging start early this year and we expect a promising continuation. In this context we warmly welcome the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on substantive reduction of their nuclear arsenals. However, Mr President, further progress would be very much needed in the light of the new challenges the international community is facing. We would highly welcome the early implementation of the common agreements reached at the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT in general and the speeding up the conclusion of comprehensive safeguards agreements and protocols additional to such agreements with the IAEA in particular.

IAEA safeguards remains for Hungary a fundamental element of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In our view the Additional Protocol is an essential tool of the efficient and effective functioning of the IAEA safeguards system. We commend the Agency for the elaboration of the "Conceptual Framework of Integrated Safeguards". However, in spite of the extensive efforts, the powerful new tools and the provided additional legal authority, a significant reduction of the risk of nuclear proliferation can not be achieved without the conclusion of comprehensive safeguards agreements and Additional Protocols by all States which have the obligation to do so. From our part, Hungary was among the first to sign and implement the Additional Protocol. During the still ongoing evaluation of the extensive information to the Agency on all aspects of the Hungarian nuclear programme we have also experienced how powerful some of the new techniques, e.g., environmental sampling, are. Having demonstrated full transparency on our side, and having co-operated with the Secretariat in the implementation of all provisions of the Protocol, we expect that the Agency will soon draw its conclusion on the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Hungary. This should then open the way to the implementation of integrated safeguards bearing also in mind Hungary's imminent accession to the European Union and the EURATOM.

At the same time let me express our concern, that an extension of the strengthened regime to all States might place an excessive burden on the Agency's safeguards staff and

budget. We trust the experience gained so far will enable the Agency to review and further optimise the methods used and strategies applied. Hungary remains committed to participate in the Agency's safeguards support programme. We keep offering our facilities, equipment and experts for training courses for inspectors, and are always ready to support Agency's inspectors in nuclear material verification. As a new task related to the Additional Protocol, Hungary is providing services in the collection of open source information as well.

Mr. President,

One of the major events in 2002 was the 2nd Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. The national report submitted by the Republic of Hungary has clearly demonstrated that our country fully satisfied the requirements formulated by the Convention. We also welcome the improvement achieved since the first review meeting in most of the contracting parties and we are convinced that the general and specific conclusions drawn this year will further enhance nuclear safety throughout the world. The implementation in practice is the task of the contracting parties. We would like to express our appreciation to the Agency for the co-ordination of the meeting.

The entry into force of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management is a very encouraging event. Indeed, Mr. President, we are convinced that it will give a new impetus to the regulation of this important field and also to the execution of our national radioactive waste management programme. The preparation of our national report on the fulfilment of the obligations undertaken in the Convention is already going on. We are looking forward to taking part in the first review conference in the hope that a wide range of States will be represented there, reflecting the high priority of this issue in the peaceful application of nuclear energy. We urge therefore those who did not ratify the Convention yet, to do so as soon as possible.

We appreciate the work of the International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group (INSAG) and we noted the intention of the Director General to review the role and mandate of INSAG in the coming months with a view to strengthening its profile to enable it to act as an independent high-level committee and making the international nuclear safety regime more effective. We highly appreciate the work of the four Safety Standards Committees established by the Agency to finalise and approve the text of draft safety standards. We welcome the decision of the Director General to reconstitute these committees and from our part we would like to believe that the Hungarian members can effectively contribute to the work of these committees.

Taking the advantage of the hard work, which has been done during the last decade and on the basis of the already established nuclear safety regime we are convinced that we have to step forward. I share the view of the Director General of the Agency that “the international community will be best served by focusing its efforts on the development of a comprehensive set of internationally accepted standards and on the harmonisation of the various approaches that can be used in the implementation of these standards”.

Indeed, Mr. President, we are convinced that if the present efforts to ensure a uniformly high level of safety in the operation of nuclear power plants and in the disposal of radioactive waste continue to be vigorously pursued within and outside the IAEA, the expanded use of nuclear power which may become indispensable may also become fully acceptable to most people. It goes also for my own country, for Hungary.

Mr. President,

We are well aware that the main conditions of the long-term operation of our Paks NPP are commitment to safety, meeting the internationally accepted safety level and taking into account the new developments. After completion of the most important ongoing issues the focal point of the company's activity will be the development of severe accident management guidelines.

Another very encouraging new development concerning nuclear power generation is that a number of countries wish to expand their use of nuclear energy or keep open the option of doing so in the future. Hungary is among those countries.

One of the most important long-term goals of the Paks NPP is to operate its units beyond their design lifetime while meeting the safety and economical criteria. The goal is to extend the operation time to a further 15-20 years. Last year's feasibility study pointed out that the plant can safely and economically continue its operation beyond the 30 year design lifetime.

However, we are also well aware that there is a number of very important factors that will influence the future of nuclear energy. The first and foremost of these is the continuing safe operation of the existing nuclear facilities. The second is the demand for energy, in particular electricity. The third is the nuclear sector's ability to be competitive. We expect that the forthcoming International Symposium on Nuclear Power Plant Life Management to be held

in Hungary in November will promote the exchange of views on these important issues. We also hope that high-ranking officials of the Agency will participate in the symposium allowing us to provide them with more detailed information on our national activities in this field.

Mr. President, the Agency's role to promote nuclear energy or – to use the terms of the Statute – “to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world” is sometimes criticised. We are of the view, however, that the Agency is there to serve all its Members and many of these see its greatest value precisely in “promotional” activities, notably in the transfer of technology.

Based on our national experiences the Hungarian delegation considers the following elements to be crucially important for increasing the effectiveness of technical cooperation and enhancing the profile of the programme.

The first is obviously to ensure or even increase the resources for TC. Equally important tasks are the allocation of resources according to a clear strategy and defined priorities, and the selection of projects in a transparent and objective manner according to the central criterion and to existing country programme framework documents.

We welcome the fact that the 80% rate of attainment set in resolution GC(44) RES/8 for 2001 have been met. In our view, however, there is still room for improvement. In that connection I would like to state Hungary's strong support for the Agency's TC activities which has been and is demonstrated by my country's 100 % record of payment to the TCF since the establishment of the fund. It is also my pleasure to announce that the government of Hungary has decided to further support the technical co-operation programmes of the Agency, to pledge its voluntary contribution to the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Funds for 2003. We appeal to all Member States to pay their contribution in full and in due time to enable the Agency to meet the expectations.

Like other countries in the region we think that long-term regional planning is the best way of accommodating the needs of individual countries. Indeed, a well-established regional co-operation is the best way of efficient utilisation of scarce financial resources. Therefore the possible exclusion of peer review services from regional technical co-operation would be a great concern to us. We are convinced that the recent IRRT and last year's OSART missions helped us to improve our activities and provide information for the public and for the international community.

In our view the importance of government commitment and of meeting the Central Criterion in order to improve the quality and increase the relevance of the technical programme cannot be overestimated. We support the proposal of the SAGTAC that there is a need for heightened national leadership of the Country Programme Framework process. We are convinced that greater ownership is helpful not only for formulation of the technical co-operation programme but also for priority setting in the Agency as a whole. We would like to believe that our CPF document recently concluded with the Agency is a good example for that.

Before concluding, Mr. President, I cannot refrain from expressing my highest appreciation to the Agency's TC Department for their devotion and commitment to the implementation of the many new initiatives over the preceding 10 years. We are of the view that the technical co-operation programme significantly contributed to establishing safety regimes and it has a similar role to play in many of the projects planned against nuclear terrorism.

Concluding Mr. President, it is obvious for us that there are still fundamental differences of views in many of the major issues concerning the priorities of the Agency. However, the present debate of the General Conference, demonstrates that support for the Agency rests on the maintenance of an appropriate balance of activities. Over the forty five years the IAEA has managed to withstand the repeated challenges and enjoy high prestige in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy in ensuring safety and in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. Let me assure you of Hungary's willingness to remain a reliable partner of the Agency in coping with new challenges.

Thank you, Mr. President.