

# **S T A T E M E N T**

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**President of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan**

**at the forty-seventh regular session**

**of the General Conference**

**of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

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Mr. President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan I would like to express our appreciation for this opportunity to address the 47<sup>th</sup> regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Availing myself of this opportunity let me congratulate the President of the Conference and his Deputies on their election to their important posts and to wish them success in their work. I would also like to thank distinguished Director General of IAEA Mr. Mohammed El-Baradei for his comprehensive and detailed report on the work of the Agency in 2002.

Mr. President,

Azerbaijan in close cooperation with the world community takes an active part in strengthening safeguards regime of nuclear security. Our country is firmly committed to universal nuclear disarmament and is a party to all main international treaties and agreements on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Today the Caspian Sea region because of its geographical position and its energy resources is becoming ever more important on the political map of the world. At the same time this region is at the greatest risk from nuclear danger and radiological terrorism and accordingly to the related dangers.

Committed to the principles of establishing a universal and sustainable security regime and guided by the obligations under the abovementioned treaties and agreements Azerbaijan has repeatedly proposed the creation in the South Caucasus of a nuclear weapons-free-zone. However, this initiative cannot be carried out today because of the policy of neighboring Armenia, which undertook an armed aggression against Azerbaijan and occupied twenty per cent of my country's territory.

Armenia's occupation of the Azerbaijani territories continues to this day and has led to the creation of zones, which are outside the control of the Azerbaijani authorities and beyond the sphere of implementation of the international verification mechanisms. As a result there has been a sharp increase of danger of illegal transport of radioactive and nuclear materials, inter alia, for their possible use for terrorist purposes.

To prevent illegal trafficking in radioactive and nuclear materials Azerbaijan in close cooperation with the Agency has taken a number of measures in recent years to train personnel and to equip its border and customs services with appropriate technology. However, without the complete liberation of the occupied territories and the restoration of the complete control over them these measures cannot produce the desired effect.

Today the fight against nuclear terrorism is an extremely important problem facing the whole international community. The IAEA is the unique international forum able to mount an effective counter to the threats of nuclear and radiological terrorism. Bearing this in mind Azerbaijan is in favor of further strengthening the Agency's work in this area.

At the same time a considerable share of responsibility rests with the IAEA Member States. In particular, strengthening the national radiological security infrastructures, optimizing their control mechanisms, creating reliable systems for the physical protection of nuclear materials and installations, drawing up timely inventories of radioactive and nuclear materials, as well as adoption of other necessary measures are of great practical importance. In this context the Agency's role in providing assistance to carry out the above-mentioned measures is impossible to exaggerate.

We note with satisfaction the considerable attention given by the Agency to the effective implementation of nuclear security plans. The provision of consultative services and services to evaluate the requirements in the field of physical security and the provision of technical recommendations as well as legal assistance and training of personnel will undoubtedly help to improve national capabilities of the Member States in this area.

We understand that the Agency faces a serious task in ensuring an agreed and consistent approach to the planning and implementation of nuclear safety program. This approach must include full coordination in all spheres of the Agency's joint work with the Member States and has to ensure an effective use of existing resources.

It is important that elaboration of plans to assist the Member States to strengthen their national infrastructures as well as taking other necessary measures to ensure nuclear security is undertaken in conditions of full coordination and in accordance with the country's own priorities. In our view, in order to achieve real results it is essential that such plans should include both recommendations and practical proposals for their implementation including indication of possible sources of financing.

I would like to touch upon some issues of technical cooperation between my country and the Agency.

The first measure I would like to mention was the project on improvement of radiological protection of infrastructure and security of radioactive sources in Azerbaijan started in 2001. Under this project the Agency has been providing assistance to strengthen Azerbaijan's radiological protection infrastructure and to set up an appropriate system for regulating control of radiation sources in accordance with the Agency's major norms of security. A number of Agency's expert missions have been undertaken in order to study the existing regulatory infrastructure in the field of peaceful use of nuclear energy in Azerbaijan. Officials from the regulatory authorities have taken part in a number of training courses and seminars in order to raise their own professional level. Under this project the regulatory authorities of my country have now been reorganized and

at present they are up to international standards. Today we have got a system in place for issuing licenses for the transport, entry and use of radioactive materials. This project has been moved from the national to the regional level.

Furthermore, at present three technical assistance projects are being carried out. These include the creation of the National INIS Center. In the framework of this project we have already got the necessary office equipment and software. The personnel of the National Center created at the basis of the Institute for Radiological Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan have taken part in training in the fields of collecting, processing and delivery of information relating to nuclear energy issues.

Secondly, we have got a project to prevent the illicit transport of nuclear and radioactive materials. In the framework of this project we have modernized and improved the technical basis of the customs checkpoints of Azerbaijan.

Finally, the biggest project in terms of financing is a project to modernize the radiological oncology infrastructure of the National Oncological Center. The Center has already received modern individual and stationary dosimeters and thus modernized its dosimetric service. Our gamma-therapy equipment has also been brought up to international requirements.

All the Agency's technical cooperation programs are regarded by the Government of Azerbaijan as a unique source of knowledge in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Our Government's objective and policy towards nuclear power is focused on modernization of existing regulatory and legislative infrastructure. Raising radiological safety in accordance with international practices and meeting social requirements and purposes of agriculture, industry and environmental protection continues to be our priorities. My Government firmly intends to continue introducing and utilizing new methods including nuclear ones in order to provide the technological development of our country. For this purpose in the course of this session of the General Conference the Government of my country and the Agency will sign a medium-term cooperation program in the field of technical cooperation.

I think it is also important to note that Azerbaijan is fulfilling its financial obligations in a timely manner as concerns the regular budget of the Agency. At present time by decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan 157-S of 11<sup>th</sup> August of 2003 the provision is being made for providing necessary funds to pay Azerbaijan's share of the total cost of projects being carried out under programs of technical cooperation.

Mr. President,

As part of technical cooperation with the Agency we have identified some high priority areas to which at present time important attention is being given. These are first of all improving the regulatory and legal infrastructure including laws, regulations and procedures. In this connection we are elaborating a program in the field of radiological protection and norms of radiation security.

For the successful realization of cooperation with the Agency the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan has set up a State Commission on Cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency headed by the first Deputy Prime Minister of Azerbaijan. To undertake a number of specific tasks the Commission has established a group of highly qualified experts in a number of fields of science and technology.

Given the importance of strengthening work in the field of radiological and nuclear safety as well as the growing threat of nuclear terrorism it is recommended to create a National Center on Radiological and Nuclear Safety on the basis of the Institute of Radiation Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan with the appropriate powers. Equipping this Center is envisaged in a future project of technical cooperation with the Agency.

We consider the modernization of services in the field of nuclear diagnostics and radiotherapy to be one of the most important healthcare tasks. Therefore, the problems of radiation therapy continue to be among our high priorities in the context of our cooperation with the IAEA.

Turning out to the question of treatment of radioactive wastes let me note that in our country we are undertaking a strict inventory of wastes arising in industry, medicine and scientific institutions. The issues of collecting, processing, transport and storage of radioactive wastes are being steadily settled. Work has commenced to modernize the existing and to create new repositories for the long-term storage of radioactive materials.

Yet another priority for us is nuclear methods of protection, rehabilitation and monitoring of the environment. Given that the contamination of drinking water is a serious problem in my country we are continuing extensive applied studies of ground and surface waters. Taking into account that a number of Azerbaijan's neighbors have nuclear power plants on their territory and the wastewaters from those power plants end up in the Caspian Sea we think it is very important for the Agency to intensify its attention to the problem of the contamination of the water resources.

In conclusion let me express my hope for intensification of our cooperation with the IAEA and also with all interested Member States directed towards the earliest comprehensive solution of the problems that have been touched upon above and of their root causes, which in turn will help to strengthen security in our region.

Thank you for your attention.