

Statement by H.E. Mr. Mart Laanemäe,
Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Estonia
At the 47th General Conference of the
Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr President, on your election. My delegation is convinced that under your skilful guidance the 47th General Conference will have a successful outcome. You have our full support and co-operation in this endeavour.

I would also like to join the previous speakers in welcoming our new neighbour, Eritrea, as well as Honduras, Kyrgystan and the Seychelles as new members of the Agency.

Estonia as a future member of the EU has participated in the preparation of the statement made earlier by the distinguished representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union and other countries and this statement expresses the Estonian position. Today, I would like to make a few specific comments, concentrating on Technical Cooperation.

But first, allow me to commend that the Director General for his efforts to make the Agency more efficient and effective. In turn, it is the duty of the Member States to cooperate with the Agency and to make their contributions to the regular budget of the Agency in full and on time.

Mr President,

Technical Cooperation between the Agency and Estonia has been highly successful. I would like to reiterate that Estonia highly appreciates the technical cooperation programme of the Agency. The Agency has the capacity and the competence to offer Member States a wide variety of programmes to suit the needs and interests of each Member State. Allow me to praise the staff of the Agency's Technical Cooperation department and those engaged in the Technical Cooperation activities from other departments for their efficient work.

Estonia has also seen how contributing to the Technical Cooperation Fund enhances the possibilities for Technical Cooperation with the Agency, and recommends that all Member States interested in Technical Cooperation consider making contributions.

Estonia also recommends to Member States to conclude Country Programme Frameworks with the Agency, as Estonia did on October 1st 2001. According to the Country Programme Framework the three high priority fields for our national Technical Cooperation programme are: strengthening the regulatory infrastructure and activities,

upgrading radioactive waste management and radiation protection, and safety in medicine.

Estonia has closely followed the provisions of the Country Programme Framework and has reported on its activities at previous General Conferences. During the last year, technical cooperation has concentrated on improving the quality of radiation therapy. As the Director General mentioned in his Introductory Statement to the Conference, access to radiation therapy is becoming increasingly important in many countries and I can assure you that the Agency is highly competent in this field.

The process of strengthening the regulatory infrastructure, which has been described in statements at previous General Conferences, is nearing completion. It is a part of Estonia's preparations for joining the European Union.

Above all, Mr. President, I must emphasize that the Agency's training programmes are unique and therefore invaluable. Estonia greatly appreciates the training programmes of the Agency and is ready to make our facilities and know how available for experts from other Member States as in previous years.

Mr. President,

At previous General Conferences, Estonia has also reported on the situation at the former Soviet nuclear submarine training site in Paldiski, which has been the responsibility of the Estonian Government since 1995. Today, the efforts are concentrating on preserving

the reactors for 50 years in preparation for final dismantling. This project is underway. Once again, allow me to thank the Agency for its major contribution to ensuring a safe future for the Paldiski area.

In closing, Mr. President, I have the sad duty to inform the General Conference of the death of Mr. Arvo Niitenberg, who was my predecessor, Estonia's first Resident Representative to the Agency. Mr. Niitenberg passed away in Toronto, Canada, this summer. He was born in Estonia in 1934. As a young boy, he fled the country during the Second World War and eventually settled in Canada. Mr. Niitenberg had a distinguished career in nuclear power generation, rising to Vice-President of Ontario Hydro, a major producer of nuclear power. From 1992 to 1995, he was the Minister responsible for energy issues in successive Estonian Governments and subsequently Resident Representative to the Agency until the end of 1999. Arvo Niitenberg was the key figure in managing the Paldiski site and initiating Technical Cooperation with the Agency. He will be remembered for his contributions to improving the quality of life in Estonia and it is a consolation to know that he saw his contributions begin to bear fruit.

Mr, President,

In conclusion, I wish the Agency success in carrying out its wide range of activities and confirm the continuing support of my Government.

Thank you, Mr President.