

**IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE**

**(15-19 September 2003)**

**NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT**

Mr President

I would like first to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of this year's General Conference. We are indeed pleased that a person with your skills and stature from our Asia Pacific region will guide the discussions over the next few days. We join also with the President of the EU in expressing condolences for the loss of the Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh last week.

Mr President

It is now two years since the terrorist attack in New York. Safety and security have been urgent international preoccupations in that time. The prospect of terrorists gaining access to nuclear materials or weapons is a horrifying one and the risk of that happening cannot lightly be dismissed. This Agency has made a valuable contribution to efforts guarding against nuclear terrorism, and is continuing to implement effective measures to safeguard nuclear materials. Among these is the programme for combating nuclear terrorism, funded from the extra-budgetary Nuclear Security Fund. New Zealand contributed to this Fund last year, and again this year in the second year of operation.

Practical training for front line officers in controlling radioactive sources, and regional outreach to provide states with effective tools for combating illicit trafficking of nuclear material are two of the fundamental measures that the Agency's programme facilitates. Another initiative relates to the safety and security of radioactive sources. The "dirty bombs conference", held in Vienna in March of this year, focussed on the importance of ensuring the safety and security of radioactive sources to prevent access by terrorists. In addition to promoting continued international efforts to locate and secure orphan sources, the conference reinforced the importance of establishing effective national regulatory infrastructures. It also gave a higher profile to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources which has been revised to take better account of the danger of radioactive sources falling into the hands of terrorists.

Mr President

This Code is now before this Conference for endorsement. It will help states ensure that they properly discharge their responsibility to keep their radioactive sources secure. New Zealand fully supports the objectives and principles set out in the Code, and intends to implement it fully as soon as possible. I would urge all States to give priority to implementing this Code.

Mr President

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was concluded 33 years ago. New Zealand was among the first countries to sign. Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to be a critical challenge to the international community.

North Korea's proclaimed nuclear weapons programme and its announced abandonment of the NPT is a serious concern to New Zealand. The development of nuclear weapons by the DPRK destabilises the Korean Peninsula and is a threat to regional security. It risks provoking others in the region also to develop nuclear weapons. As in South Asia, it opens up the possibility of nuclear confrontation. We welcome the initiative to hold multilateral talks to address this concern. We hope that the process of dialogue will continue and that agreement can be reached which will result in the DPRK's permanent abandonment of nuclear weapons and a renewal of energy and development assistance to North Korea, which could then follow. Could I in particular commend China for the constructive facilitating role it is playing in the dialogue process.

Iran's nuclear programme has also been of concern to New Zealand this year. Given the scale and advanced state of Iran's nuclear activities, it is important that the IAEA is able to verify Iran's peaceful intentions. We call upon Iran to heed the strong message from the international community in the Board

resolution passed without dissent last week and to cooperate fully and urgently with the Agency. Iran must demonstrate complete transparency in the interests of confidence-building with the international community. It is vital that the Agency be allowed to complete its assessment in order to provide the independent assurances we need.

But the NPT is not only about states agreeing to forego developing nuclear weapons. It is also about those states which already have these weapons agreeing to give them up. It is about nuclear disarmament. The disarmament commitment given by the nuclear weapons states, reaffirmed unequivocally at the NPT Review Conference in 2000, must be honoured. Calls by states already in possession of nuclear weapons for other states not to develop them would carry more moral authority if they were accompanied by greater progress towards disarmament by those states which currently have such weapons.

The ongoing development of strategic plans which appear to include the possible use of nuclear weapons is a critical concern. Reports of consideration being given to research into new types of nuclear weapons contradict the NPT commitments, and undermine efforts to achieve universality of the Treaty.

Mr President

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has a direct link with the NPT in terms of disarmament. Early entry into force of the Treaty was the first of the 13 practical steps to disarmament agreed at the NPT Review Conference in 2000. I express the strong concern of New Zealand that the prospects for entry into force of the Treaty have not moved forward. New Zealand remains fully committed to this Treaty and its early entry into force, and we will continue to work to achieve that objective. In the meantime, it is important that we maintain the momentum to establish the international monitoring system. Even if the Treaty is not in force, this network of monitoring stations is essential to expose any state which breaks the moratorium and resumes nuclear tests.

Mr President

As the current chair of the 16-member Pacific Forum, New Zealand also wishes to raise the question of the safety of transport of radioactive material. The Forum has repeatedly expressed its concern to minimise any risk to population or environment from an incident occurring as a result of the transport of radioactive material. The Forum has called for a regulatory regime that is as strict as possible in terms of safety standards, and which includes a comprehensive liability regime meeting the needs of all states.

New Zealand was pleased with the outcomes of the International Conference on Transport held in Vienna in early July, which recommended establishing a dialogue between the shipping states and the relevant coastal states on communication between governments, and setting up a working group on liability. Both areas are of particular concern to New Zealand and the Pacific. We hope that this will result in real progress in the months to come.

Mr President

I want to thank the Director-General of the Agency and his staff for their professionalism over the last year, which has been undoubtedly a difficult one. Member states rely on this organisation to provide thorough and independent assurances that nuclear materials are being used properly and safely in accordance with international commitments. The Secretariat has again served us exceptionally well. In particular, I wish to put on record New Zealand's thanks and appreciation for the very sound, measured and professional manner in which Mr ElBaradei has carried out his responsibilities, sometimes under extraordinary pressure, during the course of the last year. We have every confidence that he will continue to demonstrate strong leadership and sound judgement in the future.

With the current instabilities in global security, the coming year is likely again to pose many challenges to the Agency. I wish to express New Zealand's ongoing

support and commitment to the Agency's programme of work and the indispensable contribution it makes to the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation system.