

STATEMENT BY FINLAND

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Ambassador to Austria
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to the

48th General Conference of the
International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Finnish delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the 48th General Conference. I would like to assure you of the full support of the Finnish delegation in the fulfilment of your important task this week. Let me also welcome the Republic of Chad, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and the Togolese Republic to the membership of the Agency.

Mr. President,

I associate myself fully with the statement made by the honourable delegate of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union. In the following, I would like to comment only some issues which are of particular interest to my country, including the recent developments of the nuclear power programme in Finland.

Before doing so, allow me to congratulate the Director General and his staff for the excellent work done since last year's General Conference. The Agency's verification system has faced an increasing number of new challenges, including revelations of a nuclear black market network and other clandestine activities, which are a serious concern to the international community and to the non-proliferation regime. The Agency has managed these challenges in a professional, impartial and objective manner and we wish to commend the Director General for this achievement.

The past year has demonstrated the urgent need to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is of utmost importance to my government that we find a positive, universally shared outcome at the next NPT Review Conference. In this context, Finland takes note that the Director General has convened a high level expert group to study the multilateral nuclear approaches and we look forward to the outcome with interest.

One of the measures urgently needed to strengthen the non-proliferation regime is the universalization of the Model Additional Protocol. Finland subscribes to the view that the Model Additional Protocol is an integral part of the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system and supports the idea that the adherence to the Additional Protocol be made a condition of supply for nuclear transfers to non-nuclear weapon states.

Finland, for her part, has brought into force an Additional Protocol to the safeguards agreement that was concluded between the IAEA, the Euratom and the non-nuclear weapon states of the European Union back in the 1970's. This year Finland, together with its EU partners, has embarked on the practical implementation of the Additional Protocol.

The Finnish Support Programme contributes to the development of the Agency training programme for the safeguards inspectors and carries out exercises in activities related to the new Additional Protocol. A pilot Workshop on Additional Protocol Activities was successfully organised in Finland in April 2004 and the first full-scope Workshop is scheduled to take place in the end of October 2004.

Mr. President,

The potential link between terrorism and nuclear power has rightly gained growing attention in the Agency's work in the past three years. Finland wishes to record its full support for the IAEA Nuclear Security Action Plan. We have provided in-kind support to the Agency's activities and we are pleased to announce a new voluntary contribution of 10.000 Euro to the Nuclear Security Fund (NSF).

I would also like to note that Finland provides continuous support for co-operation in the field of nuclear safety, security and safeguards in our neighbouring areas. Over the last ten years, our financial support for bilateral and multilateral activities carried out mainly in Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic countries, has amounted from 2 to 3,5 million Euro annually.

The threat of nuclear terrorism has led to more stringent requirements also for physical protection. Consequently, the need of upgrading the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material has become increasingly acute. Finland is one of those countries, together with Austria, that have requested the Director General to convene a Diplomatic Conference to negotiate amendments to the Convention.

As so many other States, Finland has also written to the Director General, expressing her full support to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources that was adopted by the General Conference last year.

Mr. President,

The preparations of the Agency's programme for the years 2006-2007 and for the Medium Term Strategy 2006-2011 are underway. Both of these activities are of great importance. We have stressed at several occasions that the discussions between the Member States and the Secretariat should in the first place focus on the content of the programme and only then on the required and available resources.

In our view, it is important that we concentrate on the essential and that the elements of the programme are clearly within the Agency's statutory terms. There should be enough flexibility in allocating resources to new priority activities even between major programmes. In this respect, we welcome the decision taken on the package agreement in July 2003 assuring adequate funding to the IAEA's core activities.

Mr. President,

Turning to technical co-operation, Finland attaches great importance to the TC programme and we have always paid our share in full and on time. As to the content of the TC programme, we are of the opinion that the projects should be fully within the Agency's terms of reference and consistent with national development goals laid down in the Country Programme Frameworks.

Furthermore, it is important to reinforce coordination with the relevant international organizations, such as the WHO and the FAO, in order to ascertain that the Agency's nuclear input is technically justified, is delivered in the right context and produces sustainable results. It would be advisable in some cases that the lead of the operations be assumed by the respective organization. In this connection, we would like to compliment the very well organized TC activities between the countries of the European region. Finally, we wish to note that the funding of TC activities should be a shared responsibility between all the donor and the recipient countries.

Mr. President,

In the document 'Nuclear Technology Review', reference is made to the construction of the fifth nuclear power reactor in Finland. The project was approved by the Parliament after a thorough preparatory process in order to secure the long term energy supply. The contract between the operator, TVO and the vendor, consortium formed by Framatom ANP and Siemens, was signed in December 2003. The implementation of the project is proceeding as planned. The sitework has been going on throughout the year 2004. The Government is expected to approve the construction licence in early 2005 and the 1600 MW reactor is scheduled to produce electricity in 2009.

As an immediate next step, the power company has to convince the Finnish regulatory authority on the adequate safety of the plant. The safety objectives are higher than in the current generation of nuclear power plants, and many novel technical solutions have been developed by the vendor.

The overall framework of the regulatory work has benefited much from the safety activities of the IAEA. Finland appreciates very much the work that the Agency has done in setting up modern standards for nuclear safety. We find the process in creating these standards valuable and encourage the Agency to continue on the same path, even if in some cases, it would seem overly time-consuming. When developing standards, it should be noted that safety, security and safeguards form an increasingly interwoven system that only together can guarantee the use of nuclear power without problems.

Mr President,

The continuing use of nuclear power requires a robust and reliable solution for the final disposal of highly active and long-lived nuclear waste. A clear majority of experts agree that we already have a safe concept, namely the geological disposal. On the other hand, any process leading to the establishment of a final disposal facility needs to be carried out cautiously and with stepwise action. In Finland, the final disposal site for spent fuel was agreed upon by the Parliament with a very large majority in 2001, and the preparatory building work started this year. The facility, intended for strictly national use, should be in operation by 2020.

We hope that the Finnish experience to be gained during the construction of the final disposal facility will help the Agency when developing safety standards and guides for spent fuel and high level waste management. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to the Agency's Secretariat for their fruitful co-operation with the Finnish authorities in

developing a nuclear safeguards concept for geological disposal. Hopefully this co-operation will become even more intense now when the building phase has commenced.

Mr. President,

Finland has throughout the years actively participated in the majority of the Agency's activities within the limits of our competence and resources. We wish to reiterate, also this year, our continuing and full support for the Agency's work and wish the Agency a successful General Conference.

Thank you, Mr. President