

Delegation of the Holy See

Statement by Monsignor Leo Boccardi

Resident Representative

at the 48th Session of the General Conference
of the International Atomic Energy Agency
Vienna, 20 - 24 September 2004

Mr. President,

on behalf of the Holy See Delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 48th General Conference and I assure you and the Secretariat of the full support of my Delegation in making this conference a success. I wish to welcome the Republic of Chad, the Togolese Republic and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania to the family of IAEA members.

A glance at the numerous activities carried out in 2003 makes it clear that the scope of the Agency's work, has continued to expand. Due in no small way to the leadership of Director General ElBaradei and the dedication of the entire Secretariat, the IAEA was able to respond in an efficient manner to numerous challenges in all areas of its work and thus make a unique contribution to the goals of peace and prosperity in the world.

Mr. President,

The acts of violence recently perpetrated in Russia and in other parts of the world gravely offend all humanity. The continued violations of human dignity and the innocent victims of terrorism draw the attention of all to the need to face the causes which underlie such modern form of barbarism and to deal with them

effectively. We must also continue to believe in dialogue as essential to establishing peace and security.

Continued threats to peace and stability due to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and humanitarian and environmental emergencies call for firm and far-reaching responses. The response of the international community must be an integral one, combining security, solidarity and the defence of human life.

From various quarters, we have been warned that nuclear proliferation is on the rise and that there are countries interested in the illicit acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. There is also a risk that terrorists will gain access to such materials and technology. In this context, we need to agree on certain measures to ensure that nuclear "business as usual" cannot continue. The NPT has contributed to international peace and security, but still has much to accomplish, and the international community must work harder to diminish the risks of nuclear proliferation and develop a framework more suited to the realities of the 21st century. Better control over the export of nuclear material and the universalization of the export control system are necessary. Consequently, there is a need to give more authority to inspectors, as the recent discovery of an illicit market for nuclear material and equipment makes clear.

With regard to the Middle East, my Delegation shares the concerns about the growing signs of rising insecurity, due to the ongoing war in Iraq and its security implications for the region and the unresolved conflict in the Holy Land. Respect for the legitimate aspirations of both sides, a return to the negotiating table and the concrete engagement of the international community can lead towards a solution acceptable to all. For this, it is desirable that all the countries of the region and the international community initiate a serious dialogue for creating

a Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction. This, together with limitations on conventional armaments and appropriate security and confidence-building measures, can contribute to establishing peace in the region.

Mr President,

The Technical Cooperation Programme of the Agency is one of the principal instruments for transferring nuclear science and technology to Member States in order to promote social and economic development. Its initiatives, when tailored to the needs of the recipient states and their partners in the context of national priorities, help to fight poverty and can thus contribute to a more peaceful solution of the serious problems facing mankind.

Recently the Agency, together with the WHO, has drawn attention to yet another impending crisis affecting millions of people especially in the developing countries. The number of patients suffering from cancer is rising dramatically, while resources and equipment to diagnose and treat the disease are very limited or even lacking in many countries. Almost 13 % of all deaths worldwide are caused by cancer (more than by tuberculosis, malaria and AIDS put together). Already today there are more new cancer cases every year in developing countries than in the industrialized ones, and cancer rates there are expected to increase substantially within the next decade.

The Holy See appreciates all the work and efforts of the IAEA and its partners in the planning and furthering of cancer-control programmes, which include the provision and upgrading of essential equipment, and the suitable training of medical doctors, physicists and technicians, as well as the worldwide

exchange of relevant information. One of the main tasks of the IAEA has been to develop and refine standards and Codes of Practice in medical radiation dosimetry. The worldwide network of standard dosimetry laboratories, supported for many years by the IAEA and the WHO, provides calibration services to hospitals especially in the developing countries in order to assist their quality assurance programmes.

Mr. President,

The considerable efforts of the IAEA to enhance nuclear and radiation safety, to point out ways and methods for the safe use of radioactive sources, and to help retrieve abandoned sources make a significant contribution to minimizing dangers and preventing harm to the public as well as to individuals. The Agency is actively engaged in fostering a safety culture in the application of nuclear techniques and ionizing radiation, and needs to continue its work in this field. The progress in upgrading radiation protection infrastructures in many regions contributes to enhanced safety and provides a real benefit, but the goal has not yet been attained and should be pursued continuously. At the same time, another daunting task is that of enhancing the security of nuclear material and infrastructure, which is still a concern and requires efficient and intense cooperation between the International Organizations and individual States.

The Agency's activities extend to many fields. Its success, however, should not cause us to rest on our laurels. We cannot presume that our work is completed, but we must constantly strive to reach our goal.

Thank you, Mr President.