

STATEMENT BY

ANDREJ STRITAR

DIRECTOR OF THE
SLOVENIAN NUCLEAR SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

TO THE

48. GENERAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

VIENNA, 20-24 SEPTEMBER 2004

Mr. President,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to this high office. In wishing you every success in this task I want to assure you and other members of the Bureau full support of my delegation.

It also gives me a great pleasure to congratulate the Director General of the Agency and his Secretariat for their successful work carried out in the past year.

Slovenia joins the previous speakers in welcoming the applications for membership of the Republic of Chad, the Togolese Republic and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

On behalf of the Slovenian Delegation, I associate myself fully with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands on behalf of the European Union and those countries which align themselves with his Statement. Therefore, I shall only address those issues to which Slovenia attaches particular importance.

Mr. President,

This Statement is delivered under Agenda item 7 - General Debate and Annual Report for 2003 and is therefore meant for consideration of the Agency's Report for the year 2003 as contained in the document GC (48)/3. Having said that, let me underline my delegation's view that this year Agency's report once again proves and demonstrates its central and indispensable role in assuring and promoting its functions for which it is authorized pursuant to Article III of the Statute.

But since this agenda item is also meant for pointing out those activities of the Agency, which are of particular importance in the view of its individual Member States, let me start my intervention with that part of the Agency's Report which is contained under the title »Verification«. In this challenging world, it is our strong belief that while the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons represents the essential foundation of the global non-proliferation regime, the safeguards system acts as its implementing tool. In the light of the above, the Agency's verification activities, which are to provide the international community, in most effective and efficient manner, with credible assurance that states are complying with their safeguards commitments, are of utmost importance to all of us.

Our commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation has been reiterated several times. Slovenia has concluded with the Agency the Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol and we urge all States, which have not yet concluded them, to do so as soon as possible. Please allow me to take this opportunity to underline that Slovenia became an EU Member State in May 2004 and that as such is now preparing jointly with the European Commission and the Agency the transition to the EURATOM safeguards regime.

It goes without saying that the adherence to the Agency comprehensive Safeguards system should be regarded as an essential assurance that states are complying with their NPT obligations. Although the statistics with respect to the number of Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocols which are in force is getting better from year to year, regrettably, the number continues to be well below expectations. Slovenia recognizes the Additional Protocol as a crucial instrument in

strengthening the non-proliferation regime and supports the position that the Additional Protocol must become a standard for all countries that are party to the NPT.

Mr. President,

When addressing »verification« we can not avoid mentioning also other crucial activities of the Agency and its Member States, that is Security of Materials. The Agency's activities which have been intensified in the area of effective State Systems of Accounting for and Control of Nuclear Materials through the training courses and evaluation missions and through reviewing and updating the design basis threat methodology of its Member States, is of paramount importance for the effective physical protection of nuclear materials and nuclear installations. Having said that let me outline that Slovenia welcomes the proposal, which has been sent to the Director General of the Agency on behalf of Austria and other 24 States, Parties to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials, to amend the Convention. The Slovenian Government has already informed the Director General of the Agency that Slovenia supports convening a Diplomatic Conference to consider the proposed amendments to the Convention. Our firm position is that recent terrorist actions and threats and other illegal activities call for our serious concern to reinforce international co-operation in detecting and responding to such threats. In demonstrating its support to the work of the Agency in this field, Slovenia provided already in 2002 its voluntary contribution for the Agency's activities in protection against nuclear terrorism.

Mr. President,

Although it is not directly related to the above-mentioned issues, allow me to say a few words on Slovenia's response to the last year's resolution on strengthening the safety and security of radioactive sources. Pursuant to the IAEA Resolution GC (47)/RES/7B, Slovenia expressed its full support and endorsement of the efforts of the Agency to enhance the safety and security of radioactive sources and assured the Agency that Slovenia was working towards following the guidance contained in the revised IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

In the context of »Safety« part of the IAEA Annual Report for 2003, Slovenia also welcomes the Agency's activities with respect to radiation safety in the area of education and training as well as in the area of preparation of safety standards. From Slovenia's point of view the area of nuclear and radiation emergency preparedness is also of high importance. Slovenia took part in the Agency's work under the Assistance and Notification Conventions, especially in the work of newly established National Competent Authorities' Co-ordinating Group (NCACG) and in the CONVEX exercises, conducted in 2003 and 2004. It is our strong belief that the implementation of the Action Plan for the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Materials will significantly contribute to nuclear safety in this area. Slovenia welcomes the Action for Strengthening the International Preparedness and Response System for Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies, which represents an excellent platform for sustainable development of international nuclear and radiological emergency preparedness, as well as developing tools and documents in the areas of notification, communication and assistance..

Mr. President,

Slovenia attaches great importance to the Agency's activities aiming at increasing the capacity of its Member States to achieve and maintain a high level of safety in nuclear installations. Besides revising our legal framework in the area of nuclear, radiation and radwaste safety, thus reinforcing legislative and regulatory regime, which is to govern this area, Slovenia has always been attaching great importance to the operational safety of its nuclear facilities. After the 1984 and 1993 OSART missions, the third OSART mission to the NPP was carried out in 2003. We are pleased to refer to the IAEA's OSART Mission Report, where it is stated that the team found that the NPP has several strong attributes and programmes, including priorities on nuclear safety at all levels of the organization, in-depth technical knowledge and good background in nuclear plant operation of the management of the plant and effective use of computer technology to plan work and to track activities within the plant. Furthermore, the overall impression by the team was that the plant has a strong safety culture, driven from the top. At the same time the team has identified the outstanding future challenges, as for example ageing of the plant, preserving the corporate knowledge and increased economic pressure in a competitive energy market.

Having said that let me also underline that I am pleased to announce that Slovenia has already submitted its third National Report under the Convention on Nuclear Safety. We do hope that our Report will demonstrate the progress we have achieved in the reporting period, based on the concrete recommendations of the second review meeting. We are convinced that the third Review Conference under the CNS will be again an opportunity to share the ideas and learn of different practices how to fulfil the obligations under the Convention, since we understand interface between the review process and national reports as a lesson learned and a self-assessment exercise rather than a purely reporting obligation towards the Contracting Parties. In the same spirit, that is sharing the ideas, one should also take the Slovenian initiative, which was presented and discussed during the first review meeting under the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Although the initiative on "regional repository for high-level radioactive waste" has not reached any tangible results so far, it is nevertheless important that the Contracting Parties of the Joint Convention decided to keep this initiative as a viable alternative, which is to be discussed among the interested states.

Allow me, Mr. President, to use this unique opportunity to address from this forum all interested Contracting Parties of the Joint Convention to share with us their ideas on this initiative to be able to report on the next, second review meeting under the Joint Convention, on more concrete results.

Mr. President,

Technical Co-operation was, is at the present and will be in the future of utmost importance for Slovenia. The TC Europe section is considered as very effective and productive both in regional and national programmes. The credit for such a situation goes in equal shares to the TC Europe Section of the Agency's Secretariat, as well as to the countries in the region. While the Agency's programming, assessment and utilization of the TC projects is a prerequisite for a successful story, the countries' commitment to the same goal and in particular their timely and fully paid voluntary contribution to the TC Fund are also of vital importance. Slovenia's record with respect to financial resources pledged and actually paid remains faultless; as in the past years Slovenia has pledged its full share to the TC Fund for the year 2005. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that Slovenia has fulfilled its financial obligation towards TC as well as Regular Budget for 2004. With respect to the new policy, which aims to substitute the assessed programme cost with the national participation costs, let me add that we do have great deal of sympathy with such proposal, but would nevertheless like to further discuss this issue with the Secretariat.

Mr. President,

Let me close my intervention by thanking once again the Director General and the Secretariat for all work done during the reporting period and ensuring the continuing support of Slovenia to the activities of the Agency in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr. President!