

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY GENERAL CONFERENCE
FORTY-NINTH REGULAR SESSION - 26 SEPTEMBER TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2005

LATVIA

**STATEMENT BY MR. RAIMONDS VEJONIS,
Minister of Environment**

Mr. President,

I fully associate myself with the statement made by the honourable delegate of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union.

I am pleased to join others in congratulating you on your election as the President of this Conference and we look forward to work under your guidance. My delegation is convinced that the Conference will be successful and we will achieve positive results. I also would like to express my greetings and best wishes to the staff of the Agency and to the Director General Doctor Mohamed ElBaradei in further successful implementation of IAEA goals, inter alia, prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons and assistance in peaceful use of nuclear energy.

I also would like to join the previous speakers in welcoming Belize as new member of the Agency.

Mr. President,

Looking back to the goals of the 48th General Conference and activities during last year I will address several issues, which I consider of being important for my country as well as for whole international community.

Firstly I will briefly speak about new challenges that international community is facing. The EU Presidency already implicitly touched on this topic. Secondly, I will focus on some technical cooperation issues, including some topics related to implementation of projects and organisation of work specifically in Latvia. I will mention our national project of establishing National Cyclotron Centre under the scope of technical cooperation with the Agency. And I will finish my speech with issues related to the radioactive waste management, safeguards and non-proliferation.

New security challenges

Mr. President,

I would like to highlight two most important, from our point of view, developments during last year in a field of security. Those are adoption of the Amendments to the Convention of Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and adoption by consensus of the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism in UN General Assembly. Latvia as a Party to the CPPNM participated in the Conference for the adoption of the Amendments and we have already signed the new convention on Nuclear Terrorism.

During last months we witnessed also a large-scale discussion regarding possibilities of international organisations to adapt to the new situation in international affairs and to meet new security challenges. This was one of the topics during the 60th session of the UN General Assembly. As the President of the Republic of Latvia H.E. Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga pointed out in her speech to the High Level Meeting of General Assembly: “We need to achieve rapid progress on concluding a comprehensive convention on international terrorism”. It is very important that all members of General Assembly were aware of the necessity of reforms in order to increase the capacity of UN to meet new security challenges. Unfortunately final resolution does not include all recommendations, which were initially drafted, however,

willingness to improve performance of this unique entity is a signal for future reforms. The IAEA is well in pace within the reform process in the UN system by improving its capabilities to meet new challenges.

It is also important that IAEA continuously preserves its credibility and is neutral in politically sensitive issues. In this context I want to commend work of the Director General of IAEA who during his 8 years of serving has striven to uphold the best traditions of the Agency, and of international civil service, and to respond in a balanced and measured way to the demands placed upon him. Unanimous support for the re-election of Doctor ElBaradei was a clear sign of recognition of his abilities and we with pleasure congratulate him on his re-election.

Technical cooperation

Mr. President,

Regarding Technical Cooperation I would like to express our gratitude for successful implementation of technical cooperation programme during last year. I am sure that growing number of Technical Cooperation Projects and increase of TC fund serves as a proof that the IAEA is on the right way for ensuring availability of human and financial resources to help countries to benefit from nuclear energy. I am proud that also Latvia is moving towards the direction of increasing extra budgetary contributions and starting to metamorphose from pure recipients to the next stage of increasing national participation costs and governmental cost-sharing approach. It confirms my prediction made last year during GC, that our contributions gradually could exceed direct support received from the Agency.

Mr. President,

We are happy to note that during the last year the debts of countries have lessened, however we urge all countries to pay their contributions in full and on time. This is also one of the important elements for successful implementation of TC Programs.

Regarding the new simplified procedure of TC projects I want to mention that Latvia used it this year when submitted new national projects and we found that this is indeed rational and comprehensive approach.

I would like to express also the importance of knowledge management of which our government is aware. We have planned to implement several activities in order to ensure international transfer of knowledge between generations.

National Cyclotron Centre

Mr. President,

The biggest national cooperation project for Latvia is closely related to the human healthcare and applications of nuclear techniques for diagnostics and treatments. I am speaking about multipurpose cyclotron centre, which will serve for medical purposes as well it will open possibilities for us to take part in scientific research projects ensuring the new challenges and opportunities for scientists to be involved in international activities.

I was very pleased to hear that this project was accepted and the implementation of it is underway. This is very challenging task for Latvia because of the scale of this project. Establishment of national cyclotron facility demands considerable human and financial resources. In this regard it was very important that our government has included this project in priority list of activities to be implemented. I would like to assure you that our government appreciates the assistance of IAEA regarding implementation of this project. Without expertise and shared experience from agency it would be hardly possible to reach the goal, which we have set.

Safeguards and non-proliferation

Mr. President,

Latvia believes that the nuclear non-proliferation regime is of universal character and supported by a strong system of safeguards is essential for collective security. For Latvia importance of NPT lies in three pillars: nuclear non-proliferation; nuclear disarmament; and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Therefore we regret that several States Parties of the NPT still have to fulfil their basic obligation under the Treaty - that is to ratify the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA. We urge all States to fulfil their obligations under the NPT as well as to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol, because we believe that CSA and AP constitutes today's standard of verification regime as recommended in the report by the United Nations High-Level Panel and the UN Secretary General's report "In Larger Freedom". In this context I have to mention that Latvia as co-sponsor supports resolution submitted to this Conference seeking to put this recommendation into effect.

Analysing the situation with respect to other international instruments aimed to prevent proliferation and development of weapons of mass destruction, we find that situation still needs to be improved. There are only several dozen countries, which participate in regimes for import, export and transit control of dual use nuclear items.

Radioactive waste management and decommissioning

Mr. President,

Latvia is implementing the decision made several years ago on decommissioning of our only Research reactor in Salaspils. I commend the assistance provided by the IAEA and all involved Parties in the project of removal of fresh fuel from premises of the reactor and its transportation to the country of origin, which took place in May this year and we also look forward to returning of spent fuel.

Regarding the issue of radioactive waste management we are facing very difficult task of extending of radioactive waste disposal site at Baldone. Despite the fact that we have received positive conclusion from environmental impact analysts, we are facing resistance from municipality and local community. In this context cooperation and dialogue between central government and municipalities is essential to reach mutual understanding. I would like to emphasize that our government considers issue of radioactive waste management as very important one and therefore we will put much effort for bringing this issue to a close. This is an essential task under the obligations of so called Joint Convention.

In conclusion, Mr President, I can assure you that the Government of Latvia will continue to support the Agency in implementation of its programs. We believe in the goals of Agency - to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr. President!