

Check against delivery  
IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE 2008  
STATEMENT DELIVERED BY  
AMBASSADOR JOHANNES KYRLE, SECRETARY GENERAL,  
FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
(AUSTRIA)  
September 30, 2008

Mr. President,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express Austria's full commitment to the statement delivered by France on behalf of the European Union. Additionally, let me point out some of the issues to which Austria attaches particular importance. But before I do that, let me first join others in warmly welcoming Papua New Guinea and Lesotho, the states that we just admitted as new members.

Mr. President,

The Austrian Government highly appreciates the dedicated work the IAEA team has continued to perform in the past year. The Agency has again demonstrated its reliability and efficiency on the international scene and has reinforced its position as an indispensable institution in the global security architecture. It serves as a forum for debate, a centre of technical expertise and, most importantly, as a global nuclear watchdog fulfilling its tasks with reliability, proficiency and independence. More than ever, the international community needs institutions like the IAEA which actively contribute towards international confidence building.

## **I. The future of the Agency**

Mr. President,

Numerous new nuclear power plants are planned or constructed around the world in the next decades and many experts even predict a long-term renaissance of nuclear energy. This development, if it materializes, implies dramatic challenges for the international community. We therefore believe that a thoughtful examination of these challenges and their implications on the IAEA's future work is urgently required.

Against this background, Austria would like to thank the Director General for having launched a timely discussion on the future of the IAEA earlier this year. We have taken note of the Secretariat's background report "20/20 – Vision for the Future" as well as of the subsequent report issued by the Commission of Eminent Persons.

The debate among the members of the Commission, including former Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, in preparation of this report, reflects the wide range of perspectives and opinions on perceived benefits and actual risks of nuclear technology: Austria as others believes the risks of nuclear energy by far outweigh its advantages. In view of the high environmental and financial costs over time and the lack of a sustainable solution to the nuclear waste problem, we also do not see nuclear energy as a sustainable contribution against climate change. Even so, Austria is aware of the global rise in energy demand and recognizes the right of every state to choose its energy mix.

In whichever way we assess the use of nuclear power for energy purposes, we should however be united on the following: We must urgently address and prevent the potential misuse - or careless use - of nuclear technology: the risks of proliferation connected to a spread of nuclear technology, the existence of clandestine supplier networks, the production of dirty bombs by terrorists, the clandestine development of WMD programs, and nuclear accidents - these are threat scenarios we will remain confronted with in the decades to come.

It is our firm belief that it must be member states' as well as the IAEA's absolute priority to cope with those challenges, in particular by strengthening and universally implementing the Agency's safeguards system, including the Additional Protocol, by implementing and further developing the most stringent security and safety tools, and by advancing the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle. We do express our

sincere hope that in our further debate on the strategic, long-term orientation of the Agency, these central tasks within the scope of the IAEA's overall mandate will remain in the focus of our attention.

## **II. Safeguards and Verification**

Mr. President,

The IAEA safeguards system is an indispensable part of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Safeguards provide assurances that states live up to their non-proliferation obligations and do not misuse their peaceful nuclear programmes for the development of nuclear weapons. The level of assurance we get, however, depends on the scope of authority we are prepared to assign to the Agency.

Repeated cases of clandestine nuclear programmes that could not be detected by traditional safeguards measures have demonstrated the need for a strengthened safeguards system. It is of utmost importance for the international community that the IAEA be able to draw safeguards conclusions regarding the peaceful use of all nuclear material wherever it is - or might be - located.

The Additional Protocol provides the Agency with a much more complete insight into States' nuclear programmes and thereby allows detection of clandestine activities. Austria therefore continues to strongly advocate adherence to the Additional Protocol. We call on all states which have not done so to negotiate and conclude Additional Protocols to their safeguards agreements without further delay. In this context, I wish to reiterate Austria's view that the conclusion of an Additional Protocol is, for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, a legal obligation.

We are pleased to note that the number of Additional Protocols continues to increase steadily and in this context we warmly welcome the upcoming conclusion of Additional Protocols with Iraq, Lesotho, and Qatar.

The majority of NPT non-nuclear weapons states with comprehensive safeguards agreements has now brought into force Additional Protocols. This provides the

Agency with a sound basis for the implementation of full-scope safeguards, and for further refining the system, which allows for optimal combination of all safeguards measures available to achieve the greatest effectiveness and efficiency. Nevertheless, progress still remains too slow: a number of important goals of Additional Protocol implementation will only be realised when the system is universally applied.

We also regret that there are still a number of NPT-non-nuclear weapon states that have not yet concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement.

### **III. Safety and Security**

Mr. President.

The International Community's vigilance in the area of nuclear safety and security is vital for the protection of people and the environment from harmful radiation exposure. IAEA's assistance to countries to upgrade nuclear safety and security and to prepare for and respond to emergencies remains of utmost importance.

In the area of nuclear security, we have to remain alerted to the potential of terrorists targeting nuclear facilities or using radioactive sources to incite panic, contaminate property, and even cause injury or death among the civilian population. Through its Illicit Trafficking Database (ITDB) program, the Agency collects information on incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive material. In the year preceding 30 June 2008, according to the Agency, 243 such incidents were reported, 21 of which involved the theft or loss of material which was not subsequently recovered.

Because radiation knows no frontiers, States need to recognise that the security of nuclear material and facilities is a legitimate concern of all States. Countries must continue to demonstrate, not only to their own populations, but to their neighbours and the world that strong security systems are in place.

Austria takes note of the Nuclear Security Report 2008 submitted by the Director General on measures to protect against nuclear terrorism and commends the Secretariat for its efforts to implement the Nuclear Security Plan for 2006-2009. We

look forward to the Agency's sustained efforts, in particular in the context of the forthcoming Nuclear Security Plan for 2010-2013 and encourage the Secretariat to continue to cooperate with international nuclear security related initiatives, inter alia the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Mr. President,

I would now like to turn to the issue of nuclear safety. Austria thanks the Director General for the report on measures to strengthen international cooperation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety as well as waste management.

Austria is looking forward to the implementation of measures in the framework of the Global Nuclear Safety Regime, as proposed by the International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group (INSAG). We are concerned however, that more than 50 years after their establishment, IAEA Safety Standards are still not fully applied by the entire nuclear community. We support the Agency's sustained efforts directed at their full implementation and encourage the development of safety guidance for nuclear installations other than nuclear power plants.

Austria is also concerned about trends to downgrade the IAEA Safety Standards from highest to average level. We firmly believe that IAEA Safety Standards must continue to reflect the best international practices in order to serve as benchmarks for the highest level of nuclear safety.

As regards Safety Culture in Member States, Austria appreciates the performance of the Agency's Safety Culture Assessment Review Teams. While the teams have observed many cases of good practice, recurring events in Europe and worldwide indicate that Safety Culture in general deteriorates in both operating and regulatory oversight bodies. This certainly is a cause of concern and we call on the Secretariat to step up its activities in this respect.

Austria also believes that the Agencies' findings about inadequate funding for decommissioning activities are to be taken very seriously as the number of nuclear installations reaching the end of their lifetime is increasing.

Mr. President,

The 4<sup>th</sup> review meeting under the Convention on Nuclear Safety, held in Vienna earlier this year, revealed that in some Member States the separation between the functions of regulatory bodies and those institutions dealing with the promotion or deployment of nuclear energy is not fully effective. The review meeting concluded that this issue requires further attention.

Mr. President,

Concerning the existing conventions dealing with liability for nuclear damage, Austria, on this occasion, would like to reiterate only two of its major concerns: Firstly, we believe that the maximum liability amounts would be completely insufficient in the case of a major accident. In contrast, the Austrian Act on Liability for Damage Caused by Radioactivity provides for unlimited liability combined with obligatory liability insurance with high coverage for damage. Secondly, the channelling of liability according to which only operators, but not suppliers can be held liable seems inadequate to us. We thus express our hope, that ongoing discussions focus more on potential damages and victims rather than on industries' interests, finally leading to a fair, obligatory unlimited liability.

#### **IV. Nuclear Fuel Cycle**

Mr. President,

We have reached a juncture in history where the pressing issue of nuclear proliferation dominates the political debate and represents a key challenge for the international community. Austrian Minister for European and International Affairs Ursula Plassnik at the opening of the 51<sup>st</sup> General Conference last year put particular emphasis on the revitalization of the vision of a nuclear fuel cycle under multilateral control as one possible way out.

Austria since then has actively participated in the respective discussions in the IAEA and continues to believe that multilateral approaches constitute a crucial contribution towards overcoming international tensions triggered by the potential misuse of sensitive technology. The long-term goal, in our view, must be a new multilateral framework for nuclear energy that over time would include converting enrichment and reprocessing facilities from national to multilateral operations, and limiting such future facilities to exclusively multilateral operations. In our view there should not be a differentiation in “haves” and “have-nots”, only in “wants” and “want-nots”. For those that have chosen nuclear energy, access to nuclear fuel should be a strictly regulated but impartial and fair undertaking.

This is of course a long-term vision which requires a step-by-step approach. We do believe, however, that the creation of an international fuel reserve under the auspices of the Agency could be a first step into the right direction and I would also like to highlight that the European Union is examining a financial contribution in this respect, as was already pointed out by the EU-Presidency at this Conference.

Austria will continue to contribute to the multilateralization debate and intends to present a detailed outline of its proposal in the Agency’s appropriate fora later this year.

## **V. Development/Technical cooperation**

Mr. President!

With its special focus on monitoring, verification and assistance, the IAEA contributes to strengthening the Vienna centre of competence for the intertwined issues of security and development.

Over the past 50 years, the IAEA has made vital contributions to many important projects related to the development agenda. Nuclear technologies have been developed to increase food production, fight diseases and manage groundwater resources. Austria recognizes the vital importance of these activities for many nations around the globe. Against this background I am happy to announce that my

government has - subject to budgetary authorization - decided to also contribute to the Technical Cooperation Fund 2009.

Mr. President,

The work of the Joint Division of the IAEA and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been of great value to Member States. As you know, the FAO has been considering ending its involvement in the Joint Division. We are hopeful that it will not do so. Austria has been strongly supporting the continuation of this fruitful cooperation in the appropriate fora of the FAO and will continue these efforts also in the future decision-making process.

Mr. President,

Let me end this statement by assuring you of Austria's willingness to work with other Member States and the Secretariat on a strategy which keeps the IAEA in the best shape for the manifold challenges ahead of us. With political determination, openness to new multilateral partnerships, and with the reliable, trusted help of the Agency, I firmly believe that we can achieve progress over the next years.

Thank you.