

S T A T E M E N T

by Dr. Sergey Tzotchev

**Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria
at the 52nd General Conference of the IAEA
Vienna, 29 September – 4 October 2008**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria I would like to join the other speakers in congratulating you on your election as the President of the 52nd session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency and to assure you of the full support and co-operation of my delegation in the fulfillment of your important and responsible task.

I am convinced that under your guidance we will be able to reach a desirable conclusion through our deliberations and the conference will contribute to the achievement of the IAEA main objectives: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, peaceful application of atomic energy and enhancement of nuclear safety.

It is a pleasure for me to extend a cordial welcome to Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea as new Member States of the IAEA.

The Bulgarian delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of France on behalf of the European Union and the

associated countries. We attach particular importance to the positions expressed in this statement.

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

Bulgaria pursues a consistent nuclear non-proliferation policy. As a state-party to the NPT and the CTBT we would welcome all states that have not yet signed and ratified both treaties, to do so. We believe that the NPT provides a solid fundament for the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and that the IAEA has played and will play a very important role in implementing it. We stress the necessity of further strengthening the Agency safeguards system including the implementation of Additional protocol.

On behalf of my delegation I would like to express our hopes that the DPRK nuclear program problem will find its diplomatic solution within the Six Party Talks framework. We regret for the decision taken by Pyongyang to deny to IAEA inspectors access to the reprocessing plant in Yongbyon and to remove the IAEA seals and surveillance equipment. However, Bulgaria believes that the negotiations process should continue. We support all steps that would eventually lead to a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons.

We live in a complex, rapidly changing security environment. The new challenges we face are interlinked and go beyond the national borders. The danger of weapons of mass destruction proliferation includes the danger of terrorists acquiring such weapons and technologies. Our response to this

complicated problem must be collective and multi-faceted. Bulgaria believes that the existing system of treaties and initiatives provide us with nuclear non-proliferation mechanisms that make such a response possible.

Mr. President,

Bulgaria has in place an ambitious nuclear program: it has industrial nuclear power reactors in operation, decommissioning of units with VVER-440 type reactors is forthcoming and the plans for construction of a new nuclear power plant are well advanced. At the same time, efforts are made to construct a dry storage facility for spent nuclear fuel, to strengthen the State Enterprise Radioactive Waste, and to prepare for the establishment of a National Repository for Low and Intermediate Level Waste Disposal. There are over 2000 facilities in industry, medicine, and science in my country, which use sources of ionizing radiation. I would like to point out that Bulgaria is a nuclear country and the implementation of its nuclear program will be possible only under a strict and effective regulatory control.

Bulgaria participates in Global Nuclear Energy Partnership and we are one of those countries who agree on the necessity of expanding nuclear energy around the world. Development and deployment of the advanced fuel cycle technologies, protection of environment, reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation are achievable goals under this initiative. We encourage the performance of activities undertaken by GNEP and we shall continue to cooperate in this field.

Another important initiative for the progress of the nuclear energy we see in the Agency's International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycle – INPRO project. This project assists Member States to build up competence for developing innovative nuclear energy systems and to coordinate better related tasks. Bulgaria as a member of INPRO supports these activities and we are sure that the project will continue to play a key role in the nuclear sector.

Regarding our units in commercial operation I would like to mention that in 2007 the Modernization Program of units 5 and 6 of Kozloduy NPP was implemented according to the planned schedule and was completed. This is the first and at present the only program through which full scope of the recommendations for improvement was implemented at VVER-1000 units. Ensuring the transparency of the whole process of the Program implementation and seeking for independent expertise an Agency's mission is invited to assist Bulgarian experts in assessment of the results achieved. The mission will be conducted in month of November this year and we consider it as a good example of the fruitful cooperation between IAEA and certain Member State.

Mr. President,

We share the opinion expressed in Annual Report that the rising expectations for nuclear power are based on growing energy demand, concern over national energy supply security, the increasing price of fossil fuels and global environmental concerns. These expectations are already facts and responding to them we should think for the future of nuclear energy in a manner that without reaching internationally recognised safety level, without applying of appropriate

technology and without ensuring trained personnel this future is impossible. Allow me in this regard to express our view that we consider as a very important activity of the IAEA the assistance to Member States in their efforts for preservation and enhancement of nuclear knowledge and in facilitating international collaboration in this field. We would also like to commend the Agency for supporting national and international striving for the safe and secure use of nuclear technology. The publication of new safety requirements and guides, and the use of safety services to support the wider application of these standards should be encouraged.

Bulgaria is among those countries which intend to build a new nuclear plant and first steps in this direction are already in place. After signing the agreement for construction of the Belene NPP between the Bulgarian National Electricity Company and the Russian Company Atomstroyexport in 2006 now we have site approval and permission for design of a nuclear facility issued by the Bulgarian Nuclear Regulatory Agency. Bulgarian regulator now is in the process of organizing its work in direction to perform safety assessment of the Technical Design, Safety Analysis Report and Probabilistic Safety Assessment of the new build. This immediate task we expect to face soon and solving it we shall look for broad international support including assistance of the IAEA.

Another important issue in the nuclear sector in Bulgaria is the management of radioactive waste. Under the Strategy for Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management adopted in 2004, the State Enterprise "Radioactive Waste" will construct till 2015 a National Repository for Disposal of RAW. These activities are funded by the National Radioactive Waste Fund. It is planned that the this repository will be an engineering near-surface multi-barrier nuclear facility,

designed for the management of RAW from nuclear facilities and nuclear applications generated in the country.

Here I would like to mention that this summer all spent fuel from our Research Reactor was returned to the country of origin. It was carried out within the framework of the Russian Research Reactor Fuel Return Program where Bulgaria cooperated actively with the United States, the Russian Federation and the IAEA.

Mr. President,

Technical cooperation continues to be a main tool in fulfillment of the objective to contribute to sustainable social and economic benefits in Member States. The year 2007 was the first year of implementation of the current Technical Cooperation Program and we are glad to know that the payments to the TC Fund for that year are relatively high – almost 96%. We expect that at the end of the 2008 we shall have successful completion of this cycle. In 2008 Member States from Europe Region and the Secretariat adopted by consensus the Regional Profile. This document will be used as a planning tool for the development of regional programming for 2009–2013 in four strategic areas, namely: nuclear and radiation safety, nuclear energy, human health and isotope and radiation technology applications. Europe Regional Profile gives as well a new trend in balance between programs, shifting it from national to regional which is already noticeable in the new project concepts for the 2009 – 2011 cycle. We expect also that this profile will contribute the financing for the next and future TC cycles allocated for the region, to be kept adequate as for the current cycle. In this

connection I am authorized to state that the Republic of Bulgaria officially confirmed its voluntary contribution to the Technical Co-operation Fund for the year 2009.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to confirm that Bulgaria will support future IAEA activities in the promotion of international cooperation in the field of peaceful use of atomic energy and the application of Safeguards. Saying this I'm also expressing our confidence in the work of the Secretariat and his Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

Thank you, Mr. President.