

**Statement delivered by Mr. Dominique Ristori,
Deputy Director General for the Coordination of Nuclear
Activities, Directorate-General for Energy and Transport,
European Commission**

52nd General Conference of the IAEA

Vienna, 29 September – 4 October 2008

Mr President, Mr Director General,

It is an honour for me to speak on behalf of the European Commission.

Mr President, I take this opportunity to congratulate you for your election to the Presidency of this 52nd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. You can count on the unconditional support from the European Commission.

At the same time, I also thank the Director-General for his impartial and professional work and dedication.

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Global warming, energy efficiency and security of energy supply continue to be the central issues in today's discussions. The EU attaches utmost importance to its Kyoto commitments, and to a sustainable, competitive and secure supply of energy in the EU. In the EU, two thirds of CO₂-free electricity is generated by nuclear energy.

Support for nuclear energy has now increased in the European Union, with almost two thirds of citizens recognising the key beneficial effects of nuclear energy with respect to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and security of energy supply; as shown by the recent survey carried out by the European Commission to gauge public opinion on Radioactive Waste.

The European Commission welcomes the recent report of the Commission of Eminent Persons on the future of the IAEA and on its vision for 2020. The Commission is ready to support the IAEA where possible in addressing the many nuclear issues which lay ahead.

Last month the IAEA issued its very first stand alone comprehensive report on the international status and prospects of nuclear power. Its findings complement those of the Commission's 2007 Illustrative Nuclear Programme and its update in light of the forthcoming Second Strategic Energy Review.

The EU, the largest nuclear electricity generator in the world, has a mature nuclear industry spanning the entire fuel cycle, with its own technological base and highly skilled work-force.

Nuclear power generation is considered to be economically viable for base load generation of electricity and significantly contributes to the use of available energy resources within the EU: It still accounts for nearly one third of the Community's electricity generation through some 146 nuclear power plants and it will be necessary to maintain that contribution, together with an increasing renewable energy contributions, if the EU is to reach its goal of providing two thirds of low-carbon electricity by 2020-30.

However, continued development of nuclear is only possible if all our (EU) Member States meet the highest standards of safety, security and full compliance with nuclear non-proliferation requirements. The Commission, together with the EU Member States, intends to contribute in setting and maintaining the benchmark for the three "S" (Safety, Security and Safeguards).

2. JOINT EURATOM (EC) – IAEA STATEMENT / ACHIEVEMENTS

On May 7th this year, Commission President Barroso and Dr. ElBaradei confirmed their mutual will to further strengthen our synergies, emphasise the specific priority areas and to provide for regular high-level meetings to facilitate this reinforced cooperation.

The most visible co-operation is carried out in the field of nuclear safeguards, where Euratom and IAEA inspectors co-operate daily, and on a complementary basis, in the application of the safeguards agreements between the Euratom Community, the IAEA and the EU Member States.

The Commission, the EU Member States and the IAEA have been working together closely in order to facilitate the necessary evaluations under the expanded declarations required by the Additional Protocol.

The Commission looks forward to the anticipated completion by the IAEA in drawing its "broader" safeguards conclusions and the implementation of Integrated Safeguards in all EU Members States in the near future.

I would like to emphasize the good co-operation between the Commission and the IAEA in the field of nuclear safety. The joint

project EC-IAEA-Ukraine for the safety evaluation of the Ukrainian Nuclear Power Plants is now well underway.

In April, Euratom contributed to the 4th review meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, where the importance of both the authority and independence of national regulatory bodies were highlighted.

Technology and scientific research is also an important area of co-operation. For new reactors I underline the complementary frameworks of the INPRO project and the Generation IV forum, where the EU Joint Research Centre plays an important role as well as in fusion energy research, where the IAEA Fusion Energy Conferences facilitate and support the exchange of scientific and technical information concerning future ITER activities to be developed at Cadarache, France, in the near future.

3. POLICY PRIORITIES FOR EURATOM (EC)

The Commission gives its full support to the activities undertaken by the IAEA with respect to nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and decommissioning.

Nuclear Energy Policy

As part of its second Strategic Energy Review, the Commission will soon update last year's nuclear illustrative programme. The Communication concentrates on the link between nuclear energy and security of supply, with a special focus on the investment needs and security of supply for nuclear fuels.

Nuclear Safety

Nuclear safety remains one of the areas of continuous attention within the Euratom Community and worldwide. Last May, Dr. El Baradei invited the EU to be a leader in the domain of nuclear safety. The European Commission endorses IAEA initiatives promoting a global nuclear safety regime and continues to encourage EU Member States to secure the highest level of safety of nuclear installations.

The European High Level Group (of senior regulators in EU27) on nuclear safety and waste management, created by the Commission last year, has established its work programme in three priority areas: 1) safety; 2) waste management and 3) transparency. There is an increasing interest from other organisations (including the IAEA) and European countries (e.g. Norway and Switzerland) to contribute as observers as well as strong support by the Western European Nuclear Regulators Association and synergy with the European Nuclear Energy Forum.

Nuclear Waste

Radioactive waste remains a major issue for the acceptance of nuclear energy, with a safe and permanent solution for the management of radioactive waste still pending.

The Commission is concerned about the progress for permanent solutions for disposal of high level waste in the EU and world-wide. We strongly encourage Member States to establish national plans to manage nuclear waste.

Decommissioning

The EU must also progress towards improving guaranteed funding for the decommissioning of old nuclear installations and management of nuclear waste. At the end of last year the Commission adopted its second report providing an overview on the situation in its Member States with respect to provisions of funding arrangements for decommissioning and waste management. This report now covers all nuclear installations with an emphasis being placed on those which are at greatest risk, should decommissioning funding be inadequately addressed.

The report highlights examples of good practice in countries such as Finland and Sweden, where the polluter-pays principle is enshrined in national legislation. An awareness of Member State governments for the need to address this important aspect of the nuclear industry is well demonstrated in its findings. The Commission will further focus on the adequacy of funding, its financial security and on how to ensure the funds are only used for the intended purposes.

Nuclear Liability

Several EU Member States have legislation in line with international conventions with varying liability levels. A more coherent and harmonised liability scheme is required and should be developed to ensure a comparable level of protection for all citizens, creating a level playing field for EU industry. The Commission is studying on the question of liability in the EU.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

With the renewed global interest in nuclear energy and the growing number of emerging nuclear countries, there is a clear need to

strengthen international and explicit guarantees of non-proliferation. The European Union has an important role to play in this context.

The European Council has also encouraged the Commission to come forward with concrete proposals in the near future to support the establishment of an international fuel bank under the umbrella of the IAEA.

4. CHALLENGES AHEAD

Use of Nuclear Energy

The planned phase-out policy for nuclear reactors within some EU Member States over the next 15-20 years would be detrimental to the EU in meeting its CO₂ emissions targets for 2020-2030, if the redundant nuclear capacity is replaced with electricity generated through the burning of fossil fuels.

The European Nuclear Energy Forum debates the wider issues regarding the future development of nuclear energy and complements the High Level Group on nuclear safety and radioactive waste management with priority also given to both greater harmonisation of nuclear safety, ways to progress on waste management, measures to ensure sufficient qualified human resources as well as analyzing and optimising approaches to enhance trust building and confidence between the public and the actors involved in the process.

Progress will be reported at the next meeting, to be held in Bratislava on 3-4 of November.

Nuclear Material Safeguards

Nuclear material safeguards constitute the solid ground of the international system for preventing the misuse of nuclear material for

non-peaceful purposes. The European Commission co-operates closely with the IAEA in this field and strongly supports international efforts to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the international safeguards regime.

The Euratom Community and its 27 Member States have demonstrated their commitment to the Strengthened Safeguards System by ratifying and implementing the Additional Protocol. Indeed, adherence to the Additional Protocol is a condition for accession to the European Union. Furthermore, the EU seeks the universalisation of the Additional Protocol, considering that it represents today's verification standard.

Non Proliferation

Non proliferation is a major concern for the EU and constitutes a fundamental element for the EU when it considers the decision of entering into negotiations with a third country.

Specific assistance to third countries is provided through dedicated instruments. The Commission's new Instrument for Stability (IfS) for the period 2007-2013 extends co-operation with third countries in the fields of CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) risk mitigation and preparedness as well as the protection of critical infrastructures and public health. Illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear materials, emergency preparedness, redirection of weapon scientists and export control of dual use goods are explicitly included in the scope of IfS activities. This is the main instrument implemented by the Commission to counter the risk of nuclear materials proliferation outside the European Union.

Areas of potential co-operation between the European Commission and the IAEA include the enhancement of national infrastructures in the countries wishing to launch new nuclear programmes, as well as non-proliferation, nuclear security and training. Contacts are being stepped up within our respective services.

Joint Convention

In May next year, the European Commission will represent the Euratom Community at the 3rd Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. The Commission will be submitting its report on behalf of the Euratom Community to the IAEA in the coming weeks.

Radiological Protection

The Commission is revising the Euratom Basic Safety Standards that are, to a large extent, in line with those of the IAEA. For the purpose of legislative simplification, the Commission is recasting all Directives in the domain of radiation protection into a single piece of legislation, following a similar philosophy as the IAEA. On-going interaction with the IAEA, based on the new recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection, will guarantee harmonisation of the requirements for the protection against the risks arising from ionizing radiation and for the safety of radiation sources around the world.

I would like to emphasise the importance of the EC-IAEA co-operation in the field of emergency preparedness. Both organisations have statutory obligations in this field and today our emergency services are in continuous contact with each other. Our organisations are

committed to transmit data between their respective emergency information exchange systems, keeping updated in the event of an emergency. It is very important for both organisations to be prepared to face the media pressure in a co-ordinated manner during an emergency.

I also wish to reconfirm that the EC is willing to widen the co-operation between the organisations by making the European technology developed for international exchange of automatic radiation monitoring data, the EURDEP system, available for a global application through the IAEA. We see this as a natural continuation of the system development for a mutual benefit.

5. CLOSING

Euratom's international role

Euratom is increasing its cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy worldwide. Up to date, seven such co-operation agreements were signed with third countries with the purpose of facilitating nuclear trade while reaffirming our commitment to non-proliferation and seeking a high level of nuclear safety.

The European Commission continues to provide a significant contribution to enhance nuclear safety and safeguards around the world. Nowadays co-operation and assistance is being provided, for the period 2007-2013 under two new financial instruments: the Instrument for Pre-Accession (for the EU candidate and potential candidate countries) and the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation for 'third countries'.

The Instrument for Nuclear Safety Co-operation, with its budget of some €500 million, will continue supporting the traditional fields of

activity such as regulatory and operational support, design safety, waste and decommissioning of installations, off-site emergency preparedness and safeguards as well as support to international projects and actions such as the Chernobyl Shelter Fund and the “Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership”.

Euratom Nuclear Research and Training

Research and innovation is the cornerstone in maintaining EU leadership in the nuclear field. Community nuclear research is structured around the Euratom 7th Framework Programme, which has a total budget of more than €2.75 billion to fund nuclear research and training activities over a period of five years (2007 to 2011). It will help the creation of a critical mass and new structures in strategic research fields at the European and international level, such as the ITER fusion project and new innovative approaches in fission reactors and nuclear waste management processes. For the last 27 years the European Commission has also been active in providing scientific and technical support to the Agency in the field of Nuclear Safeguards.

With the many challenges facing our organisations, the Euratom Community understands the need for synergy through the use of our common resources. Success lies in co-operation. The Euratom Framework Programme for Nuclear Research and Training activities serves as a driver to create the "European Research Area" in the area of nuclear science and technology. The programme is actively pursuing a more structured approach to international co-operation, including re-enforcing synergy with the IAEA.

The European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (the so-called SET-Plan), issued by the Commission in November 2007, recognises the need for technological development and innovation, including in the

nuclear field, to face the challenge of the low carbon economy. It fosters the launch of European industrial initiatives to ensure timely progress to match the energy policy objectives set by the EU.

Euratom FP7 FISSION activities aim to develop and assemble knowledge, and to improve scientific and technical competences and know-how in support of safety, security, reliability, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of nuclear energy. In order to co-ordinate and more effectively implement the nuclear fission R&D efforts in Europe, a Sustainable Nuclear Energy Technology Platform (SNE-TP) was launched a year ago. It brings nuclear industry and research closer together to develop a common vision, define key research priorities, elaborate the Strategic Research Agenda and work together for its implementation. The SNE-TP, together with the EU Joint Research Centre, will also play an important role in the implementation of the SET-Plan orientations.

In the area of FUSION, the Euratom FP7 budget is almost €2 billion over five years, including more than €1 billion for the international ITER experiment, under construction in southern France. In addition, a contribution to the European fusion research programme of more than €1.5 billion is expected from EU Member States.

International cooperation is at the heart of ITER. The seven partners (China, EU, India, Japan, Korea, Russian Federation and the USA) having signed the ITER agreement in November 2006, have now established the ITER International Organisation, which will build and operate the reactor project.

The IAEA played a central role in initiating, supporting and promoting this unique collaborative venture in which over half the world's population is now represented. Let me express the European

Commission's warm appreciation of the continuing practical support that IAEA provides as depositary of the Agreement.

Mr President, Mr Director General,

Both the Commission and the IAEA recognise that nuclear energy is an important option for our Member States' future energy security and maintaining a base load supply of electricity, while minimising emissions of carbon dioxide – thereby contributing to mitigation of global concerns about climate change. Promoting non-proliferation, nuclear safety and security as well as protection of the public belong to the key priorities of the EU's internal and external energy policy. The IAEA shares the same objectives. Co-operation between the European Commission and the IAEA in reaching and maintaining this common goal has, till now, proved successful and must continue to be reinforced.

————— END —————