

STATEMENT BY FINLAND

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to the

52nd General Conference of the
International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the Finnish delegation, I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the 52nd General Conference. I would like to assure you of our full support in fulfilling your important task this week. I would like to use this opportunity to welcome Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Kingdom of Lesotho and Sultanate of Oman as the newest members to the Agency.

Mr. President,

2. I associate myself fully with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union. After some general remarks, I would like to comment on a few issues that are of particular interest to Finland, and the recent developments in our nuclear power sector. The full version of my statement is circulated in written form.

Mr. President,

3. To my government, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, NPT, and its integrity remain the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In this regard, I would like to note our long standing and strong support for achieving the universality of and universal compliance with the NPT, and the relevant safeguards agreements, including the additional protocols thereto.

4. Nuclear weapons proliferation is a serious concern to my government. The NPT can only fulfil its role if we can be confident of the compliance of all states with the obligations of the Treaty. The international community must take the appropriate measures in the cases of non-compliance in order to preserve the integrity and authority of the system. Finland is determined and dedicated to ensuring success for the 2010 NPT Review Conference and to addressing the challenges we face.

5. We will continue to promote also other issues of key importance such as the strengthening of export controls, entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as immediate start of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) and its early conclusion.

6. I would like to underline once again that safeguards and verification is an inseparable part of nuclear activities at large. Well-functioning verification and safeguards is a prerequisite for public trust in and acceptance of the use of nuclear energy in the longer term. It is important to ensure that the Agency can fully continue its highly professional and impartial work in the safeguards implementation, and has sufficient financial and other resources for its verification activities also in the future.

7. Finland strongly supports the strengthening of the Agency's safeguards system. The Agency's capability and legal authority to assure the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities should be further reinforced. The framework and mechanisms for

safeguards themselves have been far developed and must be implemented effectively and world wide. In particular, the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocols, which together form a solid basis of the safeguards system, and constitute the current verification standard, should be brought promptly into force and implemented in all member states. The efficiency of safeguards implementation can also be enhanced by more information driven verification activities, use of state-of-the-art technologies, high calibre staff, outsourcing, etc.

8. The integrated safeguards are expected to play a significant role in an efficient and cost-effective safeguards system. According to our view integrated Safeguards bring benefits for both, the Agency and the state concerned.

9. Finland appreciates the successful steps taken in the cooperation between IAEA and the EU in establishing a functioning combination of integrated safeguards systems in the EU countries and fully endorses the aim to have integrated safeguards in place in all EU states during 2008. In this regard, negotiations between Finland, the IAEA and the European Commission about the implementation of the integrated safeguards in Finland have taken place in recent months with good results and the implementation of integrated safeguards in Finland will start in October.

10. Finland continues to provide support to the IAEA through the Finnish Support Programme to the Agency's safeguards activities. The Support Programme contributes to the development of new verification tools for the Agency's use, to the training of safeguards inspectors and to the conduct of exercises related to the implementation of the Additional Protocol.

11. Since Finland is at an advanced stage in the development of an underground final disposal facility for spent nuclear fuel, high priority is given to the development of the safeguards system for a geological repository of spent fuel. Finland is pleased to note that major progress has taken place recently in this area to develop an Integral Safeguards Approach for the Repository.

Mr. President,

12. The growing interest in the use of nuclear power is obvious. Consequently, the challenges for the IAEA in all its areas of activity grow. Finland welcomes the first report on international status and prospects of nuclear power, that the Director General has delivered in response to recent General Conference resolutions GC(50)/RES/13 and GC(51)/RES/14. Finland, as one of the countries currently building a new nuclear power plant unit and considering further nuclear power capacity, has read the report with great interest. We share the views expressed in the report regarding global challenges and concerns involved.

13. Finland has more than 30 years of experience from operation of nuclear power plants. We have a very good safety and performance record. Besides the 4 existing nuclear power plant units, we have one nuclear power plant unit currently under construction and there are three companies interested in building additional capacity. In Finland, the most important step concerning new projects is the decision-in-principle, a decision that is made by the Government but needs to be ratified by the Parliament. One application for a decision-in-principle has been filed and two more applications are expected in a few months.

14. It is foreseen that nuclear power will play a significant role in the energy mix of Finland far into the future. The national climate and energy strategy under preparation will recognise this. With the new 1600 MW reactor which is under construction, the nuclear power is expected to cover over 35 % of the electricity demand in Finland. When the decision of the construction of the fifth nuclear power plant unit was made in 2002, a diversified and sustainable energy mix was emphasized. The share of the renewables has been close to 30 % of our energy consumption. The strong promotion of renewable energy, intensified energy efficiency and increased self-sufficiency form the basis of our energy strategy.

Mr. President,

15. Public acceptance of nuclear power needs to be earned every day, and it is to a great extent related to nuclear safety. Any major plant damage, anywhere in the world, may have major impact on the public acceptance worldwide. This underlines the importance of improving nuclear safety worldwide. The IAEA is a major player in these efforts. Now that so many new countries are planning to go for nuclear power, the role of the IAEA in this area will be even more important. Finland strongly supports the continuation and further development of the IAEA activities in this area.

16. Finland believes that Member States and the Agency should strengthen and coordinate their efforts to ensure that countries embarking on nuclear power programmes develop sound safety infrastructures including effective and independent regulatory authorities. In this context I would like to underscore the importance of a strong safety culture. Finland has also actively shared with other interested countries our experience in building national infrastructure and making other arrangements that are necessary for ensuring safety of new nuclear power plants.

17. Notwithstanding the central role of the Agency in contributing to conditions which allow public confidence in nuclear energy, it needs to be underlined that the responsibility of safe and secure use of nuclear power lies solely with the national authorities and the operators. The IAEA can give advice and support them, and develop robust international standards, but it cannot be expected to assume the responsibilities of the national authorities. In this context, Finland underlines again the importance of a strong and independent regulatory authority.

18. Finland appreciates very much the work that the Agency has done in setting up modern safety standards and we have actively contributed to that work. Finland is also a party to all international safety conventions and has participated actively in the Review

Meetings of them. We call upon all countries to accede to the safety conventions and apply the resulting obligations in full.

19. In Finland a good safety record has contributed to better public acceptance of nuclear power and has made it possible to expand our nuclear power production. Our experience has showed that a good safety regulatory infrastructure is a key element for a successful and safe nuclear power programme. In spite of the possible minor increase in the price of the electricity produced, there is no question that this investment on safety is absolutely necessary. On this there is a broad consensus in Finland, including the licensees of nuclear facilities. If the regulatory control and related requirements and activities are well understood and organized among all stakeholders from the very beginning, it should not cause any significant economic risk or delays in the nuclear power programme.

20. I would also like to underline the importance of the nuclear waste management issue. A clearly defined waste management policy and strategy openly declared by the Government including solid financing arrangements defined in the nuclear legislation are essential for enabling progress in practical implementation of nuclear waste management. The Geological Repository for the Spent Nuclear Fuel, called Onkalo, in Finland is at a characterization stage. The cave is now over 3000 meters long and 300 meters deep. The repository is planned to be operational in 2020 and the concept how the safeguards will be implemented in the repository should be in order before the licensing starts in 2012. Other nuclear waste generated during the operation of power plants is since 1990s put into waste disposal facilities located underground on each plant site.

21. With more countries planning to have nuclear power, there is also a clear need to create mechanisms which would allow countries to have access to nuclear power while reducing the need to construct proliferation-sensitive facilities and without increasing the risks of spreading sensitive technologies. We welcome the active and crucial role of the Agency with respect to multilateral nuclear approaches. In addition to the fuel supply, we think multinational approaches to the back end of the fuel cycle would also deserve attention.

Mr. President,

22. Finland welcomes the progress achieved in the field of nuclear security. Regarding the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM), Finland has completed the required amendments to the national legislation and is ready to deposit its ratification instrument. The ratification process of the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism is under consideration in the Finnish Parliament and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Finland calls upon all states for early ratification of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM), and the Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism that will strengthen the global nuclear security regime.

23. The Agency has an important role in the fight against nuclear terrorism. Finland has provided support in-kind to the Agency's activities and we are pleased to announce another voluntary contribution to the Nuclear Security Fund (NSF).

Mr. President,

24. Finland recognizes the importance to the Technical Co-operation Programme of the Agency. Finland has always paid its share in full and on time both to the Regular Budget and to the Technical Co-operation Fund (TCF) and calls upon all member states to do so. The demand for technical cooperation activities related to the introduction of nuclear power, particularly in safety, is increasing. It is important that the Agency can respond to that demand, and that the methods of technical cooperation are developed further. The most efficient ways to transfer knowledge/technology should be utilized and the emphasis should be on long-term capacity building.

25. As regards the content of the Technical Co-operation Programme, the projects should be fully within the Agency's terms of reference and based on national development

strategies. Finland fully recognizes the important role of non-power applications related technical cooperation and assistance. We hope the Agency continues to develop more cost-effective and sustainable methods, and partnerships with other organisations, such as WHO and FAO, in such a way that the technical expertise of the Agency and the sectoral and development expertise of the other organisations can be productively put to the service of the recipient countries in a coordinated, effective and sustainable manner.

26. The Report of the Commission of Eminent persons on the future of the Agency will be discussed during Scientific Forum in detail. As a general remark Finland would like to welcome the Report and notes that the Report gives us a comprehensive view of the challenges and tasks which the Agency is facing at the moment and will be facing in the future.

27. I would like to conclude my remarks by reiterating, on behalf of my government, Finland's full support to the Agency and its activities. We are convinced that under the able leadership of Dr. ElBaradei, the Agency will continue its professional, objective and impartial work to the benefit of the whole membership.

Thank you, Mr. President.