

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Frank Cogan, Permanent

Head of the Delegation of Ireland

at the 52th Session of the IAEA General Conference

1 October 2008.

Mr President,

May I begin by adding my congratulations to those who have already received following your election as President of the fifty-second General Conference. Let me assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Irish delegation during your term of office.

Ireland associates itself with, and fully supports, the statement already made on behalf of the European Union by the distinguished representative of France.

Ireland is represented on the Board of Governors of the IAEA for the current term and I have had the honour of serving as one of its vice-chairmen. We appreciate the vital role which the IAEA plays in promoting safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies. The IAEA's mission is as important today as it was when the agency was first established 51 years ago. We note that an important debate on the future of the Agency has begun with the publication of the Report of the Commission of Eminent Persons, which seeks to address the role of the Agency to 2020 and beyond.

A cornerstone of Irish foreign policy has always been our commitment to effective multilateralism as the best way of upholding the rule of law and ensuring international peace and security. Like many small countries, we view the multilateral regime of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and agreements as offering the best guarantee of continuing peace and security. We are committed to maintaining the integrity and inviolability of these instruments and to supporting the institutions which oversee them. We believe that such instruments have served us well, and will continue to do so.

NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty)

Ireland has traditionally attached a particular importance to the NPT, which originated in an Irish resolution at the UN, an initiative of the then Irish Foreign Minister Frank Aiken. We see the NPT as the essential part of the global non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The NPT is under great stress, following the failure of the 2005 Review Conference to achieve any meaningful outcome and with ongoing controversies about whether all of the parties in it are in full compliance. Now, decisions taken at previous Review Conferences are also being called into question by some States Parties, placing the Treaty under further pressure. Earlier this month, Ireland reluctantly joined consensus on the Nuclear Suppliers Group decision to exempt India from the requirement of full-scope safeguards as a condition of supply, which has been a key provision of NSG Guidelines since 1992, and of the NPT since 1995. We did so following a statement by India reiterating its key positions on disarmament and non-proliferation. These include a unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing and strong safeguards against nuclear proliferation in third countries. We call on all States who have not yet done so to sign and ratify the NPT and the CTBT.

Safeguards

There are three pillars at the core of the IAEA: Safety and Security; Science and Technology and Safeguards and Verification. One of these pillars, Safeguards and Verification, is more crucial than ever. The Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with the Additional Protocols are the only acceptable verification standard. Ireland calls on those states that have yet to adopt these measures to do so without delay. These measures are necessary to ensuring the international communities full confidence in the peaceful purposes of nuclear programmes. Anything less than the agreed IAEA standards falls short and is unacceptable.

DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)

Ireland very much welcomed the agreement reached with the DPRK in February 2007, in the context of the Six Party Talks, that it would freeze its nuclear weapons programme and the subsequent decisions and actions taken by the DPRK to dismantle its Yongbyon reactor and its nuclear programme. We acknowledge the very significant progress that was made in this regard by the DPRK in the intervening period. We very much regret, however, the recent stated intention of the DPRK to cease, and reverse, its denuclearisation activities. We call on the DPRK, and all parties to the Six Party Talks, to work together to resolve the current impasse and to do all possible to get the denuclearisation programme and all reciprocal arrangements back on track, in the interests of regional and international security.

Iran

Ireland deeply appreciates the professional and impartial work of the Director-General and the IAEA Secretariat in trying to resolve the long outstanding issues relating to the nature and history of Iran's nuclear programme. However, success in this area depends ultimately on full cooperation by Iran. We reaffirm our support for efforts to find a negotiated long-term solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

Ireland remains very concerned about the intentions of Iran with respect to its nuclear programme. We are disappointed that Iran has yet to fully comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions 1696, 1737, 1747 and 1803, and most recently under resolution 1835, as well as the resolutions of the Board of Governors. We call on Iran to fully comply with its obligations stemming from these resolutions, to suspend all its enrichment related and reprocessing activities and to fully cooperate in an open and transparent manner with the IAEA.

Ireland's Nuclear Policy

Mr President,

The policy of Ireland in relation to nuclear energy is clear and unambiguous: while we acknowledge the sovereign right of each country to decide on its energy mix, we are against the use of nuclear energy for the generation of electric power. This policy

is shaped by the belief that nuclear energy and its associated activities pose an unacceptable threat to human health and the environment. We do not believe that nuclear energy can provide a sustainable or acceptable energy resource, since there are many serious problems and issues that have not been resolved. These include the safety and security of nuclear installations; the transportation of nuclear materials; the unresolved problems of radioactive waste management; the needless reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel; contamination of the marine and terrestrial environment; the ever-present danger of accident and the risk of proliferation.

The recent “renaissance” of nuclear power seems to be based on a belief that nuclear energy can be part of the solution to the problem of global warming. Ireland does not share that belief. In our view, the perceived benefits of nuclear energy are outweighed by the serious risks to human health, public safety and the environment associated with nuclear energy.

Ireland considers that the ongoing debate on nuclear energy seeks to downplay the environmental, waste, proliferation, nuclear liability and safety issues. Ireland welcomes and supports the Agency’s work in these important areas, and hopes for a real debate that can properly address all issues and concerns.

Value to Ireland of IAEA

Mr President,

Although Ireland has chosen not to exercise its right to develop nuclear power, we derive considerable benefit from our membership of the Agency.

We value the opportunity to participate in the Agency’s work at the General Conference, the Board of Governors and at other conferences and meetings. In particular, we welcome the work of the Agency in the areas of safety and security as well as safeguards and verification.

Safety and Security

The IAEA provides the necessary framework for cooperative efforts to build and strengthen the international nuclear safety and security regime. This framework includes; advisory international standards; codes and guides; binding international conventions; international peer reviews and an international system of emergency preparedness and response. The Agencies vital role in implementing these standards is in many cases complemented by bilateral agreements between States.

Technical Co-operation Fund

We also greatly value and support the pioneering work and high quality of research of the Agency in such areas as agriculture and food, human health and other applications of non-power nuclear technology. The Technical Cooperation Fund is particularly important in upgrading safety in beneficiary States and Ireland continues to fully

support its efforts. I am pleased to confirm, Mr President, that Ireland has paid the full amount of our assessed share for 2006, 2007 and 2008 to the fund.

IAEA Emergency Preparedness Section - International Action Plan - Voluntary Contribution

Mr President,

The aims of the IAEA Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency are to provide mechanisms for mitigating the consequences of an accident through exchange of information and provision of assistance among States parties. The role of the IAEA is to facilitate and support cooperation among States Parties.

With this in mind, resolution 9.D of the 46th IAEA General Conference, in 2002, encouraged Member States to contribute to international efforts to develop a coherent and sustainable joint programme for more efficient international response to nuclear emergencies.

In 2003, at a meeting of competent authorities convened by the Secretariat, it was agreed that a National Competent Authorities Co-ordinating Group would be established. It was agreed that this Group would develop an International Action Plan to strengthen the international emergency response system in coordination with the Secretariat. **Ireland has made a contribution of thirty thousand US Dollars to the fund.** It is most important for this work to be properly funded. I would encourage all Member States to consider making a contribution in order to assist in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Shipping

Mr President,

Ireland shares a common marine environment through which shipments of nuclear materials are made. Coastal States, such as Ireland, take the view that given the risks posed and the public concern about such shipments, we should be fully informed when such shipments occur near our coasts. Provision of full information is necessary to allow risk assessment to be carried out and appropriate measures in relation to emergency response to be put in place.

With the involvement of the Agency, we are seeking to strengthen and deepen the ongoing dialogue between coastal and shipping States, with a view to improving communications between governments in relation to the marine transport of nuclear materials.

Reprocessing

Ireland has significant stakeholder interest in the matter of reprocessing. In our view, it gives rise to real and substantial safety and environmental concerns. It is not sustainable, and has a history of failure. Aspirations to safety are not always met, while discharges from reprocessing operations into the shared marine environment is not acceptable or sustainable. In addition, the economics of reprocessing just do not add up. It is well known that the cost of reprocessing spent fuel is significantly higher than the cost of direct disposal, and is likely to remain so for decades to come, unless the price of natural uranium leaps to an extraordinary level.

While it is a sovereign decision for individual States to choose or not to choose the reprocessing option, Ireland considers it necessary to point out these practical concerns that need to be addressed as a necessary precondition to the operation of existing or future reprocessing facilities. These concerns are not founded on abstract ideological policy or political views but are informed by our negative perception of the practical experience of reprocessing by neighbouring member states.

Nuclear Security Fund

Ireland supports the Nuclear Security Plan 2006-2009, and calls upon States to contribute to the Nuclear Security Fund. Since its inception, Ireland has made voluntary contributions to the fund totalling approximately €239,000. We believe it may be appropriate to consider how some of the activities of the Nuclear Security Plan can be absorbed into the Agency's regular budget and programme.

Closing remarks

I have set out our concerns and hopes for this General Conference, and the work of the Agency as a whole. The IAEA's role in helping to maintain international peace and security is as vital today as ever. It remains an important catalyst in promoting a culture of safety and security in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addressing these issues, Ireland will continue to engage constructively in support of the unstinting efforts and professionalism of the Director General and his staff.