

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY GENERAL CONFERENCE

FIFTY SECOND REGULAR SESSION – 29 SEPTEMBER to 4 OCTOBER 2008

LATVIA

STATEMENT BY MR. RAIMONDS VEJONIS

Minister of Environment

Mr. President,

I am pleased to join others in congratulating you on your election as the President of the 52nd General Conference and look forward to work under your guidance. My delegation is convinced that the Conference will be a success.

Mr. President, I fully associate myself with the statement of the honourable delegate of France on behalf of the European Union.

I would also like to join the previous speakers in welcoming the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea as new members of the Agency.

Mr. President,

Keeping in mind some of the resolutions of the 51st General Conference and current situation in several areas, I would like to draw attention of the honourable delegates to some issues, which are of particular importance to my country.

At the beginning, I will focus on some issues related to technical cooperation; I will briefly touch upon the issues of international cooperation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management, the measures to prevent nuclear terrorism and the importance of safeguards system.

Technical cooperation

It is very important that agreement has been reached on targets for the Technical Cooperation Fund for the years 2009–2011. This will enable IAEA to move ahead with the finalization of the Technical Cooperation Programme for that cycle, which will be presented to the Member States in November. I am proud to inform that Latvia has submitted only two national projects, therefore continuing previous trend to decrease the use of national projects and to increase the use of regional projects. This allows us to shift from the status of an assistance recipient to a provider of expertise to other countries. Regional projects are useful forums for exchange of ideas and experience. Latvia is also hosting scientific visits and training courses therefore contributing to the exchange of nuclear knowledge.

Regarding the funding of technical cooperation projects I would like to mention two issues that are of particular interest to my country:

- First issue relates to the budget of the Europe Division of Technical Cooperation. IAEA Member States in Europe have held meetings and adopted a common position on the development of regional technical cooperation strategy for the Europe region. EU Member States that are participating in the IAEA TC Programme for Europe have indicated that the funds, which are not used by the EU countries, should be used for the needs of other countries from this region, which need additional resources for their development and infrastructure. Latvia would like to invite the Secretariat to engage in timely, active and transparent consultations with the Member States in the cases where the budgeting principles are being

reviewed and modified. Any changes to the share of TCF allocated to TC Europe should be introduced only with consent of the Members States of Europe region in transparent, open and constructive way.

- Second issue is related to the increase of TCF share – Latvia confirms its readiness to pay its full share even after the TCF budget for the year 2009 has been increased. Already for several years Latvia has allocated supplementary contributions for its national projects. Latvia has gained a lot from the participation in TC activities of the Agency, and I am convinced that sharing of knowledge and experience will provide a great benefit for all countries also in the future.

Agency-wide Information System for Programme Support

We are pleased that an agreement for the measures to fund the initial stage of the “Agency-wide Information System for Programme Support” (AIPS) project, in order to facilitate the adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) by 2010, was reached this summer. Latvia devoted its 2006 cash surplus to the Agency to be used for funding of AIPS. All Member States will benefit from AIPS in all areas of the Agency’s activities because AIPS will provide greater transparency and improve efficiency of internal control of the Agency’s financial and procurement operations. I am convinced that this project will provide to all Member States new possibilities to get information on the status of issues, which are being solved at the Agency. Currently there are still some cases when we are unable to get precise information on procurement processes.

International cooperation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management

Latvia welcomes the assistance that the Agency has provided to a number of Member States with the repatriation of highly enriched uranium (HEU) fuel. Thanks to assistance of the

Agency and the Government of the USA, Latvia has reached progress in returning of the spent fuel to the country of origin. The spent fuel has been returned to the country of origin in May 2008, so this issue has been solved.

Measures to prevent nuclear terrorism

In today's international situation effective measures to fight against terrorism and to prevent terrorists from acquiring nuclear, biological chemical and radiological weapons are of the utmost importance. Last year the General Conference adopted resolution on this matter demonstrating that that the Agency pays great attention to this topic and that its role in common efforts to ensure international security has increased. We consider that the Member States should attach the utmost importance to strong national and internationally coordinated export controls in order to prevent and fight against illicit trafficking and procurement networks of nuclear technologies and materials, as well as the threat of proliferation of such materials by non-state actors. In this regard I would like to highlight the project, which has been implemented by the Latvian Customs institutions in close cooperation with the US Department of Energy. The aim of this project was to develop training materials on dual use items. During implementation of this project a handbook on goods identification was published and experts educated. As a result, we have significantly improved dual use goods control system and its procedures.

In the field of nuclear security, the conclusion of the first Coordinated Research Project on improvement of technical measures to detect and respond to illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive material had been an important milestone. Latvia would like also to mention the adoption of the "Third Joint Action of the Council of the European Union in support of the IAEA activities in the field of nuclear security", so the Agency would be able to perform its

activities in providing assistance to states with a view to improve border controls, strengthen physical protection at nuclear facilities and enhance nuclear security at major public events.

Safeguards system

The international safeguards system of the Agency is an essential part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Latvia strongly supports strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's safeguards.

Until now 30 States parties to the NPT still have not fulfilled their obligation to bring Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements with the Agency into force, thus more than 1100 of facilities containing nuclear material are not under safeguards. For those States, the Agency did not perform any verification measures. We regret this situation and call upon these countries to bring their respective safeguards agreements into force.

With respect to nuclear verification, Latvia welcomes the accession of additional protocols by 12 more Member States since the last GC.

Mr. President,

To conclude, I would like to emphasize the indispensable role of the Agency as the world's focal point for peaceful nuclear cooperation and nuclear safety. Its activities and guidance in implementation of safeguards agreement and promotion of non-proliferation goal proves the effectiveness of international cooperation and dialogue as the best approach for solving complex issues in the name of peace and security. Nuclear "renaissance" would not be a slogan commonly used in recent years without balanced activities of the Agency and its Member States.

Thank you, Mr. President!