

IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE

29 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER 2008

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT

Mr President

I would like to congratulate you on assuming the Presidency of this year's General Conference. Let me assure that you have the full support of the New Zealand delegation and we have every confidence that you will guide the General Conference to a successful conclusion.

New Zealand would like to welcome new members, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Lesotho, and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, a Pacific Island Forum Country, to the IAEA. It is always a notable occasion when another state joins the Agency. We are confident that the new members will make positive contributions to the IAEA. We assure them of our support, and look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

Mr President

It is clear that creating a world safe from nuclear weapons must remain one of the international community's most pressing goals. We recognise that preventing the spread of nuclear weapons through the implementation of safeguards under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a fundamental pillar of the Agency's work and we offer New Zealand's continued support in achieving this objective.

New Zealand participated actively in the second preparatory meeting leading to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference. It is clear that the NPT requires a sense of renewed ownership from all of its States Parties in support of its full implementation. We need to build tangibly on the meeting in Geneva and work cohesively towards agreement on concrete measures for the Treaty's implementation across the full remit of

nuclear issues, to ensure that the relevance and credibility of the Treaty is reaffirmed at the 2010 Review Conference.

Mr President

One of the IAEA's key roles is verifying and assuring member states that nuclear material is not being diverted from peaceful uses.

New Zealand attaches great importance to making sure that the IAEA has all of the tools necessary to provide robust assurances to the international community that nuclear activities undertaken by States are purely for peaceful purposes. Current proliferation challenges today, however, mean the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement on its own is no longer adequate in giving the Agency the necessary authority to fully carry out its verification mandate under the Treaty.

The Additional Protocol is the key tool in this regard and forms the contemporary verification standard in New Zealand's view. New Zealand strongly supports efforts to make the Additional Protocol a condition in new supply arrangements developed with non-nuclear-weapon States. New Zealand strongly urges all States Party which have not yet done so – particularly those with significant nuclear activities – to conclude and to bring into force an Additional Protocol without delay.

New Zealand is supportive of the decision to modify the small quantities protocol (SQP) in order to address the weakness identified by the Director General in the current safeguards system. We welcome the Agency's offer of assistance to small states to assist in implementation of this decision.

Mr President

New Zealand shares the Director General's assessment that the possibility of terrorists obtaining nuclear or other radioactive material remains a grave threat. New Zealand notes the Director General's concern that the uncertainty in funding makes the Agency's programme planning and prioritisation in the area of nuclear security difficult. New Zealand is proud to announce that we will shortly contribute NZ\$50,000 to the Agency's Nuclear Security Fund. We

have increased the level of our contribution this year to reflect our participation in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, to which the IAEA is an observer. The IAEA Nuclear Security Programme is well placed to implement some of the key GICNT principles, and thereby prevent nuclear and other radioactive materials falling into the hands of terrorists.

Mr President

Nuclear safety constitutes another important pillar of the Agency's work. New Zealand is committed to the principles and objectives of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, and the Guidance on the Import and Export of Sources.

The safe transport of radioactive materials continues to be of considerable significance to New Zealand. Given these shipments pass our shores and those of our small island state neighbours in the South Pacific from time to time, it is important for New Zealand that these transports take place against a backdrop of the highest possible safety and security standards, that we receive appropriate information in advance of any transports that may take place through the Pacific, that proper emergency response systems are in operation, and that an effective liability and compensation mechanism is in place so that any innocent victim is assured of not being left unsupported in the event of any incident resulting in harm of some kind. New Zealand is pleased that progress is being made in many of these areas, but urges all parties to continue to strive for improvements where possible.

We appreciate the valuable role that INLEX has played in examining and clarifying the application and scope of the Agency's nuclear liability regime and welcome the outreach workshops being held to explain the nature and content of the international regime. We continue to attach importance to INLEX's consideration of possible gaps in the regime and ways in which these gaps may be addressed.

We welcome the continued dialogue between coastal and shipping states on these issues, in particular on the exchange of information regarding these shipments. New Zealand is pleased that constructive talks between coastal and shipping states will be held

on this issue in Vienna this week and we look forward to further progress on this issue with a view to working towards an understanding on future practice which meets the concerns of both sides.

Mr President

New Zealand welcomes the ongoing efforts to achieve the denuclearisation of the DPRK. We continue to support international efforts to encourage the DPRK to fully meet its Six Party Talks commitments within a reasonable timeframe. Steps now being taken by the DPRK to restore its nuclear capacity will, however, seriously undermine the good faith and confidence it has been building with the international community. We urge the DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations, including an early return to IAEA safeguards and the NPT.

New Zealand shares the concerns of the international community about the questions that remain regarding Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's failure to comply with the provisions of UN Security Council and IAEA resolutions continues to be of concern. We call on Iran to comply with these resolutions, particularly through the suspension of its enrichment and reprocessing activities, the implementation of the Additional Protocol and reconsideration of the decision to suspend implementation of the modified text of their Subsidiary Arrangements under modified Code 3.1.

We urge Iran to work with the IAEA in a timely and transparent manner to provide the information the Agency seeks on the outstanding issues identified in the latest Director General's report which give rise to concerns about possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme. New Zealand supports the Director General's call for Iran to provide all the requested information and clarification without further delay. We hope that, with Iran's active co-operation, the Agency's continuing efforts will result in the early resolution of all aspects of the outstanding issues.

New Zealand continues to strongly support a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear programme based on Iran's compliance with IAEA and UNSC requirements. Iran must, however, play its part to realise this outcome.

Mr President

As a strong supporter of the NPT, New Zealand supports the principle that others should have access to nuclear technology for peaceful uses in conformity with Article II of the Treaty – particularly the many civilian applications which are not related to nuclear power generation and which could enhance the lives of millions of people worldwide.

New Zealand has rejected the use of nuclear power for itself as we do not believe that nuclear power is compatible with the concept of sustainable development given the long-term costs (both financial and ecological), particularly those associated with the disposal of nuclear waste. New Zealand is also concerned about the possible proliferation risks that are associated with nuclear power generation. New Zealand's view is that any responsible discussion about nuclear power as an option should be balanced, and should include consideration of the serious risks and costs as well as any potential benefits.

These are issues with global implications, and we believe that the international community must put more attention and resources into other safe, renewable energies. We are not convinced that the IAEA should have an increased focus on the provision of expertise and resources relating to nuclear power, when there are many other more sustainable energy sources which could be developed.

Mr President

This is a time of increased challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is imperative that the international community works together to agree and coordinate effective responses to meet this challenge. The Agency has a vital role in this collective response, working with member states to safeguard and secure nuclear materials for exclusively peaceful purposes.

I wish to express New Zealand's ongoing support and commitment to the Agency's programme of work and the indispensable contribution it makes to progressing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In particular, I thank the Director General and his staff for their efforts and the professionalism they have showed over the past year in pursuit of this objective.

Thank you Mr President.