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INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA)

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STATEMENT BY

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VIENNA

Madam President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your election as President of this important conference. I am confident that under your guidance and able management, the conference will succeed to accomplish its goals in the most satisfactory manner. I wish the other members of the Bureau every success, too. I can assure you, Madam President, of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation.

Madam President,

My delegation is very pleased to see that the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of Rwanda have now joined the IAEA, and congratulates them on their membership.

Also, I would like to thank the Director General and his staff in the Secretariat of the IAEA for preparing the excellent documentation of the General Conference, with its vast agenda to be tackled, as well as for compiling the annual report for the year 2008.

Let me seize this opportunity to express my delegation's sincere appreciation of the approval of the appointment of Ambassador Yukiya Amano as the new Director General of the IAEA, who has an impressive record of expertise, experience and leadership, and who will be the first IAEA Director from the Asia-Pacific region. At the same time, I wish to applaud Director General Mohamed ElBaradei for his great efforts during his tenure at the helm of the Agency. His untiring efforts have yielded significant results. Serious issues were met with due attention, and strenuous efforts were made to improve the living conditions of millions of people.

Madam President,
Director General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the agenda, this year's General Conference is of particular importance. Let me here only mention crucial items such as expansion of technical cooperation, safeguards verification and nuclear security.

Madam President,

The association of Afghanistan with the International Atomic Energy Agency goes back to the inception of IAEA. My country was among the founding nations of this international organization in the year 1957. During the early years of its membership, Afghanistan was actively involved in the implementation of joint programmes of technical cooperation.

Unfortunately, years of conflict and war led to interruption of mutual cooperation. Since 2002, however, Afghanistan pursues its ambition to regain its role on the political map of the world and within the international organizations. Afghanistan, a least developed country, still depends on the support of donor countries and international organizations such as the Agency. Afghanistan requires large-scale technical cooperation to foster recent achievements towards socio-economic development, throughout the reconstruction stage and beyond. Taken all this into account, the Government of Afghanistan has established the Afghanistan High Atomic Energy Commission with a view to responding efficiently to the ever-increasing number of Agency projects in Afghanistan.

In 2004, my government signed a payment plan for settling the arrears of Afghanistan to the IAEA, which occurred due to devastating circumstances. I am pleased to announce that past dues have already been settled as per the agreement between my government and the Agency, and that hopefully soon the whole balance will be leveled. Afghanistan is strongly committed to its obligations on timely payment of its contributions in the years to come.

Madam President,

My government is convinced that the technical cooperation of IAEA relating to the peaceful uses of atomic energy and its practical applications will substantially contribute to the reconstruction of my war-torn country and will help to improve the lives of our people.

The transfer of nuclear technology for increasing agricultural productivity, improving the government's capability for provision of health services and potable water, as well as facilitating environment protection worthy of the name is crucial for my country.

The Agency currently undertakes 11 national and 31 regional or interregional projects in Afghanistan, the majority of which are in the fields of education and training, with the remaining projects covering health and agriculture sectors, including nutrition and potable water. The Agency's approach towards development of self-reliance, promotion of sustainable increase of

productivities and enhancement of capabilities is systematic, consistent with the requirements of my country and therefore supported by my government.

Madam President,

The IAEA's annual report for the year 2008 shows that the Agency put its main focus of its technical cooperation activities on strengthening the technical capacity of national and regional institutions and resource centers for applications in health, agriculture, environmental protection and energy. New resources for the technical cooperation programme reached a total of 92 million USD in 2008, with 80 million USD for the Technical Cooperation Fund. The rate of attainment stood at 94.7 % at the end of the year. My delegation appreciates the fact that the core technical cooperation programme could be carried, while regretting that projects worth of 46 million USD remained unfunded.

Non-power nuclear applications save lives and mitigate suffering. The IAEA, in cooperation with the WHO, is capable of critically advancing healthcare in many developing countries. Nuclear and isotopic techniques are instrumental in alleviating hardships caused by shortage of potable water, hunger and disease. Radiation induced mutation in crops such as rice, wheat and barley increases the value of the crops and makes them resistant to drought while producing greater yield at higher levels of nutritional quality. The positive effects on nutrition are obvious and the Agency and its Member States must pursue their goal to minimize the number of undernourished people, especially children.

My government supports all efforts towards widening the scope of activities in the different fields of peaceful use of nuclear technology. But, we must remain cognizant of the need to prevent the misuse, diversion and theft of nuclear materials. Increased levels of utilization of nuclear technology require increased levels of responsibility.

Safeguards agreements between the Agency and its Member States, the development of State systems of accounting for and control of nuclear material, secure storage and waste management, and effective border controls are central to our common goal to prevent illicit trafficking of nuclear material.

My delegation concurs with the view that when safety and safeguards activities also serve nuclear security purposes, additional funding should be provided from the Nuclear Security Fund. This will certainly accelerate implementation, promote sustainability and will help to avoid costly redundancies.

However, keeping in mind the fundamental importance of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme for developing Member States, my delegation would

like to emphasize that Member States' contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund shall not be neglected in favor of the Nuclear Security Fund, with the latter not serving a core statutory function of the Agency. It is the responsibility of the IAEA's Member States to secure their nuclear and radioactive materials.

Afghanistan encourages enhancement of capacity building programmes on both the national as well as the regional and interregional levels, respectively. Priority should be given to technical assistance, the application of nuclear technology and nuclear security.

Madam President,

Let me finally foreground the issue of nuclear disarmament and its relevance to the objectives and activities of the Agency.

In today's world, the strategic value of nuclear weapons is clearly on the decline, which makes them more like a burden than an asset. The dangers of proliferation must be taken into account seriously and it deems essential for the international community to not jeopardize past successes, since the end of the cold war, in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, but to rather go from strength to strength in negotiating and concluding existing and new agreements.

Perceived security benefits based on the possession of nuclear weapons are quickly put into perspective when considered against the backdrop of the complex security problems which go along with those weapons. Additionally, the possession of nuclear weapons involves the risk that further countries are stimulated to acquire them.

The rationale for retention of nuclear weapons becomes less and less intrinsic. Nuclear realpolitik, based indeed on practical considerations, must accommodate adjustment to a changing global situation.

The vision of a world free of nuclear weapons may still be cloudy. Effective reduction of stockpiles and warheads will clear our view. This will be a long journey, but the journey is its own reward.

In this context, I would like to commend the recent positive steps taken by the United States of America and the Russian Federation, culminating in the signing of a Joint Understanding, in Moscow in July this year, for a follow-on treaty to the START agreement, which will reduce nuclear warheads and delivery systems by up to a third from current treaty limitations. I trust that other nations soon

will follow this example in exploiting new ways and means to reduce the number of nuclear weapons.

My delegation also appreciates that, earlier this year, the Conference of Disarmament agreed to negotiate a fissile material treaty and to discuss nuclear disarmament and security assurances for non-nuclear-weapons states.

Downsized arsenals of nuclear weapons will reduce risks of nuclear accidents and will reallocate more space, time and resources to the Agency and its Member States to be used to support developing countries embarking on peaceful nuclear technology programmes.

Madam President,

Many experts and decision makers predict an even progressing importance of the International Atomic Energy Agency and I can only agree. If we succeed to take the right decisions in this and other fora, we will manage to endow this important organization with the ability to effectively address future challenges.

Thank you, Madam President