



International Atomic Energy Agency,  
53<sup>rd</sup> General Conference

Agenda Item 8:  
General debate

Statement by Ambassador Helmut Böck,  
Austria  
September 16, 2009

Madame President,

Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Austrian delegation let me use this opportunity to congratulate you, Ambassador Jennifer Macmillan, on your election as President of this year's General Conference, and to assure you of Austria's full cooperation in ensuring its success.

Allow me also to congratulate Ambassador Yukiya Amano on his appointment as the new Director General of the IAEA. Bearing in mind Ambassador Amano's vast experience and knowledge of the technical issues that the Agency deals with, his commitment to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime as well as his diplomatic skills, I am confident that the Agency will continue to fulfil its functions in the most efficient way. The new Director General will face a number of challenging issues on the agenda of the Agency and I am confident that he has all the necessary skills to address them. Certainly, he will need the full cooperation of the whole membership to succeed. In this regard I can assure you of Austria's full support.

Further, I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Mohammed El Baradei for the work done in the past 12 years in his capacity as Director General of the IAEA. His statement at the beginning of this General Conference was testimony to his active and integrative leadership. During this outstanding service, the IAEA made a major contribution to peace, security and safety as well as to the

promotion of health and prosperity. The Director General has also repeatedly reminded the International Community of the need to address the root causes of major crises and not to forget to focus on the wellbeing of the human family. Austria therefore fully supported the resolution in document GOV/2009/62 to confer on Dr. ElBaradei the title of "Director General Emeritus of the IAEA".

Madame President,

In addition to the statement made by Sweden on behalf of the European Union, please let me point out some of the issues to which Austria attaches great importance:

#### **Nuclear Non-Proliferation - NPT**

Nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons should be in the common interest of all members of the International Community. Austria, as a non-nuclear country, greatly values and supports the vital role of the IAEA with regard to the NPT regime. Likewise, we will continue to support all efforts aimed at strengthening and universalizing the IAEA safeguards system, including the additional protocol, and at making the IAEA fit for the growing challenges in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and safety in the near future.

Many challenges to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty continue to exist and should not be underestimated. Austria reiterates the appeals made by the Swedish Presidency of the European Union regarding the resumption of IAEA work in the DPRK, the clarification of questions related to the nuclear activities of Iran, and the provision of relevant information by Syria.

Austria believes that we need to make significant progress at next year's NPT Review Conference in New York. Bearing in mind a more constructive atmosphere and enhanced multilateral dynamics than in previous years, the Third session of the Preparatory Committee in May 2009 has raised the hope for a productive review conference in 2010. However, it also demonstrated how much work still needs to be done politically and diplomatically to achieve the kind of agreements and commitments that will genuinely strengthen the non-proliferation regime and provide a basis for building security in a world free of nuclear weapons.

As in the past, Austria will play an active role in the Review Conference, both individually and together with its partners in the EU as well as with other groups. We will support initiatives aimed at substantial progress in nuclear disarmament, at institutionally strengthening nuclear non-proliferation, at promoting nuclear weapons free zones and at establishing a fair global system that effectively controls the nuclear fuel cycle. All these efforts should ultimately reduce the current international mistrust over national nuclear programs.

During the last years Austria has been actively participating in the debate on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle, presenting a working paper (INFCIRC/755) entitled "Multilateralisation of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle: Increasing Transparency and Sustainable Security" during the Board of Governors debate on this issue in June 2009.

The proposal for the establishment of a Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank under the control of the IAEA has been declared an ambitious project. We agree. However, we believe that this is a good first step in a

process eventually leading to the full multilateralisation of the nuclear fuel cycle. The framework proposed by Austria would ultimately lead to a more comprehensive implementation of Article IV of the NPT, where the benefits of all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle would be available to all States who seek them on a fair and equal basis.

## **Nuclear Power and Nuclear Safety**

Madame President,

I would now like to turn to the issue of nuclear power, nuclear technology and of course nuclear safety.

We believe that safety and security awareness are essential when it comes to the construction of nuclear power plants. Therefore, delays regarding the completion of nuclear power plants should be acceptable if more time is needed in order to make them safer and more secure. In this context, Austria welcomes the respective support provided by the IAEA, aimed at assisting regulatory authorities in member states in the design and construction phase thus upgrading the overall safety of newly built reactors.

The ratification of all Member States to the “Family of Safety Conventions” and the full adherence to their provisions and obligations thereby constitute an important goal.

Concerning new nuclear technologies, the global nuclear community must also focus on the challenges national regulatory authorities are facing today, in order to assure that safety and security keeps pace with emerging technologies. The development of technical systems should

nevertheless remain with the industrial sector, which by now has gained more than 50 years of experience.

Let me also point to the fact that higher prices for nuclear power could be seen as a sign of the internalization of some external costs of nuclear energy. Austria favours a full internalization of all costs related to nuclear power, including the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, decommissioning and, most important, unlimited nuclear liability.

Madame President,

As regards emergency preparedness and response, the position of non-nuclear countries bordering nuclear ones should be fully recognized. This idea is barely reflected in the documents on nuclear power programmes prepared by the Agency. In our view, the responsibility for emergency response should not end at national borders, but should be a common effort at transboundary level.

The third review meeting of the Joint Convention, held in Vienna this year, showed that a large number of facilities worldwide undertaking decommissioning activities continue to be underfunded. In combination with the well known problem of securing the safe final disposal of spent nuclear fuel in the long term, the question of sustainability of the nuclear power sector therefore arises once again.

### **Safeguards and Verification**

Austria sees the IAEA safeguards system as an indispensable part of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Safeguards provide

assurance that states live up to their non-proliferation obligations and do not misuse their peaceful nuclear programmes for the development of nuclear weapons. The level of assurance we get, however, depends on the scope of authority we are prepared to assign to the Agency.

Repeated cases of clandestine nuclear programmes that could not be detected by traditional safeguards measures have demonstrated the need for a stronger safeguards system. It is of utmost importance for the international community that the IAEA can draw safeguards conclusions regarding the peaceful use of all nuclear material wherever it is located.

The majority of NPT non-nuclear weapons states with comprehensive safeguards agreements have by now brought into force an Additional Protocol. This provides the Agency with a sound basis for the implementation of Integrated Safeguards, and for further refining the Integrated Safeguards System, which allows for optimum combination of all safeguards measures available to achieve the greatest effectiveness and efficiency. Nevertheless, progress still remains too slow: a number of important goals related to the implementation of the Additional Protocol can only be realised once universality has been achieved. Austria therefore continues to strongly advocate adherence to the Additional Protocol. In this context, I wish to reiterate Austria's view that the conclusion of an Additional Protocol, for non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, is a legal obligation.

Madame President,

Please let me also mention that from an Austrian perspective it is important that the IAEA is able to maintain both, the quantity as well as

the quality of its analytical services needed to sustain an efficient and effective safeguards system. In this regard we also want to highlight the importance of the work undertaken at the Safeguard Analytical Laboratories in Seibersdorf (SAL) which forms an essential component of the NWAL (Network of Analytical Laboratories). We are pleased that the voluntary contributions for the ECAS project which already have been pledged, will enable the start of a redevelopment process of the Seibersdorf site in the near future. By providing more than 60.000 square meters of land, Austria wants to show its commitment for this undertaking.

Madame President,

With its special focus on monitoring, verification and assistance, the IAEA contributes to strengthen Vienna as a centre of competence for the interwoven issues of security and development. Over the past 50 years, the IAEA, through its Technical Cooperation Programme, contributed to a full range of projects related to the development agenda. Austria recognizes the vital importance of these activities and therefore intends to continue to support the Technical Cooperation Fund also in the year 2010.

Madame President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is much evidence that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear safety and security will continue to demand a high and increasing level of international co-operation in the years to come. Let me conclude by stressing that for my country it is therefore crucial that the Agency be fully equipped and funded to fulfil these important tasks.

Thank you very much for your attention.