

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Frank Cogan,  
Permanent Representative to the International  
Organisations in Vienna  
and Head of the Delegation of Ireland**

**at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the IAEA General Conference**

**September 2009.**

Madam President,

May I first congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-third General Conference, and assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Irish delegation during your term of office.

**Director General ElBaradei**

I would like to begin by offering Ireland's thanks to Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei for the excellent work he has done for the IAEA over the course of three terms. During his twelve years at the helm of the IAEA he has guided the agency through some very challenging and contentious times and has always done so with dignity, impartiality and professionalism. He has enhanced the agency's reputation through his actions, and this culminated in being jointly awarded, with the IAEA, the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2005; an award which is richly deserved, and for which I would like to once again offer the admiration and congratulations of my country.

**DG Elect Amano**

I would also like to offer my warmest congratulations to Ambassador Yukiya Amano on his election and appointment as the fifth Director-General of the IAEA by the board of Governors in July.

Ambassador Amano, subject to the confirmation of your appointment by this sitting of the General Conference, you will be inheriting a challenging brief at a pivotal time in the debate on the future role and direction of the agency. We have full confidence that you will pursue your work effectively and impartially and in doing so you will continue to uphold and advance the good reputation of this organisation.

I would like to assure you of Ireland's full support and cooperation in your new role.

**The IAEA**

Ireland associates itself with, and fully supports, the statement already made on behalf of the European Union by the distinguished representative of Sweden, and we add our welcome to those extended already to the new Member States: Cambodia and the Republic of Rwanda.

Ireland fully appreciates the vital role which the IAEA plays in promoting safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies. We are firm believers in its mission, and are committed to working with the agency and other member states in attaining its goals. Ireland **has for some years now, been a part of the main drafting group** of resolutions that affect transport, security and safety of nuclear power. We believe we have made a worthwhile contribution in this field and will continue to do so.

From our viewpoint, the IAEA's mission is as important today as it was when the agency was first established 52 years ago, and that its importance will increase in the years ahead as new demands, technologies and challenges arise. With this in mind, we welcome the ongoing debate on the future of the Agency that began last year 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 belief in, and commitment to effective multilateralism as the best way of upholding the rule of law and ensuring international peace and security. We believe that safety standards and practices are best supported and enhanced by international peer review and the sharing of knowledge, both of which are well served by IAEA programmes and mechanisms.

Like many small states, 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)**

Madam President,

Ireland has always had a particularly close association with the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Over fifty years ago, the Irish Minister for External Affairs proposed the establishment of a committee to study the dangers inherent in the further dissemination of nuclear weapons and to recommend appropriate measures to avert them. This led to the adoption of what were known as *'the Irish resolutions'* and ultimately to the negotiation, a decade later, of the NPT.

The world today is very different place, and while the danger posed by nuclear weapons to the security of the international community remains, the nature of the threat has changed a good deal in the interim. The only realistic way to eliminate the danger posed to the world by nuclear weapons is through their total elimination. Together with our partners in the New Agenda Coalition and other like minded Governments and members of civil society, we have consistently called for the prioritisation on nuclear disarmament and believe that the '13 Practical Steps' agreed by the NPT Review Conference in 2000 remain the benchmarks for progress.

I am making this statement at a time of renewed hope that we may be successful in our goals. I warmly welcome commitment by the President of the United States to work for a world without nuclear weapons and his promise to work to strengthen the NPT and to immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. I also welcome the commitment by the US and the Russian Federation to negotiate a successor to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. We are encouraged by reports that the talks are making good progress.

In the NPT context, there are immediate steps that can be taken, including increased transparency on the part of nuclear weapons States. Maintaining current levels, or developing new weapons in the belief that this will enhance national security is unpersuasive and sets a bad precedent.

For 40 years, the NPT has provided the essential basis of mutual confidence allowing for the international development of exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It remains as important as ever to ensure the universality of the treaty, and we once

again to call on those who have not yet signed or ratified it to do so. The Treaty comprises both key rights and obligations with respect to the uses of nuclear energy, and it is important that both are recognised by all State Parties.

Ireland believes that 2010 may well be a landmark year in the development of the NPT. For the first time in a decade, there is a real opportunity to realise the full potential of the treaty. We look forward to the 2010 Review Conference in New York in anticipation of the development of a new package of agreements, supported by concrete and ambitious benchmarks and a realistic roadmap towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

### **Safeguards**

The IAEA has identified three pillars upon which safe and secure global nuclear regulation must be built: Safety and Security; Science and Technology and Safeguards and Verification. One of these pillars, Safeguards and Verification, is now more crucial than ever before. The Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with the Additional Protocols are the only acceptable verification standard. Ireland encourages those states that have yet to adopt these measures to do so without delay. These measures are necessary to ensuring the international community's 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)**

The provocative nuclear test carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in May is an affront to the international community and shows blatant disregard for the safety of its own citizens, and of its neighbours. We call upon the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks immediately and without preconditions. We urge the DPRK to abandon and completely dismantle any nuclear weapons related programme in a transparent and irreversible manner. The DPRK must comply unconditionally and without delay with all its international obligations as set out in the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and its IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

### **Iran**

Iran's continuing refusal to fully cooperate with the Agency is a matter of ongoing concern to my government. The Director-General reported to the Board of Governors meeting earlier this month that while Iran has cooperated with the Agency in some areas it has not done so in all. Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities or its work on heavy water related projects as required by the UN Security Council, nor has Iran implemented the Additional Protocol. Iran has not cooperated with the Agency in a way which will allow the Agency to exclude the possibility of there being military dimensions to its nuclear programme. It must do so.

We call on Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and to implement the Additional Protocol without delay.

## **Ireland's Nuclear Policy**

Madam President,

Ireland's policy on nuclear energy is clear and consistent: Our policy is not to use nuclear energy for the generation of electricity, and we remain unconvinced of the case for nuclear power put forward by its advocates. In our view, the actual and potential benefits of nuclear energy are, on numerous dimensions, outweighed by the risks to both people and the environment. While we recognise the sovereign right of each country to decide on its own energy mix, and do not seek to impede or obstruct those who opt to harness nuclear power, we do not believe that it is the answer to our energy needs. We would prefer instead to see greater international resources devoted to research into, and development of renewable energy sources. This policy is shaped by the belief that nuclear energy and its associated activities pose unacceptable risks to human health and the environment, and the many serious associated 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 interim and long term 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 resurgence in interest in nuclear power seems to be based on the claim that nuclear energy can be a major part of the solution to the problem of climate change. Ireland does not support that claim. In our view, any benefits arising from the civilian use of nuclear energy are outweighed by the serious risks to human health, public safety and the environment associated with it.

With this in mind, Ireland considers that the current debate on a new generation of nuclear installations often fails to give due consideration to the environmental, waste and safety issues that will arise. Our concerns notwithstanding, Ireland welcomes and supports the IAEA's work in these important areas, and looks forward to working with the Agency and other member states in bringing these matters to greater prominence.

## **Value to Ireland of IAEA**

Madam President,

Although Ireland has chosen not to develop a nuclear power industry, we greatly value, and 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.

As I have mentioned previously, Ireland attaches great importance to our belief in the benefits of a collective and multilateral approach to matters of safety and security. We welcome, and are glad to be contribute to the culture of learning and continuous

improvement that is fostered by organisations such as the IAEA.

Because of the trans-boundary nature of the risks from an accident at a nuclear installation, or involving the transport of radioactive materials, safety in all aspects of the global nuclear industry and its associated activities is a matter of concern to nuclear and non-nuclear states alike.

Though we have decided against having any civil nuclear energy facilities, Ireland is in very close proximity to such facilities in neighbouring states. While Ireland has no ownership or control over these facilities or the activities which take place there, a major radiological incident in one of them could affect Ireland to a similar degree as the host State. Once released, radioactive particles do not respect borders: they disperse through the air, through the sea and are not confined to their country of origin. Although Ireland is a non-nuclear state, we are not unaffected by the nuclear industry. Therefore, we must be part of the global dialogue on nuclear issues. It is in this context that Ireland values so highly its membership of this Agency. We are pleased to be able to play a constructive part in this dialogue and to do so as a non-nuclear nation. This position is reflected in our emphasis on high safety standards; on environmental protection; on multilateral co-operation and transparency. In this context we welcome the ongoing debates on safety and security, and equally, we are reassured by the level of commitment to these issues we witness among nuclear energy producing countries here and in other fora. This must be maintained at this time of global expansion in the civil nuclear industry.

While the choice to opt for nuclear power rests locally with each nation, the risks and complications associated with the generation of that power are international. With this in mind, as a firm believer in multilateral problem solving, Ireland greatly respects and values the work of the IAEA in providing the vital 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 Agency's role in implementing these standards is in many cases complemented by valuable bilateral agreements between States.

Ireland also has significant stakeholder interest in the matter of reprocessing. It has been Ireland's longstanding view that this activity gives rise to real and substantial safety and environmental concerns. A particular concern for us, given the proximity to our shores of the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant, is radioactive discharges from reprocessing operations into our shared marine environment. We welcome the work to date, and ongoing IAEA research in the area of reprocessing, and look forward to working with the Agency towards a world in which such activities, where they must take place, are undertaken cleanly and with zero risk.

In June of this year Ireland welcomed the agreement of the EU Nuclear Safety Directive as an important step in ensuring the highest standards of safe operations in European Nuclear facilities. In particular, we support a strong regime in the area of regular independent safety assessments at nuclear installations. The European initiative is, of course, underpinned by the vital work that the Agency has carried out in this area for many years. It is our hope that the implementation of the new

Directive will prove to genuinely enhance nuclear safety across Europe. Ireland will continue to seek stronger regulations and standards in Europe and worldwide, in recognition of the potential risks that one nation's nuclear industry imposes on its neighbours.

### **Shipping**

As I've mentioned, Ireland shares a common marine environment with other member states. As regards shipments of nuclear materials, 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 by our Government and our agencies in the unlikely event of an accident.

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.

Ireland uses the forum of the IAEA to bring this message to the table and engage in shipping and coastal states meetings. We would like to offer our thanks to the United Kingdom for organising this year's meeting, and to Japan and Panama as its hosts.

### **Technical Co-operation Fund**

Madam President,

In the coming century, we anticipate that nuclear technology will continue to spread beyond its conventional use in the generation of energy and will impact on our daily lives in increasingly sophisticated ways. This will increase the range of roles and complexity of challenges facing the IAEA. Ireland believes that the Agency will meet the demands of these emerging technologies, and greatly values and supports the pioneering work and high quality of research of the Agency to date 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 support these goals.

### **Nuclear Security Fund**

We welcome the progress achieved under the Nuclear Security Plan 2006-2009, and the approval by the Board of Governors of the Nuclear Security Plan for 2010-2013. Ireland once again commends the work of the Agency on matters of Nuclear Security and welcomes the priorities identified in it and other related documents such as the completion of a comprehensive set of guidance, facilitating adherence to and implementation of the legal framework. Ireland has supported this work through

voluntary contributions to the Nuclear Security Fund since its inception. We particularly welcome the special attention that will be given to providing assistance to newcomer States planning to use nuclear power in their energy mix. This reflects what is, in our view, the greatest strength of the Agency: the sharing of knowledge and experience and the nurturing of a culture of constant improvement through peer review.

### **The Future of the Agency**

Madam President,

Ireland welcomes the debate on the future of the Agency. We feel that a review of the roles and objectives of the IAEA is both timely and necessary in a world that has changed considerably since the Agency's founding. The advances in technology both in the field of energy production and beyond, and the wider application of nuclear technology in the industrial, healthcare and agricultural sectors present new challenges that the Agency will have to adapt to meet.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is likely to see a greatly expanded and more dispersed use of nuclear technologies, and with this wider dispersal may come new risks and new threats to safety and security. It is vital that the IAEA is in a position to meet the challenges of the coming century, and the review of the Future of the Agency is an important first step in preparing the Agency to be equal to those demands.

Ireland does not regard this process as an opportunity to deconstruct or to reconstruct the Agency, but rather to strengthen and amend existing structures to enable more effective and efficient operations.

We welcome the fact that the process is informal and open-ended, and open to all Member States. Ireland would like to thank former Chair of the process Ambassador Kauppi for her dedication and hard work in this, as well as the new Chair, Ambassador Guerreiro. The debate thus far has been engaging and productive and held in very open and positive spirit, which gives me great hope for its conclusions, and for the future of the Agency itself.

### **Closing remarks**

I have set out Ireland's hopes and expectations for this General Conference, and the work of the Agency as a whole. To reiterate: we believe that the IAEA's role in helping to maintain international peace and security is as vital today as it has been at any stage in its fifty two year existence. 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.

Thank you, Madam President.