

Statement

Korea, Republic of



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International Atomic Energy Agency

1. Introduction

Madam President,

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude for having the opportunity to participate in the 53rd General Conference of the IAEA. On behalf of the Korean delegation, I would also like to welcome all the distinguished delegates from the Member States.

Madam President,

Allow me to extend my congratulations to you for being elected as the President of the 53rd General Conference of the IAEA.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express my sincere respect and appreciation to Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei for his excellent leadership and contributions for the last 12 years to the Agency and to the promotion of peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Agency and the Member States will long value and acknowledge his outstanding achievements.

My sincere congratulations extend to the incoming Director General, Ambassador Amano. I am quite confident that the Agency will take advantage of Ambassador Amano's outstanding leadership and valuable experiences in enhancing security and peace in the world of nuclear energy.

2. Designation of the "Day of Nuclear Energy"

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

Around the world, people are turning to nuclear energy as the best foreseeable option to meet the growing needs of energy while mitigating the environmental concerns.

If we are to be successful in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while building more nuclear power plants, it is essential that we establish and maintain relevant infrastructures to deal with the issues surrounding nuclear safety, safeguards, and human resources development.

In addition to the infrastructure, we also need to secure a stable supply of nuclear fuel and improve our ability to dispose of nuclear waste in a safe and environmental friendly manner.

Thus, the role of the IAEA becomes critically important. It is noteworthy that the Agency has undertaken projects for addressing infrastructure requirements for those Member States that are considering the introduction of nuclear power.

The Korean government is willing to support the efforts of the IAEA by sharing our 50 years of experiences in the construction and management of nuclear power plants as well as in training and educating nuclear experts and professionals.

Today, I would like to propose that the IAEA designate a "Day of the Nuclear Energy". By celebrating the "Day of the Nuclear Energy," we will be able to promote to instill public confidence in the benefits of nuclear energy which is environment-friendly and safe.

It will also enable to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by facilitating exchange of experience and knowledge among the Member States.

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

For this purpose, I believe international cooperation is essential if we are to expand the use of nuclear energy around the world.

Moreover, in order to reduce the development cost and time while lowering the chances of failure, we need to share our information and experience in bilateral and multilateral context while building partnerships with international bodies.

One issue that we need to resolve, for example, is the problem of spent fuel accumulated from 20 nuclear power reactors in Korea.

We believe our current capacity for temporary storage will be saturated by 2016. In order to solve the issue of spent fuel management, Korea is considering various options that include the R&D of advanced fuel cycle technologies which is corresponding to the proliferation resistant purposes, while being committed to achieving the goal of global non-proliferation.

We believe that we need international cooperation to solve this important issue.

3. Education and Technology Cooperation

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

We believe that human resource development is vital to the successful introduction of nuclear programs.

Today, Korea is able to execute successful construction and operation of nuclear power plants. This was possible because of Korea's strong emphasis on human resources and the technical cooperation and training programs from the Agency and international community.

I especially believe that the IAEA technical cooperation program is enormously contributing to the improvement of nuclear capabilities of the Member States.

Korea has benefited tremendously from the Agency's technical cooperation program since 1961 which allowed us to take giant steps in nuclear technology development. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the Agency's support and cooperation.

Korea will take an active role as a donor country of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation from 2010 in order to return what we've received. I believe that now Korea can share its accumulated experience and knowledge with other countries.

In this connection, the Korean government will start contributing to the Extra Budgetary from 2010 so that Korea can fully support the Member States' training and education efforts especially in the countries embarking on nuclear energy.

4. Non-proliferation and Safeguards

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

The growing use of nuclear energy demands our commitment to nuclear nonproliferation now more than ever. We face imminent and grave challenges from nuclear proliferation, illicit trafficking of sensitive nuclear material, possible nuclear terrorism by non-state actors and noncompliance with safeguards obligations.

Given such circumstances, it is crucial that we achieve universality of and compliance with the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol.

Taking this opportunity, we would like to call upon those states which have not yet signed, ratified or acceded to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol to do so without any further delay.

At the same time, we request that the Agency offer more incentives to the states that adhere to their legal obligations on nonproliferation and safeguards.

While the Republic of Korea has expanded its use of nuclear energy, its policies have also consistently prioritized peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Korean Government has faithfully implemented the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol, and we will continue to make efforts to strengthen the legal and institutional framework of our national nuclear energy control system.

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

On the contrary, the DPRK's development of nuclear weapons is an absolutely unacceptable act of provocation, which threatens the peace and stability in Northeast Asia and undermines the foundation of the international non-proliferation regime.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the international community's condemnation of the DPRK's second nuclear test through the adoption of the UN Security Council resolution 1874 and implementation of extensive sanctions against the DPRK.

The Republic of Korea also emphasizes the necessity of continuing to faithfully implement this resolution through close international cooperation. It is the unified position of the countries concerned that the North Korean nuclear issue must be resolved in a peaceful manner through the Six-Party Talks.

It is our belief that the IAEA plays an important role in the denuclearization process of the DPRK and we hope that the Agency will resume its substantial efforts in areas such as monitoring and verification at the earliest possible date.

5. Nuclear Safety

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

Korea is committed to honoring international treaties, standards, and

guidelines related to nuclear safeguards, safety and security as well as in strengthening cooperation with the international community.

To ensure safety of our nuclear power plants, we are in full compliance with international standards and requirements including the overall safety review of the IAEA Operational Safety Review Team (OSART).

In celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Kori-1, the first nuclear power plant in Korea, the Korean government voluntarily organized a "Special Safety Review Team" composed of experts from within and outside of Korea to comprehensively examine the safety of the 20 nuclear power plants in operation in Korea.

Hopefully, we may be witnessing the coming of a nuclear renaissance in the world as a growing number of countries are expressing their interests in nuclear programs.

In this context, it is essential that we support the building of proper nuclear infrastructures with a strong emphasis on nuclear safety and safeguards.

In order to facilitate the sharing of experiences on nuclear safety between those experienced in nuclear energy and those from emerging nuclear countries, the Republic of Korea will hold an International Forum on the Nuclear Safety Infrastructure in 2010 with an expected attendance by cabinet members from around the world.

We respectfully ask the Director General and the Member States of the IAEA to give us full support and cooperation in organizing this international event.

6. Closing

Madam President & Distinguished Delegates,

The role and responsibility of the Agency is more important today than any other time in human history.

In the last 50 years, the Republic of Korea has been able to accumulate knowledge and experience in the areas of R&D, safety regulation, safeguards and human resource development, as well as building and managing the nuclear power plants.

With the knowledge and experience we have thus far accumulated, we intend to strengthen our relations with the IAEA and the Member States to achieve our goal of promoting peaceful use of nuclear power in the world.

Thank you very much.