

**IAEA 53. GENERAL CONFERENCE, 14 September – 18 September 2009**

**Statement by Slovenia**

**delivered by Mr. Andrej Stritar, Director, Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration**

Madam President,

I would like to begin by congratulating you on your election as the President of 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the IAEA General Conference. In wishing you every success in this task I want to assure you and other members of the Secretariat full support of my delegation. I also extend my congratulations to all other elected General Conference officers and, Madam President, I am convinced that you will steer this conference to a successful conclusion.

It is my honour and pleasure that I can commend on behalf of my entire delegation to the Director General and the Secretariat for their effort in preparing for this session and for all the diligent work in the past year.

On behalf of Slovenian Government and on my personal behalf I would like to commend the outgoing IAEA Director General Dr. Mohammad ElBaradei for his diligent and tireless work and for everything what he achieved while steering the IAEA through three terms of office. Especially I would like to mention his willingness for cooperation and his optimism in trying to find solutions in situations where the others gave up. I admire his patience in and persistence during difficult negotiations he had to have as the IAEA Director General. In 2005 Dr. ElBaradei and the IAEA were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which was the recognition of the international community that the direction he chose and his decisions were right.

On behalf of my delegation I would like to welcome Mr. Yukiya Amano, the incoming IAEA Director General, and I would like to wish him every success in the position he is going to assume. The tasks before the IAEA are tremendous and his position requires a man with a clear vision and enormous energy. On behalf of Slovenia I can assure Mr. Amano all support and cooperation in discharging his duty.

Slovenia joins the previous speakers in welcoming the application for membership of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of Rwanda.

I associate myself fully with the statement delivered by the distinguished Mrs. Åsa-Britt Karlsson, State Secretary for Environment of Sweden, on behalf of the EU. Therefore I shall limit myself only to the matters of particular interest for Slovenia.

Madam President,

The IAEA role in preventing misuse of nuclear materials is widely recognized and its final goal is preventing spread of nuclear weapons. The IAEA, as the organisation, has accumulated more than fifty years of verification activities inspections, which are respected as impartial and independent activities. The Safeguards Implementation Report for 2008 concludes that eighty-four States have comprehensive safeguards agreements with additional protocols in force, which is an increase by two from the previous year. The Slovenian position remains that a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement together with an Additional Protocol should be considered as the contemporary verification standard. Therefore we urge Member States, which do not have a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement in force and those who are hesitant about concluding an Additional Protocol, to do so without delay. Slovenia also supports progress in strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards. The integrated safeguards has been implemented in only about 25 countries so far, Slovenia being amongst them.

In my delegation's view the threat of nuclear or other radioactive material, which could be used in malicious acts, remains high and it should be addressed in a timely manner in order to minimize potential consequences. We consider this threat of being a serious risk to society and environment. Thus we recognize the IAEA's work in the area of nuclear security as indispensable to prevent, as well as to detect and respond to nuclear terrorism. We were glad to learn that in the evaluation of the Agency's Nuclear Security Programme carried out in November 2007 almost 90% of those Member States responding to the survey were either satisfied or very satisfied with the Agency's work. Nevertheless, the responsibility for nuclear security rests with the Member States, who should work hand in hand with the Agency to strengthen non-proliferation, nuclear verification and export controls. In addition, I would like to mention that Slovenia ratified the amended Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear

Materials, which creates an obligation to criminalise acts of sabotage against nuclear facilities and materials including trafficking in nuclear materials.

Madam President,

I would like to draw your attention to some specific issues of technical co-operation. Slovenia attaches great importance and is fully committed to support the IAEA Technical Co-operation (TC) activities. In the last year Slovenia acted as the host country for three IAEA regional workshops, training courses and seminars, as well as Slovenian organisations and institutions trained the IAEA fellows from different developing countries in the total duration of thirty months. Since 2006 Slovenian experts have been active in the ambitious project to assist Serbia in the decommissioning of nuclear objects, so called VIND project (Vinča Institute Nuclear Decommissioning). The Slovenian assistance was mainly directed to the Serbian regulator, which needs to issue a licence for the repackaging and transport of spent fuel from the Vinča RA Research Reactor. In 2009 the scope of assistance comprised on-site visits, the workshop in Ljubljana, the review of Final Safety Analysis Report, drafting of the licence conditions and consultations about spent fuel transport to Russia.

Madam President,

I will turn now to the international nuclear and radiation emergency preparedness. Slovenia recognizes the effort made by the IAEA Secretariat to improve and strengthen the emergency preparedness and response in Member States. The IAEA Incident and Emergency Centre maintains the Joint Radiation Emergency Management Plan of the International Organizations and acts as the focal point for international preparedness, communication and response to nuclear and radiological incidents. Slovenian organizations offered its participation in the Response Assistance Network (RANET) under which Member States, parties to the Emergency Conventions and relevant international organizations are able to register their response capabilities. We are glad that RANET is becoming more and more popular among Member States, recognizing RANET as a useful network and sending a clear message that no country should be left alone in case of an emergency. In the absence of real emergency events, we all wish they would never occur, the exercises are an important tool to test emergency response capability. The ConvEx exercises are widely appreciated by the Member States and Slovenia successfully takes part in these exercises. The ConvEx exercises range

from simple communication and response tests to the full operation of the information exchange mechanism worldwide. In the light of the emerging security threats it is necessary for these exercises to include also a security component.

Slovenia can report about positive experiences with our system for prevention of illicit trafficking of radioactive materials in scrap metal, which was significantly improved in 2008 to strengthen the national control over orphan sources, which may appear in any shipment coming from domestic suppliers or from abroad. During the year 2008 86,000 shipments were monitored by the scrap metal importers and metal reprocessing plants. There were two findings at scrap yards involving radioactive sources, but there were no adverse events presenting a threat to workers or the population.

Madam President,

For the time being our main goals are associated with the continuation of safe operation of the existing nuclear capacities. Since 2005 the Krško NPP has not experienced any reactor trip, neither automatic nor manual one. The programme of the next Periodic Safety Review, which is due to be finished in 2013, has been submitted to the regulator. Ageing management programme has been finished and the life extension activities are ranked high on the operator's agenda. In this regard, we consider the international experience and information exchange can significantly contribute to maintaining high level of nuclear safety. The Krško NPP has an excellent operating record maintaining its share of almost 40% of electrical power supplied to the electrical grid, in spite the total production, including hydro and thermal power, has increased in recent years.

Due to phase out of older thermal power plants in the next decade it is expected that some new units will be added to the Slovenian fleet of electrical power plants. A new nuclear power plant is still considered as a possible solution, although other energy options are competing to provide for the power, which will be needed in the nearest future. The advantages of the nuclear energy are numerous, such as reliability, large units, low operational costs, negligible greenhouse gas emissions, although the disadvantages are large initial investment and long, as well as complicated licensing and construction phase. Nevertheless, nuclear remains a viable option of the Slovenian current and future energy mix. With development of new and safer nuclear power plant designs this energy is going to be even more attractive. Slovenian nuclear

related organizations are seriously considering engaging in new renaissance in nuclear power production.

In Slovenia the process of siting of the repository for low and intermediate level radioactive waste is just before the completion. A major step occurred in July this year when the Krško municipality council approved the amendment to National Spatial Plan for the repository location at Vrbina site. Therefore the local community after long debates and public hearings agreed to have repository in their municipality. This was an important milestone and the conclusion of the long-lasting process, when all municipalities in Slovenia were invited to offer a possible repository site on their respective territories. After the National Spatial Plan for the repository is adopted by the Government, the application for construction can be filed.

Madam President,

Slovenia attaches the utmost importance to a high level of nuclear safety worldwide. The Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management are recognised as incentive conventions and the whole review process including the meeting of the contracting parties itself represents a mechanism to influence and maintain a high level of nuclear safety. An analysis of the Convention on Nuclear Safety issues has revealed that many of the issues appeared to be quite country-specific and after fourth Convention on Nuclear Safety review meetings the time has come to try to introduce some changes to make review process more efficient. Slovenia welcomes the first extraordinary meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety contracting parties and wishes that the rule changes submitted for the adoption would meet the expectations of the contracting parties. My delegation would like to highlight the importance of continuous safety improvement and promoting international co-operation regarding safety related matters also outside of the framework set by the above conventions. Also bilateral relations, based on the agreements or informal ones, can be utilized to exchange information which can resolve many safety related issues in the countries which do not have as much operational experience as the countries with the large number of operating nuclear reactors.

In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to mention a widespread use of radiation techniques in medicine. The advances in medical imaging and therapy equipment provide

better treatment methods for patients, but radiation protection needs not to be neglected. UNSCEAR estimates that the dose to the world population due to medical diagnostics rose of over 70% in less than a decade. We are aware of growing use of medical radiation techniques and of their benefits, but also medical exposures need to be justified and optimized. The exchange of information and sharing the experience among practitioners should be encouraged, as well as strengthening the regulatory oversight of patients' exposures.

Madam President,

Let me assure you of Slovenia's continued support for the IAEA. I wish to sincerely thank to the outgoing Director General and the Secretariat for their competent and devoted work to fulfil the Agency's statutory obligations.

Thank you, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates for your attention.