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(General Debate)

Statement by

**Mr W. Steinmann
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Governor of Switzerland**

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Madam President,

The Swiss delegation heartily congratulates you on your election as president of the 53rd session of the General Conference of the IAEA and wishes to assure you of its full cooperation in the exercise of your functions. It is especially pleased to welcome the presence here of the Kingdom of Cambodia and of the Republic of Rwanda as new member States of the IAEA.

From an overall perspective, we are all happy to note that since the General Conference last year there have been some encouraging signs especially in the area of nuclear disarmament, in particular:

- The commitment undertaken by President Obama and President Medvedev at their meeting in London on 1 April 2009 "to achieving a nuclear-free world" – I quote the actual wording of the statement published on this occasion. This commitment was substantiated notably by the adoption of the "Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty" that was signed by President Obama and President Medvedev at their meeting in Moscow last July.
- The constructive atmosphere surrounding the work of the 3rd session of the PrepCom of the NPT Review Conference last May in New York.
- The acceptance, on 29 May 2009, of the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva – a development that has considerably restored the confidence of the international community in the multilateral mechanisms.

These developments should be followed closely, all the more so since – with regard to some of them – there could be some interesting implications for the IAEA.

However, it has to be noted that as far as regional issues are concerned, developments have unfortunately not been as satisfactory. In the area of nuclear verification, there are still many uncertainties and indications that nuclear programmes could have a military dimension. It is therefore important that the Agency be able to carry out all the required verifications.

Concerning these regional files, Switzerland sees no other way out of these crises than the diplomatic channel. This is why we call on all parties to seize the opportunities presented

to them even if they do not immediately correspond to their expectations. It is important to embark on a dialogue.

Madam President,

In the context of the Agency's activities, we would like to emphasise our satisfaction regarding the debate in progress concerning its future. Although we are still far from the conclusion, the fact that we are able to discuss freely and openly questions that concern us all enables us to better understand each other's point of view and thus to improve our ability to find compromises when the need arises.

Regarding the multilateral approaches to the fuel cycle, these have provoked intense discussion. Since the report published in 2005 by the IAEA Group of Experts, the work of reflection on this issue has however been unable to shake off a certain malaise. These discussions should never be allowed to lead to attempts by the States in possession of sensitive nuclear technologies to put a brake on the technological progress made by the non-nuclear States on the pretext of the need to fight nuclear proliferation. The free use of nuclear technologies – in accordance with the inalienable rights provided for in the NPT – must not be called into question. For many, the main motive of these initiatives are based on economic considerations. And it is true to say that the exception accorded to India by the NSG in August 2008 delivered a blow to confidence in the notion of a fair non-proliferation system and has tainted these discussions with bitter arguments about double standards. Moreover, in the absence of real progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, we are running the risk that these discussions will always be seen as premature by many non-nuclear states. Consequently, Switzerland supports any initiative to reassure the latter of their rights.

Madam President,

I would now like to address some issues of a more technical nature.

My delegation is satisfied with the financial accounts submitted for 2008 as well as the auditor's report, and it takes this opportunity to thank the Department of Administration and the Auditor for their contribution to the good functioning of the Agency.

On several occasions in the last few years, we have asked that efforts be made to ensure that all expenses be kept within the ordinary budget, and, after various exceptions, we expect future increases in the budget to remain limited to offsetting inflation both for the

ordinary budget and for the budget for technical co-operation. However, the budget presented for 2010, which was accepted by consensus last summer, does not show any real improvement in this respect. Nevertheless, we must note the creation of a fund for the main investors, which marks a first step towards the development of a modern and transparent policy on the management of real estate and the materials needed by the Agency. It now remains to introduce this fund into the ordinary budget so that it properly reflects a shared commitment, financed by all, and not only that of a handful of States.

My delegation also notes the decision to form a working group charged with the task of proposing a budget for 2011 on the basis of priorities still to be defined. In view of the many discussions on the budget that have taken place in the last few years, our bet is that this will not be an easy task! However, my delegation can assure you of its active and committed participation. Indeed, we attach high importance both to the inclusion in the ordinary budget of all the costs and investments linked with the statutory tasks of the Agency and to rigorous planning. Finally, my delegation notes with satisfaction that a first measure to protect the financial resources earmarked for activities in technical co-operation has been taken through the request for contributions in two different currencies.

My delegation also gives high priority both to the Agency's promotional activities and to efforts in the area of technical co-operation. It notes that the payment of contributions has been satisfactory and that as a result interest in the Agency's programme remains intact in spite of the financial crisis affecting the economies of many States. At this point, we would like to reaffirm our full agreement with the application of the principle of the cost of national participation by project as well as with that asking for the development of a national framework programme. For us, these are important factors for ensuring the efficient implementation of our technical co-operation programme and for enabling the Agency to make a more useful contribution to the achievement of our objectives for the millennium.

My delegation is satisfied with the annual report on the application of safeguards, in particular the fact that the Agency has pointed out that within the group of States with comprehensive safeguard agreements in place, nuclear materials have remained within the field of civilian use. We call on all States parties to the NPT that have not put

comprehensive safeguard agreements in place to do so. In the area of integrated safeguards, my delegation asks the Secretariat to concentrate its attention on the analysis of overall cost reductions that the progressive application of integrated safeguards entails both for the Agency and for the countries concerned. We recall that the reduction of verification costs was one of the declared purposes of the introduction of the additional Protocol. Finally, like other delegations, we would like to receive from the Department of Safeguards a proposal to focus verification efforts on those installations that receive nuclear materials and thus create large risks in terms of proliferation.

Madam President,

At risk of repeating myself, my delegation considers that it would be useful if the Agency were to recall and explain its role and responsibilities in the areas of safety and security as well as the roles and responsibilities incumbent on the host-state of a nuclear installation and on its owner. These distinctions are not always clear in public opinion, and we think it would be undesirable if false expectations were to develop in the general public concerning the Agency's role.

Before concluding, I would like to inform you about developments in the field of nuclear energy in Switzerland.

The first concerns the road map to the creation of deposits in deep geological layers. The road map was accepted last year by the Swiss Federal Government following consultations with the parties concerned both in Switzerland and abroad, and the plan is now being put into action on a progressive basis.

The second concerns the age and future of Switzerland's five nuclear reactors, the oldest of which has been in operation for 40 years. We consider that the three oldest of these power plants should be decommissioned after 50 years of service. The question now arises as to their replacement. However, before the decision to build new ones goes ahead, a referendum will be held, probably in 2012, to obtain the approval of the Swiss electorate.

To conclude, I would like to draw your attention to a statistic: To date Switzerland's five nuclear power plants have generated 750 billion kWh of electricity. This production corresponds to the production of some 600 Mt of CO₂, that is more than 15 years of Switzerland's total CO₂ emissions.

I would like to conclude by thanking the members of the IAEA secretariat and the Director-General, Mr El-Baradei, for the high quality of their work and above all for their dedication to the fundamental objectives of the IAEA. I would like to emphasise our admiration for the independence and the courage that the Director-General has shown in the last 12 years, that have been very rich in political events. Such essential qualities have enabled him to lead the Agency through the turbulence of the last few years. In expressing our deep appreciation of his commitment, we would like wish him every possible success in facing the challenges ahead.

Thank you, Madam President.