

**Statement by the Head of the Australian delegation, Ambassador  
Michael Potts, Governor and Permanent Representative to the  
International Atomic Energy Agency, to the 55<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the  
IAEA General Conference**

**20 September 2011**

Mr President

My delegation congratulates you on your election. We have every confidence that, under your leadership, the Conference will be given every opportunity to reach successful outcomes on all its agenda items.

Our thoughts continue to be with Japan and its people as it continues to cope with the aftermath of the terrible natural disasters in March this year. We are humbled by the courage of those emergency workers who dealt with the Fukushima emergency and continue to strive to overcome its ongoing effects.

The Fukushima accident, occurring in this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Chernobyl accident, reminds us of the importance of nuclear safety.

We welcome the Director General's prompt action and initiatives regarding nuclear safety in the wake of Fukushima. We are pleased to have been able to participate in the Ministerial Conference in June and to have some of our proposals for improving nuclear safety, and securing public confidence in those measures, reflected in the Ministerial Declaration and adopted in the Director General's Action Plan formulated as a result of the Conference.

We welcome the consensus approval of the Director General's Action Plan last week by the Board of Governors and urge this Conference to also endorse the Plan by consensus. By doing so the member states of the IAEA will send a message of unity and purpose concerning the priority we attach to achieving the highest possible standards in regard to nuclear safety.

Events this year have demonstrated that we cannot rest in our past efforts to improve nuclear safety. We look forward to reports on the effective implementation by the Secretariat and Member States of the Action Plan, and to further opportunities to develop and secure agreement to measures for enhancing safety and ensuring transparency within the process.

While Australia strongly supports the Action Plan, we do not view it as an exhaustive list of actions on nuclear safety. We encourage States to be proactive in undertaking additional actions that are relevant to their own circumstances and to ensure that adequate resources are made available.

We would like to highlight and promote the use of the suite of international peer review missions that are available to Member States through the IAEA, including but not limited to IRRS, OSART and SCART. Furthermore, Australia emphasises the need for the international community to support international fact-finding missions, and asks the IAEA to develop mechanisms by which such missions can be deployed rapidly and efficiently.

We must also continue to strengthen the role and capacity of the IAEA to fulfil its obligations in regard to emergency preparedness and response.

Australia also notes that the IAEA Safety Series is being reviewed, and continues to stress the importance of the Safety Series to guide efforts to increase nuclear, transport, radiation and waste safety worldwide.

Australia also supports the close cooperation between the IAEA and the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) in assessing the consequences of the Fukushima accident and is pleased to coordinate the assessment of public health and environmental effects through its safety regulator, ARPANSA.

We also note that safety measures are not the only elements required to properly protect people and the environment. We emphasise the close connection between safety and security-related measures.

Mr President

I turn now to the issue of **Safeguards and Verification**. All member states of the agency must work to ensure an effective safeguards system which provides assurances of the correctness and completeness of a State's declarations concerning the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities – a system that we can all continue to have confidence in. Such a system provides the basic foundation for nuclear trade and cooperation, security and a base for continuing progress on nuclear disarmament.

It remains vital that, to be effective, a safeguards system must have universal coverage. We continue to call upon all those NPT states which have yet to fulfil their obligations under the Treaty to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements without delay. Australia has long emphasised the importance of universalisation of the NPT. We encourage those states that have not signed and ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible. Full compliance with safeguards on all peaceful nuclear activities is an essential step towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Australia is honoured by the nomination of Ambassador Peter Woolcott to chair the 2012 Preparatory Committee to the 2015 NPT Review Conference and looks forward to working with all NPT States Parties towards a successful Preparatory Committee meeting in Vienna next year.

Australia welcomes the Agency's efforts to promote safeguards. We will continue to

work with the Agency in using regional and bilateral opportunities to encourage all countries to implement effective safeguards.

The **Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network** held its 2<sup>nd</sup> plenary meeting in the Republic of Korea from 5-7 July 2011. We thank the Agency for joining and contributing to that meeting. Australia, as chair of the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network will continue to work with the Agency to improve and strengthen safeguards implementation as well as the overall non-proliferation regime in the Asia-Pacific region. In this respect, Australia is working with the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network in drafting a paper on the fundamentals and good practices of state systems of accountancy and control. It will comprise the experiences and lessons learnt of the community of Asia-Pacific nations that make up the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network, and will complement the work of the Agency on safeguards implementation guidelines. The Network's statement of principles is published as IAEA information circular INFCIRC/769.

Mr President

Safeguards Support Programs are an important means for member states to support the Agency in developing safeguards techniques and approaches. The **Australian Safeguards Support Program** (ASSP) has been in place since 1980 and has made valuable contributions to areas such as: analytical services for environmental sampling; remote monitoring; training; and analytical and concepts work. In this regard, I am pleased to note a new safeguards support program task that Australia has recently taken on. The University of Western Australia is in the process of qualifying its large-geometry ion microprobe for isotopic analysis of uranium-bearing particles to become a member of the Agency's Network of Analytical Laboratories (NWAL).

Mr President

The major technical challenge faced by the safeguards system is the need to ensure **credible verification** – to provide confidence that safeguards are effective to detect both misuse of declared facilities and the existence of undeclared facilities.

Australia was the first state to sign and then first to ratify an **Additional Protocol**. The combination of a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an Additional Protocol assists states in assuring others of the peaceful intent of their nuclear activities. Every state benefits from a safeguards system that is as effective as possible, and the Additional Protocol is an essential component in ensuring the maximum effectiveness of that system. Australia strongly encourages those states yet to sign, ratify and implement an Additional Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

States must comply with their safeguards obligations. IAEA safeguards obligations are not voluntary. Such obligations include those under the NPT, where non-nuclear weapons states have made a commitment to each other to use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes. We must keep that commitment and hold each other to account for any violations.

Mr President

It is a matter of continuing regret that certain states continue to be in breach of their safeguards obligations.

**Iran** continues to defy binding UN Security Council Resolutions and IAEA Board requirements. We share increasingly serious concerns about the mounting evidence of the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program. We look forward to the Director General setting out in greater detail the basis for the Agency's concerns in this regard. We again encourage Iran to comply with UN Security Council resolutions and engage with the Agency to resolve all issues, and demonstrate conclusively the peaceful intent of its nuclear program.

We continue to urge **Syria** to act quickly to implement the Resolution adopted by the Board on 9 June 2011. We welcome Syria's offer of cooperation with the Agency to resolve all outstanding safeguards issues and again ask Syria to engage positively and substantively with the Agency on these matters. Australia requests the Director General to continue reporting to the Board as appropriate.

**North Korea** continues to be in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations and to act in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions. Australia continues to urge the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons and its nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and to comply with its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations. We support the Agency in continuing to maintain its readiness to play an essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme.

Mr President

Australia has long supported the establishment of a **Middle East** zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Full compliance with their non-proliferation obligations by all states in the Middle East is critical to building mutual confidence and security in the region.

It is important to continue our efforts to build on the outcomes from the NPT Review Conference, including agreement to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the Director General's initiative to convene a Middle East Forum on this issue in November this year. We will work with others to ensure both the success of the Forum itself by sharing our experiences in relation to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, and position the Forum as a positive step towards the broader goal of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. At this critical time we encourage all states to avoid any actions that might disrupt progress towards reaching such a valuable and important goal.

Mr President

Australia continues to work closely with the Agency and our regional neighbours with regard to **nuclear safety and security**.

As a major uranium producer and exporter holding some 30-40% of the world's uranium resources, we are committed to the safe and environmentally sound mining, processing and transport of uranium, and proudly carry a strong record in these areas. Signifying this commitment, Australia has established an informal Vienna-based contact group for existing and prospective uranium mining countries, with an easy to remember acronym of **FORUM** (Friends of Responsible Uranium Mining), as a means of exchanging views and experiences with regard to best practice mining of uranium.

In addition, we are pleased again this year to be able to host a side-event during the General Conference on the topic of "Integrated approaches to effective controls for uranium mining by government and industry". This is the fourth successive year of this uranium side-event, which has proved to be successful, and we look forward to hosting the event again next year.

Australia values its cooperation with the Agency in the Regional Radiological Security Partnership for South-East Asia. Over the past eight years, the Partnership – bringing together the IAEA, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), the US Global Threat Reduction Initiative and our regional partners in South-East Asia and the Pacific - has strengthened the security of radioactive sources in the region. We are particularly looking forward to the biennial review meeting to be held in the Philippines in January 2012.

We attach great importance to capability development in nuclear security, particularly nuclear forensic science. We will continue to support international efforts in method standardisation, development of nuclear forensic libraries, common lexicon and training. We look forward to hosting an Asia-Pacific training workshop on Radiological Crime Scene Management and Nuclear Forensics in February 2012.

We continue to attach great importance to the safe, timely and reliable **transport of radioactive materials**, which are essential to industry and to medical, scientific and industrial applications. The issue of timely and reliable transport has been recognised as a key issue and Australia continues to support international efforts to address this issue. We look forward to consideration of this issue at next month's International Conference on the Safe and Secure Transport of Radioactive Material.

Mr President

Australia, through the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), is continuing to expand production of molybdenum 99 for nuclear medicine through its fully LEU-based OPAL reactor fuel and targets. In doing so, Australia is

contributing to the worldwide supply of radiopharmaceuticals while advancing global nuclear non-proliferation efforts through practical advances towards minimising the civilian use of HEU.

In relation to nuclear applications, Australia restates the right of IAEA members to enjoy the benefits of **peaceful uses of nuclear energy** in accordance with their international obligations. Through ANSTO, Australia shares its skilled scientific research base with other member states, and facilitates the use and exchange of equipment and personnel in fields relevant to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. In this regard, we note that ANSTO continues to have its state-of-the-art neutron beam facilities at the OPAL reactor designated as an IAEA Collaborating Centre for Neutron Scattering Applications; a facility from which Member States in our region benefit.

In addition to sharing these skills and materials, we are consistently ranked among the top contributors to the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund, providing substantial contributions to the Agency's efforts to share the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Australia also continues with its leading role in the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for the Asia and the Pacific (RCA), including on projects covering radiation protection and health care.

In this regard, I am pleased to recall that in the spirit of the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative, which has the goal of raising an additional \$100 million in extra-budgetary contributions, Australia contributed A\$100,000 to the IAEA for the "Marine Benchmark Study on the Possible Impact of the Fukushima Radioactive Releases in the Asia Pacific Region" which was approved by the June Board meeting. We were pleased to host the initial project meeting for the Study in Sydney from 29 August to 2 September.

Mr President

While the events at Fukushima are very much still in our minds, this Conference is nonetheless an annual opportunity to take stock of the work of the Agency and to evaluate its contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. While over the next year the Agency will face many challenges, a number of which I have outlined today, my delegation is confident that the Agency has the capacity and the resilience to meet the objectives outlined in its Charter and to contribute to a better world.

Thank you.