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NTI Pledges \$1.2 Million to IAEA for Nuclear Material Protection

In a move to strengthen global efforts to secure vulnerable nuclear material, Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) President Charles Curtis announced today in Vienna, Austria, a pledge of \$1.2 million to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The grant will expand the Agency's ability to review security for nuclear facilities worldwide, identify needed security upgrades, and organize contributions from member states to carry out the upgrades.

Describing the international community's investment in nuclear security as "grossly inadequate to address the dangers we face," Mr. Curtis said that "zero growth budgets at IAEA widen the gap between the nuclear threat and our global response."

Highlighting what he called "a quiet crisis" facing IAEA, Mr. Curtis noted that "during 15 years of zero real growth in the IAEA's safeguards budget, the number of states who are part of the nonproliferation regime, the number of safeguarded facilities in those states, and the amount of plutonium and HEU requiring safeguards have all increased dramatically.

"This rising supply of weapons materials matches the rising demand for the materials by terrorist groups of global reach and substantial wealth. IAEA is the only international institution of global scope devoted to controlling access to weapons-usable material. There is little hope that we can build an effective global system to secure nuclear material from terrorists without an effective and well-financed safeguards system at its foundation."

Mr. Curtis underscored the important role IAEA plays in preventing terrorists from developing nuclear or radiological weapons, saying that "we are now in a new arms race; terrorists and certain rogue states are racing to get weapons of mass destruction, and we are racing to stop them." He said that the September 11th attacks show that terrorists no longer recognize any boundaries when it comes to taking innocent lives. "Their capacity for killing," he said, "is limited only by the power of their weapons."

An autonomous organization under the United Nations established in 1957, the IAEA promotes scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. By conducting inspections at facilities containing radioactive materials, the IAEA verifies that States Parties to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty adhere to their treaty obligations. The IAEA is currently responsible for monitoring more than 900 facilities around the globe where radioactive materials are stored and utilized to ensure that no nuclear materials at those facilities are diverted to military use.

Established by CNN founder Ted Turner and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, NTI seeks to reduce the global threat from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.