

STATEMENT BY FINLAND

62nd General Conference of the IAEA

General Debate

H.E. Ambassador Hannu Kyröläinen

Resident Representative

Madam President,

Finland aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. I will make some remarks in my national capacity.

Let me start by congratulating you, Madam Žiaková, on the election as the President of the 62nd General Conference. I would like to express my gratitude to Director General Yukiya Amano for his devoted input to the work of the Agency, and wish him a speedy recovery. I also thank the Secretariat and IAEA staff for their professional and impartial work. Finland attaches great importance to equal opportunities for men and women in the Agency.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the NPT, assures an inalienable right of all states parties to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It also constitutes a framework for the IAEA safeguard system that is fundamental for maintaining confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear activities and for preventing nuclear proliferation.

Nuclear proliferation continues to pose a serious threat to international security. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with relevant UNSC resolutions and return to the NPT and to IAEA Safeguards at an early date. Signing and ratifying the CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty) would signal true commitment to non-testing.

The JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), agreed upon in July 2015, is an important milestone in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We deeply regret the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA. As part of the EU, Finland continues to fully commit to this crucial agreement. The Agency's role in verifying Iran's nuclear programme is fundamental. Finland has supported these efforts with annual contributions, amounting to 1.2 MEURO this year.

Thanks to the NPT and the Agency's safeguards system, nuclear energy and other peaceful technologies are available also to non-nuclear weapon states. For Finland, this has been very important indeed: We have benefited from nuclear energy and other applications for 40 years. Today, one third of our electricity is generated by nuclear power.

Nuclear technologies can bring enormous benefits to millions of people worldwide. They can play an important role in achieving sustainable development goals in a number of fields: energy, health, food and agriculture, water, to name a few. Nuclear power can help countries in assuring the security of their energy supply, as well as in reaching agreed emission targets. Finland is happy to support the IAEA Technical Cooperation programme, contributing to these important goals, through annual contributions.

Madam President,

It is clear that to fully benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies, states need to have the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards in place, and to commit fully to non-proliferation in line with NPT obligations. For Finland, these have always been guiding principles. We urge all states to show their commitment to non-proliferation, with maximal transparency, by signing and ratifying the Additional Protocol to the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements. The Additional Protocol constitutes the IAEA safeguards standard.

A sound legislative framework for nuclear and radiation safety, an independent, competent and well-resourced regulatory body, as well as responsible licensees are an essential foundation for the safe use of nuclear energy. This must be complemented by effective control of nuclear material and the fuel cycle, as well as a responsible nuclear waste management strategy.

Finland has invested considerably in developing national expertise to ensure the best possible safety, security and safeguards standards are in place. These are key principles also in our international cooperation on nuclear energy. Through our bilateral safeguards support program with the IAEA we have lent our expertise to the Agency and to the benefit of its member states, including to newcomer states – already for 30 years. Recently, nuclear security matters have gained more and more attention nationally and internationally. We were pleased to see Finland ranking first in preparedness against theft and sabotage in the 2018 Nuclear Security Index by Nuclear Threat Initiative.

We are committed to sharing our experience and know-how on nuclear safety, security and safeguards also on a bilateral basis, in accordance with the Vienna Declaration. Cooperation between the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority STUK and the nuclear authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia is a living example of this.

Our flagship project is the construction of the geological repository for spent nuclear fuel – a facility first of its kind in the world. This has brought the Finnish authorities, as well as the Agency, before new safety, security and safeguards challenges. We have tackled these challenges together from the very beginning; the safeguards concept is being developed in close technical cooperation with the IAEA and the European Commission. The IAEA State Level Approach (SLA), once finalised, will enable effective and cost efficient implementation of safeguards for the new facility.

Today, the rapid development of new technologies and digitalisation create vast opportunities also in the nuclear field. Small Modular Reactors can make nuclear energy available to many more uses and users. 3D-printing and augmented reality bring significant benefits to project management, engineering, design, maintenance and operations. However, new technologies are not without challenges. While exploiting new opportunities we must, in parallel, ensure the safety and security of their use. It is vital for the IAEA and the member states to provide resources and co-operation platforms timely.

To conclude, Madam President,

The development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy contains enormous potential, but also necessitates a high degree of responsibility from the states seeking to utilise it. Here, too, the NPT is our prime frame of reference and the essential foundation for all our work. I want to thank the IAEA for its work in this regard, and assure our continuous support to the Agency's valuable work in promoting safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology.