

Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Jackie Wolcott at the IAEA Virtual Event for the 10th Anniversary of the Peaceful Uses Initiative

November 9, 2020

Vienna, Austria

Virtual WebEx Platform

[event in progress]

MODERATOR: Excellency, the United States proposed and has nurtured the PUI for the last ten years. What made the United States propose the PUI at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and how has it been supporting it since?

AMBASSADOR WOLCOTT: Good afternoon, Sophie, thank you for that question, and thank you to the Agency and Director General Grossi for hosting this virtual event to celebrate this 10-year anniversary of the Peaceful Uses Initiative. I'm pleased to be able to participate in this panel along with my distinguished colleagues, Ambassador Hikiyama and Ambassador Djumala, and send my greetings to our on-line audience and friends.

With respect to the origins of the PUI and U.S. support, this month's IAEA Bulletin features an article by the United States' Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation, Ambassador Jeffrey Eberhardt, in which he describes the impetus behind the United States establishing the PUI with the IAEA in 2010. I hope all of you get a chance to read the article, along with all the other important pieces in the Bulletin.

First and foremost, U.S. support to IAEA activities through the PUI is a demonstration of our commitment to Article IV of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which recognizes the inalienable right of NPT Parties to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in conformity with their non-proliferation obligations under the Treaty. Article IV also provides for international cooperation to enable states to enjoy the benefits of the peaceful uses of the atom.

The widespread benefits of peaceful uses have in fact been central to the NPT – and to the IAEA – since their inception. But the areas of great need with respect to peaceful uses cooperation and assistance far exceed funding available to the IAEA through regular Member State contributions.

Another major motivating factor for our support to the PUI is that it provides the flexibility the DG mentioned for the Agency to respond quickly to the shifting priorities of Member States as well as to unexpected needs or unforeseen emergency events,

such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other disease outbreaks. It supports and complements the IAEA's Technical Cooperation (TC) Program by providing additional resources both to the TC Department and to the other IAEA Departments that provide the technical expertise the TC program relies upon.

Looking back at the past ten years, we are happy to see that our PUI funds have made many other positive impacts. As we will see shortly in the video on Guatemala, the IAEA has done outstanding work not only providing technical expertise on the sterile insect technique but also developing new applications and helping push the technology forward.

Another example is U.S. support for the Agency's "PACT" [Program of Action for Cancer Therapy] program. With U.S. funding this year alone, Algeria, Libya, Sierra Leone, and Mexico have received assistance with radiotherapy treatment through the PUI.

Our PUI funding for the IAEA's Nuclear Applications Department's Environmental Laboratory in Monaco helps the IAEA accelerate research and develop techniques to address marine plastics and ocean acidification. And here in Austria, our support for the Nuclear Applications labs at Seibersdorf ensures that the IAEA remains at the forefront in applying nuclear technology to meet the development needs of its Member States for decades to come, including through the TC Program.

All of this nicely describes why the United States pledged an initial \$50 million toward the implementation of peaceful uses projects in 2010 under the PUI. Building on the demonstrated value of prior projects and recognizing the continued need for cooperation, the United States pledged another \$50 million to the PUI at the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

And I am extremely pleased to announce today, on behalf of the United States, a new pledge to the PUI: over the next five years, the United States is committed to providing another \$50 million in contributions to the PUI to reinforce our commitment to and support of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Let me again thank the Director General for your leadership, and thank you Sophie for organizing this timely and worthy celebration. I'm pleased to be able to deliver that good news and I'm happy that so many have been able to tune in virtually, and look forward to hearing from our fellow panelists.

[...]

MODERATOR: What is the way forward for the PUI? What will the be next 10 years, what is the dream? Ambassadors, I ask you to keep your answers under three minutes, and please raise your hand virtually and I will give you the floor. Who wants to begin? Yes, to the Excellency U.S. Ambassador, you have the floor.

AMBASSADOR WOLCOTT: Thank you. You know, we firmly believe that the peaceful applications of nuclear technology hold vast potential for addressing some of the worst problems pressing us in the world, including those tied to global health and sustainability efforts. We saw one excellent example today, the Sterile Insect Technique, which has produced remarkable results for the local economies where it is used. And we are now looking at how the technique can be used to control mosquito populations and help prevent the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses.

And in fact, this is an application for which the United States has not only provided funding, but it has also been a beneficiary country. In Lee County, Florida—the heart of one of my country’s most beautiful tropical tourist destinations—local officials are receiving technical assistance from the IAEA in the sterilization and release of mosquitos. As a donor country to PUI, we appreciate the indirect and direct benefits of supporting the IAEA’s work on peaceful nuclear applications.

And despite the postponement of the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the United States will continue to take part over the next year in enhanced engagement with NPT Parties on how best to maximize peaceful nuclear cooperation under the NPT in this, its 50th year. Past and future successes in peaceful nuclear uses rest on the strong nonproliferation protections of the NPT and the broader nuclear nonproliferation regime for which it is the foundation.

Thus far, the United States has provided over \$110 million in PUI contributions to the Agency to support projects in the areas we’ve all discussed today: human health, food security, development of nuclear power infrastructure, promote nuclear safety and security, environmental protection, and better manage water resources. With my announcement today, of an additional \$50 million over the next five years, we are expressing our commitment to continue to do so over the next five years.

The United States is proud to be the largest contributor not only to the PUI but to the full range of IAEA activities that expand the benefits of peaceful nuclear uses. But we know that we can’t do it alone, and I want to thank every Member State that has contributed to PUI to ensure that priority projects continue to receive the funding they so deserve and more countries can benefit from them. Thank you very much.