

Opening Statement and Acceptance Speech
by
H.E. Ambassador Maria Zeneida Angara Collinson
President of the 61st General Conference of the IAEA
18 September 2017

Excellencies,

Director-General Yukiya Amano,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great honor and humility that I wish to thank you for reposing your trust and confidence in me - a woman from a developing country. Since the Agency's establishment in 1956, I am only the third representative of the female gender and the fourth representative from the Philippines to have been elected by Members States and entrusted with the great responsibility of steering the proceedings and deliberations of the General Conference. It is a promising portent of the future of our Agency whose importance and relevance to our world and humankind have increased dramatically over the years. I make a pledge here and now, to strive, with your cooperation, for a fruitful and successful General Conference

Before proceeding, I would like to thank the members of the Far East Group and in particular, Ambassador Mitsuru Kitano, for their nomination.

I wish to congratulate my esteemed friend and ASEAN colleague, Ambassador Dato' Adnan bin Othman, Resident Representative of Malaysia, for his excellent chairmanship of the 60th General Conference last year.

May I likewise take the opportunity to commend Director-General Yukiya Amano, who, with his balanced, able and effective stewardship combined with the dedication and expertise of the Secretariat, has led the Agency to significant achievements and accomplishments in the last 8 years.

I will be conducting the Conference in a hopefully more democratic manner with balanced representation by requesting the eight Vice-Presidents to come to the podium and take over the conduct of business at short intervals in the course of our five-day Conference.

Excellencies, dear Colleagues,

This year, as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Agency's Statute, we are faced with both opportunities and threats. The opportunities come from the promise of ever-increasing benefits from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. From enhancing food security through, inter alia, the

development of high-yielding crop varieties as well as disease-resistant livestock, to better management of the environment, particularly our water resources; from ensuring a longer and a better quality of life through curative and preventive advances in health-related technology, to greater prosperity and a higher standard of living for our peoples through better products for trading and consumption - the myriad avenues of nuclear applications are vast and they continue to grow.

At the same time, however, safety issues involved in nuclear technology and its applications remain, even whilst we have made some progress in addressing them. From management options for disused radioactive sources to the safe permanent disposal of spent fuel, we do not, as yet, have the magic bullet and the perfect answers to our lingering questions and doubts to be able to create the collective confidence nor to secure a categorical universal vote for nuclear technology over others available.

The biggest threat from nuclear energy, however, comes from its weaponization. Casting a shadow on our meeting this morning is the real and present danger of developments in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The nuclear non-proliferation regime which we all support, is being directly challenged and this particular threat needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Our Agency, however, is not to be judged by factors beyond its control but by its readiness to resume its work under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the DPRK. We commend the Agency for its recent pro-active measures, including the creation of a DPRK unit in the Secretariat.

Likewise, we cite the Agency for its work on Safeguards where agreements are in place; for its expert assistance, upon request, in efforts by Member States to establish and maintain effective and sustainable nuclear security regimes, as well as for its valuable verification work.

Excellencies,

The new realities in the world need to be recognized and faced with both courage and circumspection. Problems demand solutions and these will come in many forms, but all with the same objective of solving problems. The international community is not wanting in goodwill, hope and action. So when 122 nations adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July 2017, they did so to minimize, if not neutralize, the negative aspects and use of nuclear power: weaponization. It is worthwhile to recall that, having witnessed the horrors of atomic weapons, the international community came together to ensure that atomic energy would be used henceforth for peace, health and prosperity. The

International Atomic Energy Agency. our Agency, was thus born. Let this credo remain: Atomic energy should be used for peace, health and prosperity.

In this regard, allow me to commend the work of the Technical Cooperation Department in the Agency. Despite the increasing number of Member States, the Technical Department has exhibited gumption in trying to deliver services adequately to its constituency.

I would be remiss if I did not touch on the imperative for equal representation of women in the Secretariat, particularly in the professional category. As a good management practice, the establishment of standards and measurements would facilitate examination of whether or not there is steady progress in this regard. The issue of balanced geographical representation likewise deserves our attention with a view to a satisfactory solution. The Agency should be perceived as belonging to all, and stakeholders must be represented in a fair and balanced manner, naturally with due regard for appropriate qualifications.

Excellencies,

We have a full agenda ahead of us. As in many organizations, resources always seem to lag behind increasing work and higher expectations. The six program areas all demand bigger funding. The challenge for Member States is to provide the financial resources within their capacities in full and on time, while the

challenge for the Agency is to create the synergies among its various Departments to achieve more with not necessarily less. I draw your attention to the fact that this is a budget year and we will be considering the budget for the next biennium. Our collective wisdom and shared objectives will hopefully lead to the best possible results.

I enjoin all of you, therefore, to ensure that the outcomes of our deliberations over the coming days lead to a reinvigorated Agency, to the promotion of respect and goodwill among Member States, and to a safer and more secure world in peace, health and prosperity.

Thank you.