

**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Michael Linhart  
Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and  
Foreign Affairs**

Vienna, 15 September 2015

Mr President,  
Mr Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to congratulate you, Mr President, upon your election and to assure you of the full support of the Austrian delegation. Austria also aligns herself with the statement delivered by Her Excellency, Ms. Lydia Mutsch, Minister of Health of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

As representative of the host country, I would like to welcome all delegations to Vienna, and in particular the delegations of Antigua and Barbuda, of Barbados, and of Turkmenistan who have joined the International Atomic Energy Agency since the last General Conference. Austria tries to do its best to contribute to an environment conducive for constructive and successful discussions.

Austria is proud to host the IAEA - an international organization with a unique mandate and unique programmes that contributes to the achievement of global development goals. The Agency assists Member States in the different peaceful applications of nuclear energy under the highest safety, security and non-proliferation conditions. The Agency's verification expertise is essential for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

Austria continues to support the Agency in its important work in many ways, through assessed contributions to the regular budget and to the Technical Cooperation Fund. Furthermore Austria provides support for the Agency's programmatic activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications and its infrastructure both at the seat of the Agency in Vienna as well as at the laboratories in Seibersdorf.

Austria attaches great importance to the ReNuAL project of the Agency to modernise the nuclear applications laboratories in Seibersdorf. Much progress was made over the last year. We were pleased to learn from the reports to the recent Board meeting that conceptual and detailed designs are completed for two buildings, the Insect Pest Control Laboratory and the Flexible Modular Laboratory. Preparations of the site for construction of the Insect Pest Control Laboratory (IPCL) have started. Support for this very important project for the Agency is vital as the laboratories are the engine of much of the technical assistance which the Agency provides to Member States. With full access to a new Biosafety level 3 facility in Mödling that became operational last August, Austria provides the necessary capabilities that are required by the Animal Production and Health Laboratory of the Agency.

I highly commend the tireless efforts of the Group of Friends of ReNuAL (led by the Ambassador of Germany and the Ambassador of South Africa) to generate the financial support for this core project, scheduled to be completed by the end of 2017.

Mr President,

The successful work and crucial contribution of the Agency has recently been demonstrated by the adoption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the E3/EU+3 and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Austria takes pride in having hosted the final and decisive round of negotiations. Austria welcomes this historic agreement and its subsequent endorsement by the United Nations Security Council. The IAEA is requested under the agreement to undertake comprehensive verification and monitoring tasks. We firmly believe that the full implementation of the JCPOA will provide the international community with the necessary assurances about Iran's nuclear programme and will contribute positively to regional and international peace and security, as well as to the strengthening of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. As announced during last week's Board of Governors, Austria will also contribute financially in support of the Agency's important responsibilities in this regard.

Mr President,

While the successful Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a very important contribution for nuclear non-proliferation, the disarmament and non-proliferation regime as a whole faces many challenges. Austria strongly regrets the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The dissatisfaction of many delegations with the lack of progress on the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction free Zone in the Middle East was clearly apparent. Austria would like to commend the Finnish facilitator, Amb. Laajava and his team, for their efforts and commitment in the past review cycle. We share the view that progress in this area must remain one of the key priorities. Success or failure will have tremendous impact on the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, in particular the NPT.

The 2015 Review Conference also demonstrated a deep divide within the NPT regarding the nuclear disarmament obligations, as laid down in Article VI of the Treaty. Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament must go hand in hand and can only succeed in parallel. Nuclear disarmament, however, has fallen far behind expectations and new vigour and urgency are needed in pursuing nuclear disarmament. States who stress the importance of nuclear weapons for their own security, while insisting on the unacceptability of these for other States risk damaging the credibility of the entire regime and endanger us all. Equally damaging and incompatible with the object and purpose of the NPT and the disarmament obligations are the long-term nuclear weapons modernization programmes that are under way in all the nuclear weapon States.

In order to stress the urgency of nuclear disarmament and of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, Austria hosted the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December of last year. The humanitarian initiative has gained tremendous momentum in the past few years. The facts, findings and conclusions gathered in its course challenge the legitimacy of nuclear weapons and a

security approach based on nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons have catastrophic consequences, their possession carries many considerable risks, their use would be illegal - except maybe for a small range of largely hypothetical scenarios - and the combination of these factors together with the underlying readiness to commit mass destruction raises profound ethical and moral issues. As a consequence, Austria issued the so-called "Humanitarian Pledge" as a call for urgent nuclear disarmament efforts and to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. We are grateful and encouraged that 115 States have formally endorsed this call for action to date. Austria looks forward to working closely with all stakeholders in furthering this initiative and a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr President,

The right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy comes with the obligation to do so without causing harm to others: the peaceful uses of nuclear energy can only be pursued under the highest standards of safety, security and safeguards. Austria fully supports the Secretariat's approach to implement safeguards in a manner that considers a State's nuclear and nuclear-related activities and capabilities as a whole.

In this context, we wish to highlight the importance of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its 2005 Amendment. We welcome that the number of State parties that have ratified the Amendment has now reached 87 and would like to encourage others to follow suit to allow the entry into force of the Amendment. Austria also appreciates the recent proposal of an International Convention on Nuclear Security. We believe that this proposal could complement and support the already existing instruments in the field of nuclear security.

Several countries, including Austria, do not consider nuclear power to be fully compatible with the concept of sustainable development. Consequently, we appreciate that some countries started to phase-out nuclear power. While the Agency projects nuclear power's global expansion to continue in the coming decades, albeit at a slowing pace, the application of the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation in a transparent manner remains a top priority.

It is in this context that Austria takes note with appreciation of the IAEA Director General's Fukushima Daiichi Report as it contains a number of important recommendations to further improve nuclear safety. As the Director General stated "There can be no grounds for complacency about nuclear safety in any country."

To mention just one example, we refer to the reassessment of external hazards, in particular of seismic hazards. To consider a return period of 10.000 years can be considered as established practice. But as equally important as the return period are the methods used to identify seismic hazards. To this end the pertinent IAEA Safety Guides should be fully applied.

The Report considers, inter alia, radiological consequences. Given the remaining uncertainties in actual exposure Austria would deem it appropriate to revisit the issue

by a comprehensive and independent assessment of the health and environmental consequences of the Fukushima accident.

We take some pride that the outcome of the February 2015 Diplomatic Conference on the Convention on Nuclear Safety is called the "Vienna Declaration". Austria, would have preferred a legally binding outcome. Nevertheless, we are confident that the "Vienna Declaration" will also contribute to improving nuclear safety, if fully implemented. To continuously improve nuclear safety, it would be helpful, if the Secretariat would develop and update a multi-annual Nuclear Safety Strategy in close consultation with Member States for its programme of work. This should build upon the twelve functional areas of the 2011 Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, the experience of States in implementing the Action Plan, and the observations and lessons contained in the Fukushima Report and the Vienna Declaration.

I wish you, Mr President, and us all a successful General Conference.

Thank You.