

Statement of the Czech Republic
Delivered by Ms Dana Drábová
President of the State Office for Nuclear Safety
To the 2015 IAEA General Conference
Of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Vienna, 16 September 2015

Thank you, Mr. President.

First of all, let me congratulate you on your election as President of this General Conference and assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Czech Delegation. The Czech Republic warmly welcomes Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turkmenistan as new members to the IAEA.

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by Luxembourg. In addition, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

Let me first turn to nuclear safety.

After the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant a significant number of efforts and initiatives have taken place on all levels to enhance nuclear safety. Nearly all member states operating nuclear power plants have completed or committed to undertake safety reassessments with the aim of evaluating the design and safety aspects and the robustness of NPPs to withstand extreme events. In February the Contracting Parties met at the Diplomatic Conference of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) to consider a proposal for its amendment. It was not possible to agree on the proposed amendment, nevertheless the Contracting Parties unanimously adopted the “Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety on principles for the implementation of the Convention on Nuclear Safety to prevent accidents and mitigate radiological consequences”. I join in appreciating the atmosphere of consensus on which the Diplomatic Conference proceeded. The integrity of the international nuclear safety regime, embodied in the CNS, has been maintained.

As noted during the Diplomatic Conference, the international community was prompted to look forward and build on the actions undertaken since the accident at Fukushima in the spirit of continuous improvement as reflected in the Vienna Declaration. Moreover, the agenda of the 7th Review Meeting of the CNS shall include a peer review of how these principles are reflected in the actions of Contracting Parties.

Another key instrument in the global nuclear safety framework, the Joint Convention, held its fifth Review Meeting in May. We note closely the decisions taken by the Contracting Parties to the Joint Convention. They touched upon issues which will be critical for the future of nuclear power, such as the disposal of spent fuel and radioactive waste in another country, in the context of studying the feasibility of regional or multinational disposal facilities.

Mr. President,

I would like to commend the Technical Secretariat and all my colleagues for the extensive effort put in the Fukushima Daiichi Accident Report and its five detailed technical volumes, on which I had the honour to collaborate as the external Co-Chair of Working group 3 (Emergency preparedness and response). It is the first report where the impact on the public is assessed based on monitoring data made available by the Japanese authorities. Let us hope that the lessons contained in each of the sections will be acted upon by all relevant stakeholders involved in nuclear power production.

As a chair of the IAEA Commission on Safety Standards, I have been directly involved in reviewing the adequacy of the collection of IAEA safety standards. The review revealed no significant areas of weakness, only a small set of amendments were needed to strengthen the Safety Requirements and facilitate their implementation.

In a letter addressed to DG Amano I also replied to a request for consideration of the technical elements contained in the Vienna Declaration with a view to incorporating them as appropriate into the relevant IAEA safety standards. I assured DG Amano that the Commission is in a position to confirm that the technical elements of the Vienna Declaration are already well reflected in the relevant Safety Requirements. With regard to the Safety Guides, a number of them have already been under revision as part of the Nuclear Safety Action Plan. The Safety Guides relating to the technical elements cited in the Vienna Declaration have been identified and will be further reviewed and revised, as appropriate. The important lesson to be learned, however, re-emerging from the mentioned reviews, is that the implementation of safety standards in practice is the key to a high level of safety.

In this context, I would like to welcome the establishment of Emergency Preparedness and Response Standards Committee (EPRReSC) under the Commission on Safety Standards. It is a standing body of senior experts in nuclear or radiological emergency preparedness and response (EPR). Its main task will be to review and approve Agency safety standards in this area. I would usually be rather hesitant to support establishing another body of this kind within the IAEA system. However, in this particular case I commend the Technical Secretariat for having done so. EPR is a cross-cutting field requiring specialised expertise. I believe that with the involvement of senior EPR experts we will achieve an increase in quality, transparency and consistency of EPR aspects within Agency safety standards, and an improved coordination of EPR among various publications.

Mr. President,

The Czech Republic appreciates the work performed by the IAEA in organising IRRS and other safety missions, which contribute enormously to enhancing the global level of nuclear safety.

Since the last General Conference, the process of nuclear safety reviews in the Czech Republic has continued. In November 2014, an international team of nuclear safety experts completed the assessment of long term operational safety (SALTO) at the Dukovany Nuclear Power Plant. The SALTO team focused on in-depth review of aspects essential to the safe long term operation of the plant's four reactors. The plant's organization and programmes, including human resources and knowledge management, were reviewed. Based on the IAEA safety standards, the team identified several areas where they made proposals for improvements to operational safety and a number of good practices and good performances at the plant that will be shared with the nuclear industry globally. Quite recently, four months ago, an IAEA team completed a follow-up Corporate OSART mission at ČEZ, the largest national electricity company in the Czech Republic operating two nuclear power plants. An earlier review, the first of its kind ever performed, was conducted in October 2013 at the invitation of the Czech government, reviewing corporate safety performance, focusing on the centralized functions of the corporate organization that affect all the operational safety aspects of a utility's nuclear power plants. The 2013 OSART team identified good corporate practices and provided proposals for improvements of corporate processes and performance. The follow-up review team was to assess how ČEZ followed up on the safety recommendations. I am pleased to note that six of the nine issues identified in the earlier review have been fully addressed. The team recommended further action on the other three issues, although stating satisfactory progress.

At the last General Conference I informed about the update of our legislation covering comprehensively all administratively-legal aspects of the nuclear field with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of the regulatory framework and adjusting the legally binding safety requirements to recent developments.

We drafted a new Atomic Act, which will be accompanied by the set of revised implementing regulations. The draft is currently under discussion in the Czech Parliament, we expect it to enter into force in 2017.

Mr. President,

We continue to believe that it is necessary to strongly support the Agency in assisting interested member states in developing the infrastructure for the safe and secure deployment of nuclear power, putting the appropriate legal and regulatory framework in place and ensuring the highest standards of nuclear safety and security. Participation in TC projects allows for the exchange of expertise among nuclear specialists from various member states at different levels of development. I am pleased to mention that despite the climate of financial austerity the Czech Republic holds the status of a "net contributor" to the TC programme and remains committed to providing extrabudgetary contributions through the IAEA Peaceful uses Initiative (PUI). The Czech Republic has further enhanced its support to the IAEA's mission by providing a cost-free expert who has worked in the IAEA's Section of Radiation Safety and Monitoring since March of this year. PUI has been one of the most powerful tools of promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy since its start in 2010. Last year our contributions to PUI amounted to almost 100 000 EUR, for this year we expect approximately the same amount. These extrabudgetary contributions have been targeted at priority activities, for instance assisting Armenia in upgrading its national nuclear regulatory infrastructure, enhancing the operational safety of its NPP and strengthening the radiation therapy services of its Oncological Centre in Yerevan. We are considering various ways of future cooperation with Ukraine, one of the largest users of VVER reactors, with a view to exploring and testing technologies for implementing lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident.

The Czech Republic has traditionally contributed to expertise sharing projects not only by financial means but also by hosting the Agency's activities. It is my pleasure to mention, as an example, the Intercontinental Nuclear Institute (INI), organised by the Governments of the Czech Republic and the United States through the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Center (CNCC) in Prague and the University of Massachusetts Lowell as a pilot four-week project supported by the PUI through the regional TC programme. Its first course, successfully completed in July, provided 22 young nuclear engineers and scientists from across Europe with hands-on experience and mentoring at nuclear installations in the Czech Republic and the United States. It is planned to be repeated annually.

Mr. President,

Turning now to safeguards and nuclear verification, the Czech Republic supports all measures to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system, which we consider an essential part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call on all countries to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol as the world-wide standard for verifying compliance with the NPT. The spread of nuclear weapons must be prevented. We therefore welcome the agreement reached on 14 July on the final text of the historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by E3 + 3 and Iran. Let us hope that the JCPOA, once implemented, marks a conclusion to the long-running diplomatic efforts to reach a comprehensive and peaceful solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, contributing positively to global peace and security.

Mr. President, that concludes my remarks, and I wish you and the conference every success.