



GC

GC(40)/6/Add.1
10 September 1996

International Atomic Energy Agency

GENERAL CONFERENCE

GENERAL Distr.
Original: ARABIC
and ENGLISH

Fortieth regular session
Item 23 of the provisional agenda
(GC(40)/1)

APPLICATION OF IAEA SAFEGUARDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Report by the Director General to the General Conference

Pursuant to a request of the Resident Representative of Saudi Arabia, the text of a letter of 17 June 1996 addressed by him to the Director General and that of a letter of 24 April 1996 addressed by him to the Director General on behalf of the Arab States Members of the Agency and members of the Board of Governors (see INFCIRC/507 and 507/Corr.1 and the Director General's reply in INFCIRC/507/Add.1) are attached hereto.

**TEXT OF LETTER OF 17 JUNE 1996 FROM THE
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SAUDI ARABIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

Sir,

I refer to the intervention of my country's delegation on Friday, 14 June 1996, at the end of the summing-up by the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the discussion on sub-item 10(c), "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East", at the Board's series of meetings held during 10-14 June 1996, and to the request that the communication dated 24 April 1996 concerning the Israeli Dimona reactor addressed to the Director General by the Resident Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab States Members of the Agency and members of the Board of Governors be included in the report to be submitted by the Director General to the General Conference pursuant to the request contained in operative paragraph 9 of resolution GC(39)/RES/24.

I hope that your Excellency will take this into consideration and attach the communication referred to.

Accept, Sir, etc.,

(signed)

Essa Al-Nowaiser
Resident Representative to the IAEA
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

His Excellency Dr. Hans Blix
Director General
IAEA, Vienna

**TEXT OF LETTER OF 24 APRIL 1996 FROM THE
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SAUDI ARABIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Arab States Members of the Agency and members of the Board, I wish to express the concern felt by the Arab Governments and peoples at the news and reports concerning the potential danger of leakage of nuclear radiation at the Israeli Dimona reactor and the hazards of storage and burial of atomic waste in the area of the reactor, for they feel that the continued existence of the nuclear reactor without any real knowledge about the extent of its safety and also the nuclear waste burial sites in the area pose a threat to security, life and the environment.

The following are among the factors that increase the intensity of this concern:

1. Persistence of news and reports, including reports from Israeli sources, about radiation leakage at the reactor and the nuclear waste burial sites in the area of the reactor;
2. The reactor is old and has reached the end of its assumed lifetime;
3. The region is subject to earthquakes and earth tremors;
4. Monitoring of radiation leakage into groundwater across the borders will require a long time before such leakage is detected in the neighbouring States, making it technically difficult to determine, on the basis of measurements performed outside Israel's borders, that there was no accident which might have devastating consequences in the future.

His Excellency Dr. H. Blix
Director General
IAEA, Vienna

The continuation of Israeli nuclear activities outside international control does not provide the least assurance about the nuclear safety of these activities, and there is no doubt that any nuclear accident in Israel will have transboundary effects and give rise to hazards beyond its borders. For this reason, it is necessary that there should be at least a minimum of transparency in the Israeli nuclear activities and that Israel should become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to a safeguards agreement with the Agency.

It is therefore requested that necessary steps be taken on your part to inform the Agency's Member States of the extent of the concern felt by the Arab region as a result of these activities. The Agency is also requested to make contacts with a view to carrying out the necessary technical studies to measure the radiation level at the site of the Dimona reactor and in its neighbourhood and at the nuclear waste burial sites in the area in an endeavour to prevent the potential hazards of nuclear radiation leakage, and to submit a report thereon to the Board.

In this connection, I should like to point out that the potential danger from any nuclear accident would extend beyond the region. The Chernobyl accident and its consequences certainly continue to be a source of concern to the world and illustrate the real importance of nuclear safety.

In view of the urgency and importance of this matter, we hope that necessary steps will be taken without delay, and at the same time we request you to circulate this letter to the Member States of the Agency as an official document.

With kind regards,

(signed)

Essa Al-Nowaiser
Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps and
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**TEXT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPLY TO THE COMMUNICATION
FROM THE RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SAUDI ARABIA
TO THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

Excellency,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated 24 April 1996 concerning the Israeli Dimona Reactor. As requested, your letter has been circulated for the information of Member States (INFCIRC/507, 8 May 1996).

As you are aware, the IAEA has been endeavouring to establish internationally binding legal norms in the field of nuclear safety. The Nuclear Safety Convention relevant to nuclear power reactors has recently been concluded and it is hoped that it will enter into force sometime this year. A Convention on the Safe Management of Radioactive Waste is under active preparation by an international technical and legal group of experts from the Agency's Member States. At present the Agency's role is limited to providing advisory services, facilitating exchange of information and developing safety standards. These standards, which are recommendatory in nature, are not, however, legally binding upon the Member States. It follows that, unless requested and authorized by a Member State, the Agency has no legal authority to make radiological measurements within a State or intervene, even in cases of nuclear accidents except with regard to an Agency project.

The Agency has been entrusted with certain responsibilities under the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident. Under the terms of that Convention, Parties to the Convention are obliged to inform the IAEA and potentially affected States, either directly or through the Agency, of a possible or actual transboundary radioactive release that could be of radiological safety significance. No such notification has been received from Israel, as Party to the Early Notification Convention, relating to the Dimona Research Reactor.

Mr. Essa Al-Nowaiser
Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps and
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia
to the IAEA
Formanekgasse 38
A-1190 Vienna

In view of media reports brought to our attention on a leak from the reactor, the Agency on 4 April 1996 approached the competent authorities in Israel to ask them to comment on these reports. As a consequence of that enquiry, the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission informed the Agency on 12 April 1996 that "The Ministry of the Environment [of Israel] monitors the air, water and ground outside the perimeter of the Nuclear Research Centre Negev (NRCN) and to this day no radioactive leakage endangering the population has been detected. NRCN monitoring inside its perimeter ensures the same results" and that "the radioactive waste at the NRCN does not endanger the population, the environment and water sources. All the waste is stored safely according to the strictest international criteria and is constantly monitored. No contamination was ever detected".

Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(signed) Hans Blix
Director General