

**Opening Statement  
of the  
President  
of the Diplomatic Conference on the  
Convention on Nuclear Safety**

**Rafael Mariano Grossi**

**Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the  
Argentine Republic to the International  
Organizations in Vienna**

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**Dear colleagues**

**Welcome to Vienna**

**Welcome to the Diplomatic Conference on the Convention on Nuclear Safety.**

**We are gathered here today, on a new occasion to work together, as a community of countries in the nuclear field, to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide.**

**There is great logic in this assembly coming together in this form, today.**

**Nuclear safety is at the top of the list of priorities in every country in the world operating nuclear installations.**

**It is also an aspiration of all those in neighboring countries to those operating nuclear power plants, and the world community as a whole.**

**It is evident that this meeting, and everything else countries do in the nuclear field, is subject to an increased level of attention as it comes in the post Fukushima world.**

**The world was shocked by the accident and as a consequence expects from all of us to abide by the highest standards of safety, accountability and transparency.**

**We do not arrive here today empty handed.**

**Quite to the contrary, a lot has happened since the fateful afternoon in March 2011, when the great earthquake and tsunami triggered off, in a deadly combination, the accident.**

**Countries did not wait to act until now.**

Since then, parties have taken a great number of actions and initiatives at the national, regional, and international levels, aimed at enhancing nuclear safety.

Nearly all contracting parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) 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, including a defense in depth, safety margins and multiple unit failures occurring in parallel as well as the prolonged loss of support systems.

These assessments, in some countries known as stress tests, have been completed and, as a result, additional safety measures have been introduced

These are aimed at preventing new accidents, and mitigating their consequences, should an accident occur.

The actions and initiatives undertaken since 2011 have been carried out at three different levels.

First, as I just indicated, the national level, which is the initial, and most immediate level. Here, operators themselves and national regulators reacted without delay introducing changes and checking the areas of vulnerability.

Second, at the regional level, primarily but not exclusively Regulators and regional associations, ensured that these initiatives would not be isolated from what was being done in nearby countries.

There was also the important contribution from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that came in the form of a Ministerial Meeting in June 2011, as a result of which a worldwide Action Plan on Nuclear Safety was later adopted in September of that year. There is today wide agreement on the positive impact of this Action Plan, which has resulted in a number of specific initiatives or actions, including Member States responses to the Action Plan and IAEA-hosted

**International Experts Meetings on a number of topical areas. This is an ongoing effort, and we will have another opportunity to attest in a few weeks, when the IAEA Board of Governors will review the progress achieved and approve key nuclear safety documents.**

**But that is not all.**

**As we all know, the Convention on Nuclear Safety itself, contains an elaborated peer review process which was reviewed immediately after the accident.**

**Within its framework, Contracting Parties discussed and agreed on a number of proposals to update the CNS Guidance documents, contained in Information Circulars INFCIRC/571, 572 and 573 and have made recommendations for action to the IAEA and international organizations.**

**These modifications provide clearer guidance on actions taken by CNS Contracting Parties to meet the objectives of the Convention, enhance the preparation of national reports, improve the review process, and enhance international cooperation and increased transparency to the public.**

**Distinguished colleagues**

**We are meeting here today against the backdrop of these actions, initiatives, all very concrete, and all mutually reinforcing.**

**At the 6<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which took place in Vienna from 24 March to 4 April 2014, a two thirds majority of parties present and voting decided to convene a Diplomatic Conference to consider the Swiss proposal to amend Article 18 of the CNS.**

**I think it is proper to commend Switzerland for its initiative, which has focused our efforts to strengthen nuclear safety.**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting also decided to hold a consultation meeting open to all Contracting Parties, at least 90 days before the Diplomatic Conference to exchange views and prepare for the adoption of the rules of procedure.

It soon became clear that a single meeting would be far from sufficient to ensure thorough consideration of the Swiss Proposal and to look into other organizational aspects.

Contracting Parties took upon themselves to set up a mechanism for consultations, the Informal Working Group, (IWG) which I chaired, to facilitate this process. As a group we have been meeting regularly since July 2014, having had at least 8 sessions plus innumerable more informal meetings and consultations in what became an intensive and structured process where rules have been studied and drafted, organizational matters have been sorted out and the Swiss proposal has been analyzed including through national presentations which put that proposal in the perspective of national plans and actions.

I think I reflect the view of all Contracting Parties when I say that the IWG has served us well to do this work and to elaborate a way forward.

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

As Chair of the preparatory process two things have surfaced with great clarity to me.

The first one is, that all Contracting Parties, without an exception are unequivocally committed to nuclear safety.

In this sense, the consultation and incentive forum the CNS provides has been playing its envisaged role, and more will be expected from it in years to come.

**We all agree that there must be unanimous resolve to strengthen nuclear safety and that divisions and disagreement in this particular field must be avoided.**

**Having a split, two tiered, two speed, two system regime as a result of the Diplomatic Conference would be a clear loss.**

**Our intensive consideration of the Swiss proposal led us to the conclusion that it would not be possible to reach consensus on the Swiss proposal.**

**Confronted by this fact, and convinced and encouraged by my colleagues' unanimous resolve to move forward in unison, I have proposed an alternative consensus outcome, consisting of a Declaration which would set out principles for the implementation of the objective of the Convention on Nuclear safety to prevent accidents and mitigate radiological consequences.**

**This document, the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety, encompasses principles to guide all Contracting Parties in specific areas like design, siting and construction of new nuclear power plants. It also contains guidance on comprehensive and systematic safety assessments to be carried out periodically and regularly for existing installations throughout their lifetime. Importantly, it reminds us all that national requirements are to take into account the relevant IAEA Safety Standards and other relevant good practices.**

**The Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety also integrates into the existing CNS Review Meeting process by requesting us all to commit to consider the principles agreed at this Conference in future national reports, starting immediately with the ones to be submitted to the next, 7<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting and onwards.**

**Lastly, we recognize that there is an organic link between what we do as 77 Contracting Parties to the CNS and the wider work of the IAEA, including through its Safety Standard Committees. This is why we would like to request the Director General of the IAEA to refer the result of our work to these**

**committees for review and to ensure coherence and consistency between what we do here and what is done by the Agency.**

**Dear colleagues**

**All Contracting Parties have worked hard on the Vienna Declaration.**

**As in any honest, open and professional negotiation, concessions have been made by all sides.**

**We have come to a point where a strong, meaningful, agreed document can be approved by consensus, thus making the Diplomatic Conference a true example of collective determination to work through our differences to uphold a high level of nuclear safety.**

**I call on all contracting parties to adopt the Vienna Declaration, which will be attached to our Summary Report.**

**I hope you will concur on this way forward.**

**Thank you.**