

IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE 2015

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT

(Check against delivery)

Mr President

At the outset, let me offer New Zealand's congratulations to you on the assumption of the Presidency of this year's General Conference. I assure you and your Vice-Presidents of New Zealand's full cooperation in our collective work to make this conference a success.

New Zealand would like to welcome to this General Conference the three newest IAEA members, Djibouti and Guyana and to extend a special welcome to our Pacific Island neighbours Vanuatu. We also congratulate Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turkmenistan on their applications for membership. We look forward to working with them. The continued growth in IAEA membership gives a clear signal of the value of the Agency's work.

Mr President

New Zealand's goal is a world free of nuclear weapons, and one in which all nuclear and radioactive material is both safe and secure.

This year we have missed major opportunities to advance towards that goal – most notably in terms of the failure of the NPT Review Conference.

New Zealand is also deeply disappointed that, despite the efforts of many, it has not yet proved possible to convene a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction. This contributed significantly to the failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We hope that despite the difficulties, efforts will continue towards fulfilling the objectives of the NPT's 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

And another year has passed with no efforts from DPRK or Syria to address the serious proliferation concerns of the international community. New Zealand calls on DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons programme, which sits in blatant defiance of Security Council and IAEA resolutions; and reinforces the calls of the international community for the Syrian Arab Republic to provide the information required about the undeclared nuclear reactor at Dair Alzour and to move back to compliance with its Safeguards Agreement.

While there have been some disappointments there are however some gleams of light.

New Zealand welcomes the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed with Iran, and congratulates all who stayed the course to reach this agreement, demonstrating that diplomacy and cooperation can and should succeed. We look forward to implementation of the JCPOA and to resolution of the outstanding issues, including the possible military dimension of Iran's nuclear programme.

We also welcome the innovative work on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the new avenue this offers for progressing nuclear disarmament.

And the IAEA's work on nuclear security is offering states practical assistance in making these dangerous materials less vulnerable and, taken in its broader context, will help to build international confidence and underpin nuclear disarmament.

Mr President

New Zealand strongly supports the Agency's work on nuclear security. New Zealand makes regular contributions to the Agency's Nuclear Security Fund, 85,500 euro in the last year. New Zealand's support for the central role of the Agency in nuclear security complements our participation in the Nuclear Security Summit process and a range of other initiatives including the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. We look forward to the discussions which will take place at the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Security in December 2016 to further cement the leadership and central role of the Agency in strengthening the nuclear security framework globally and in coordinating international activities in the field of nuclear security.

New Zealand has appreciated the practical advice and assistance provided to us by the Agency this year. In January New Zealand hosted an initial inspection under the Modified Small Quantities Protocol to our Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. In November 2014 we welcomed an Agency team to prepare for the International Physical Protection Advisory Service visit that will take place in November 2015.

A comprehensive Radiation Safety Bill is now at an advanced stage of consideration by the New Zealand Parliament. We aim to ratify in the near future both the Amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Mr President

New Zealanders continue to contribute to and benefit from advances in nuclear science across a range of areas such as human and animal health, water management, and food

quality. We appreciate the benefits of scientific interchange provided by the IAEA's Regional Cooperation Agreement for South and South East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East, in which we participate.

New Zealand is also continuing its support for the Peaceful Uses Initiative. We are pleased to have provided financial contributions in both 2014 and 2015 (totalling 100,000 euro) toward the integrated management and sustainable development of the shared groundwater resources in the Sahel.

Mr President

New Zealand does not use nuclear energy to generate electricity, but we recognise that nuclear power forms part of the energy mix for a number of countries. Although New Zealand has chosen not to use nuclear energy, we are still vulnerable to damage caused by a nuclear accident elsewhere, particularly if one were to occur during maritime transport of nuclear material near our waters.

We therefore emphasise that all countries developing and using nuclear energy must apply the highest standards of safeguards, safety and security through all stages of the fuel cycle, including waste management and transport. We highly value the dialogue between coastal and shipping states that takes place in the margins of IAEA meetings, the voluntary guidelines on government to government communications developed by participating coastal and shipping states, and initiatives such as the table top exercise that was conducted to test these guidelines earlier this year.

New Zealand remains engaged in efforts to improve the international nuclear liability regime so that it addresses the concerns of states – especially non-nuclear states – which might suffer damage as the result of an accident involving nuclear material, including a maritime transport incident.

We also welcome and support the new Emergency Preparedness and Response Standards Committee and have nominated an expert to participate in this important work which should build on and draw out lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident. The report on the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant makes sobering reading, and we need to make best use of the lessons to be learned.

Mr President

New Zealand is committed to helping prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, including through the implementation of safeguards in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The integrity of IAEA verification activities is fundamental to assuring us that nuclear activities are indeed undertaken purely for peaceful purposes.

We welcome the contribution to be made by the Agency's use of the State Level Concept, which further increases New Zealand's confidence in the Agency's implementation of its verification mandate. This concept provides a valuable tool for customising safeguards to a specific environment, taking into account broader information about a state's nuclear programme beyond traditional accounting and inspections but not involving any additional rights or obligations beyond those already agreed by the state.

We also recognise that with increased activities for the Agency under the JCPOA come increased costs. We look forward to the discussions on including core monitoring and verification activities in the regular budget from 2017. In the meantime, New Zealand has previously contributed voluntary funding to the Joint Programme of Action, and has committed a further contribution of 50,000 euros to support the Agency's verification activities in Iran.

Mr President

New Zealand is committed to achieving a constructive outcome on the range of complex and important issues on the agenda of this Conference. We look forward to working with all other member states of the IAEA to achieve our shared objectives in nuclear safety, security, safeguards and peaceful uses.

Thank you.