



AUSTRIA

**Address by H.E. Ambassador Michael Linhart
Secretary-General and Deputy-Minister for Foreign Affairs**

**Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and
Foreign Affairs**

Vienna, 22 September 2014

Mr President,

Mr Director-General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

As representative of the host country, let me start by welcoming all delegations to Vienna, in particular the delegations of Brunei Darussalam, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and San Marino, whose countries have joined the International Atomic Energy Agency since the last General Conference. As host country of the Agency, we try to do our part to contribute to a conducive environment for constructive and successful discussions.

I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, upon your election. I want to assure you of the full support of the Austrian delegation in your work which is taking place in an increasingly challenging political environment.

The Italian Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Senator Benedetto Della Vedova, has already spoken on behalf of the EU and I fully subscribe to that statement. I would just like to offer some additional thoughts from the Austrian perspective:

We have gathered here in this unique organisation with unique programmes contributing to the achievement of global development goals: the Agency is the only global organisation that can assist in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy under the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions. It is an Agency that disposes of a unique verification expertise: not only does it provide the international community with the necessary assurances regarding the peaceful use of nuclear material – this verification expertise is also required in order for nuclear disarmament to take place. The same expertise is also needed for the creation of nuclear weapon free zones like the Zone in the Middle East we are all hoping will kick off as soon as possible in Helsinki.

Austria supports the Agency in its important work in two ways: First, as a Member State we contribute financially through assessed contributions to the regular budget and to the Technical Cooperation Fund – this is also foreseen in 2015; Secondly, as host country we support the Agency by providing infrastructure virtually cost-free and by facilitating the programmatic work at the locations in Vienna and at the laboratories in Seibersdorf. On Monday next week there will be a ground-breaking ceremony at Seibersdorf. Especially in moments of renewal and expansion as well as at times of political necessity – such as during the talks of the E3/EU+3 and Iran in Vienna this year – Austrian support is and always has been substantial.

Let me also reflect on the Agency in the general political and normative context: The right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy comes with the obligation to do so without causing harm to others: Only by ensuring the highest standards of safety, security and safeguards can the peaceful uses of nuclear energy be possible. Regarding safeguards, we strongly support 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.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament go hand in hand. Despite past efforts, nuclear disarmament has fallen far behind expectations and the necessary: new vigour is needed in pursuing nuclear disarmament. In order to underline the importance and urgency of nuclear disarmament and of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, Austria has invited to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons on 8 & 9 December 2014. All States are welcome, and so are all the relevant international organisations, like the Agency, as well as civil society and think tanks. Registration has been opened and will continue until 24th October.

Having a facts-based discussion on the impact of nuclear weapon explosions is important for contributing to a greater understanding of their immediate and long-term humanitarian consequences. It is also important for understanding the immense risks associated with nuclear weapons. This will help to inform and reinvigorate all the relevant international nuclear disarmament forums like the Conference on Disarmament, the United Nations General Assembly, and

the Review Process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Austria is convinced that the humanitarian focus has a positive and uniting effect on the international nuclear weapons discourse.

Progress in nuclear disarmament is also essential to bolster the universal political support for a robust, up-to-date global verification regime. The Agency needs to stay abreast of technological development and adapt its working methods accordingly. It needs the support of its Member States to achieve this goal.

This will also facilitate building the transparency we urgently need for the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Many countries, like Austria, do not consider nuclear power as a viable option for meeting our energy needs. Countries wishing to develop their nuclear capacities need to proceed with transparency and provide the necessary assurances regarding the application of the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation.

Regarding nuclear safety, Austria would like to emphasize that the highest standards have to be implemented and continuously improved – this is all the more crucial in view of worldwide endeavours for the long-term operation of nuclear power plants. We are confident that the Agency is well equipped to assist Member States in meeting this formidable challenge.

Within the European Union, the revised `Council Directive establishing a Community framework for the nuclear safety of nuclear installations` increases transparency on nuclear safety matters by ensuring that information is made available to the public – both, in normal operating conditions of nuclear installations and in case of incidents or accidents. Austria is convinced that transparency and public involvement also contribute to continuously improving nuclear safety.

In this context we also support the proposal made by Switzerland to strengthen the Convention on Nuclear Safety by amending Art. 18. Austria looks forward to discussing this proposal with other Contracting Parties of the Convention in the run-up to as well as during the Diplomatic Conference scheduled for February 2015.

Over the years, the political context keeps changing. In an ever changing world, it is important to have a forum like the Agency that provides the necessary framework for cooperation and consultation. With such a forum and with the political will of Member States, all challenges can be overcome.

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

Thank You.