

60th General Conference of the IAEA; General Debate;

Statement by Austria

Delivered by Deputy Foreign Minister Michael Linhart

Vienna, September 27, 2016

Mr. President,

Mr. Director General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all the participants of this year's General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Allow me also, Mr. President, to congratulate you upon your election and to assure you of the full support and co-operation of my delegation. I would also like to congratulate the three States whose application for IAEA membership was approved by this Conference yesterday, namely Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Islamic Republic of The Gambia.

This year's General Conference is special. Almost exactly sixty years ago the Statute of the IAEA was agreed upon by a special UN conference convened in New York. While our deliberations during this week will naturally focus on pressing current issues, I would also like to mention those people who built this Agency and made it a success story. They are an inspiration for our future work!

Austria is proud to host the IAEA - an international organization with a unique mandate and unique programmes - that contributes to the

maintenance of international peace and stability in a variety of ways. One particular strength of the Agency is its ability to build on its achievements and to develop new areas of activities for the benefit of its Member States. I am pleased to announce that Austria pledges its contribution to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2017 in full and on time.

Mr. President,

I would also like to express Austria's full alignment with the statement delivered by Ambassador Martha ZIAKOVA on behalf of the European Union, and in particular the clear condemnation of the recent nuclear test by the DPRK in violation of a number of UN Security Council resolutions. Let me also draw your attention to the statement of the Austrian Foreign Minister, Sebastian Kurz, strongly condemning the recent test. I would like to express our appreciation for the Director General's report to the Board on "Application of Safeguards in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)" and for the Agency's readiness to play an essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme. We call on the DPRK to cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of the Agency's comprehensive safeguards, including all the necessary safeguards activities provided for in the safeguards agreement.

I intend to focus the following remarks on a few other issues to which Austria pays particular attention.

Mr President,

At the heart of the IAEA's activities lies the application of safeguards, as well as its equally indispensable role in promoting nuclear security, and nuclear safety. In today's world all three and the Agency's work in this regard are becoming ever more important.

The Agency's verification expertise is indispensable to uphold the non-proliferation provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in particular article III specifying IAEA safeguards. The NPT remains the centrepiece of the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Austria attaches great importance to its integrity and full implementation.

Austria fully supports the Secretariat's approach to implement safeguards by carrying out comprehensive State evaluations based on relevant information about States' nuclear and nuclear-related activities.

We also welcome the role of the IAEA in verifying the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed among the E3+3 and Iran here in Vienna last year. This historic agreement is an example for effective multilateralism and international cooperation, conducted within the framework of relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions, IAEA Board Resolutions and the NPT. The importance of the IAEA's verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear related commitments under the agreement cannot be overemphasised.

As to nuclear security, let me commend the IAEA's role as the global platform for improvements in this crucial area. We are looking very much forward to the International Conference on Nuclear Security to be convened by the Agency in Vienna in December.

In this context, we also wish to highlight the importance of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and

express our appreciation that the amendment of 2005 finally entered into force.

Mr President,

Five years after the Fukushima accident and 30 years after Chernobyl, nuclear safety remains a constant challenge. We must ensure that such incidents will not ever happen again!

The world is spending ever more energy and as part of this trend - according to recent IAEA projections - a rise of global nuclear power production in the period up to the year 2030 may be expected. Moreover, ageing power plants and long-term operation pose considerable challenges. In view of this, it is important to bear in mind the specific risks and problems associated with nuclear power, in particular the undeniable possibility of severe accidents with far-reaching and long-lasting health and environmental consequences - unacceptable from the Austrian point of view -, and the lack of a sustainable disposal of nuclear waste associated with nuclear power production.

For this reason Austria, in contrast to the trend just mentioned, advocates a worldwide controlled phasing out of nuclear power production, accompanied by stronger efforts to make full use of renewable energies as well as to enhance energy efficiency and energy savings. Respecting the sovereign rights of States to opt for nuclear power, these States have to construct, operate and decommission their nuclear power plants in accordance with all relevant international conventions and safety standards. Moreover, those States should take the interests of neighbouring countries into due consideration, offering open dialogue and transparent public communication including sharing operational experience for the whole nuclear cycle.

Given the importance of nuclear safety, we believe that the IAEA needs a clear vision of priorities and milestones for the years to come, not least to make best use of scarce resources. In this regard, we take note of the Director General's Report "Building on the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety". We appreciate the work done and the Agency's intention to apply a distinct "Methodology for Systematic Analysis and Prioritization". We are looking forward to receiving proposals for priorities, milestones and core elements of a nuclear safety strategy. This should be a complement to the strategic approach of the Agency on nuclear security, as nuclear safety and security are complementary concepts to reduce nuclear related risks.

Austria very much appreciates the positive momentum in implementing the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety, noting the active contribution of the Secretariat. Austria remains committed to supporting the upcoming 7th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. We are convinced that implementing the principles of the Vienna Declaration will lead to improving nuclear safety on a permanent basis.

Mr President,

Austria regards the Technical Co-operation Programme of the IAEA as an integral part of its activities. We support it by contributing to the regular budget and to the Technical Cooperation Fund and by providing infrastructure both in Vienna and in Seibersdorf. While we retain reservations about the generation of nuclear power, we fully support the Agency's activities in the wider area of peaceful non-power applications of nuclear science and technology. I would just like to mention as examples the training of scientists from Member States in the use of a nuclear technique to help the rapid diagnosis of the Zika virus. In the field

of food security, the IAEA contributed to the development of new crop varieties – resistant to climate change by using nuclear techniques. And of course there are many more activities by which the Agency helps achieve the SDGs for the benefit of all.

Crucial for this innovative work is the operation of the eight IAEA Nuclear Application laboratories in Seibersdorf near Vienna. Representing the host State of the Agency, allow me to close my remarks with a few words about this dynamic hub, where scientists, technicians, fellows, interns and students from all over the world train, collaborate and conduct research in the manifold aspects of nuclear technology, to the benefit of the IAEA's Member States.

Having been in service since 1962, the laboratories now need modernisation and enlargement, and Austria attaches great importance and fully supports the ambitious ReNuAL [in einem aussprechen] project of the Agency currently being implemented. I commend the tireless efforts of the Group of Friends of ReNuAL that helped greatly to ensure the necessary financial support.

Let me add that in addition to the facilities at Seibersdorf, as of August 2015, the Animal Health and Production Laboratory started a promising collaboration with the newly-constructed biosafety level 3 laboratory of Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety in Mödling.

Mr President,

In closing, I would like to reiterate that Austria very much appreciates the work done by the Director General and his staff in the past year. Let me assure you that Austria will, as in the past, lend its full support to the Agency.