

The IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology:
Addressing Current and Emerging Development Challenges
Vienna, 28-30 November 2018

Statement by
Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal
Honourable Mr. Giriraj Mani Pokharel

Co-Chairs of the Conference

Her Excellency Ms Epsy Campbell Barr,

Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, and
His Excellency Mr Kiyoto Tsuji,

Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
Mr. Yukiya Amano, Director General, IAEA

Distinguished Delegates

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin by congratulating the Co-Chairs on their assumption of the chair of this important Ministerial Conference. My words of appreciation also go to the Ambassadors of Costa Rica and Japan for the wisdom and hard work with which they guided the preparation of this Conference.

I would like to thank the Director General and the Secretariat of the Agency for excellent preparation of this important conference.

Though use of nuclear science and technology is still very limited in Nepal, the areas it covered already include radiation safety, productivity of agriculture and live stocks, food safety, uranium and thorium deposits prospecting and exploration, radiation monitoring, non-destructive testing, environmental monitoring, ground water level and quality determination, energy planning, nuclear education and so on. Our membership to IAEA in 2008 is the single most significant driving force behind the development of the Nuclear Science and Technology in Nepal. Furthermore, association with the Agency's Technical Cooperation

programme in 2012 immensely contributed in broadening our understanding of application of nuclear technology and its utility for socio-economic development.

I believe that this conference is in itself a reiteration of the commitment of the international community to work together to bridge the gaps in the field of nuclear science and technology and applications among the Member States. A country like Nepal, that is lagging behind in financial and human resources, needs external support for properly utilizing the benefits of nuclear science and technology. Apart from our strong need to acquire advanced technologies in identified areas, especially in health and agriculture sectors, we equally need to expand its application in sectors that are new for us, industry and combat against pollution and climate change. We join with all present here in recognizing and appreciating the role of IAEA's Technical Cooperation programme as a major mechanism to support Member States in building, strengthening and maintaining their capacity to use nuclear technology in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. I also acknowledge the continuous support of IAEA in complementing national efforts made by Nepal to attain Sustainable Developing Goals in various fields.

Let us take an example. Nepal is far below the WHO recommended level of one Megavoltage machine per million population for effective cancer control. We have also realized the importance of Cyclotron based 'Radiopharmaceutical production facility' in the country with the purpose of providing quality and productive services to the patients. Though, with the IAEA support, our technical capacity is growing, and cancer patients are being offered radiation therapy, the existing gap, nevertheless, needs to be addressed. We, therefore, urge the continued support of IAEA and its member states with the key equipment employing latest technology and training our workforce to absorb the technology.

 Nepal has been historically committed to world peace as reflected on our becoming party of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as early as in 1970 and subsequently to Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Conventions. Moreover, we are also signatory to Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and Nuclear Weapons

Prohibition Treaty. Ratification process of both of these treaties is being initiated with due priority. Nepal signed an agreement with IAEA for the ‘Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons’ in 1972. Recently, we have ratified the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific (RCA)-2017.

In line with our commitment to global peace and denuclearization, we firmly believe that Nuclear Science and Technology should only be used for the peaceful purposes within recognized safeguard framework of IAEA. In the context of such commitment, Government of Nepal has adopted several measures. We formulated National Nuclear Policy in 2007 and introduced Nuclear Materials Regulatory Directives in 2015. Most importantly, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that Government of Nepal has earlier this week approved the draft of the Nuclear Bill to be tabled in the Federal Parliament in its forthcoming session. The draft of the bill itself was prepared after sustained cooperation and support of IAEA. Furthermore, we have already taken necessary initiatives to create robust legal infrastructure such as setting up an independent regulating body, formulation of regulation and technical guidelines to ensure that the law comes into effect at the earliest.

In domestic front, after successfully coping with the devastating earthquake in 2015 and bringing end to decade long political transition, we have embarked upon the road to reconstruction and economic prosperity. We urge international community to support us in our endeavour to achieve a national goal of ‘Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali’ by ensuring larger investments and smooth technology transfer that would accelerate the economic growth, create jobs and ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

This is possible only if developing countries like ours have resources and access to successful and proven technologies, including nuclear technology. We do sincerely hope that this conference will throw insights on peaceful and beneficial applications of the nuclear technology for the welfare of human beings and engage in fruitful dialogues that will

ultimately lead to safe and secure future not only for this generation but also for the generations to come.

I wish a grand success of the conference!

Thank you