



PHILIPPINES

67TH IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE
25 - 29 September 2023

Delivered by:
H.E. EVANGELINA LOURDES A. BERNAS
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Madame President,

1. I would like to convey our warm congratulations to the distinguished Ambassador of Thailand on your election as President and assure you of our delegation's full cooperation and support.
2. The Philippines also extends its congratulations to Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi on his reappointment. We look forward to building on the work we have done with the Agency under your leadership.
3. We express our appreciation to the dedicated women and men of the Agency for their valuable efforts in "accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world." In the midst of heightened uncertainties and conflicts, both economic and geopolitical, and worsening effects of climate change, the work of the Agency is ever more relevant.

Madame President,

4. The Philippines lays the foundation for its engagement with the Agency to fully maximize the benefits of nuclear technology through the Philippine Development Plan, our President's 10-Point Economic Agenda, and the Country Programme Framework for 2022 to 2027.
5. The Philippines continues to develop and expand various applications of nuclear technology with the valuable support of IAEA, to wit:
 - a. In health and medicine:** We are establishing the Nuclear Medicine Research and Innovation Center to make cancer care more affordable. We also pioneered research through the help of gamma irradiation on hemostatic agents which can stop the bleeding of ruptured blood vessels in emergency situations.
 - b. In natural resources and the environment:** We are contributing to pollution and radioactivity management in the ridge-to-reef environment, covering terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The Philippines is privileged to be one of the pilot countries for the NUTEC Plastics Initiative and hopes to further expand our participation and contributions by reaching technological readiness 4 by next year.
 - c. In food and agriculture:** Through plant mutation breeding, we are developing high-yield crops resistant to different biotic and abiotic stresses, improving

agricultural practices to enhance soil fertility and increase food production, improving food safety, and supporting agricultural exports. With the help of the Agency, our scientists developed a carrageenan solution that increases crop yield, leading to a 19% increase in farmer income. Through irradiation, we also managed to extend the shelf life of the Philippine Mango, one of the sweetest mangoes in the world.

d. In energy and industry: We aim to improve our long-term capability in harnessing nuclear energy and its power-related applications. This year, the Philippine Research Reactor, Subcritical Assembly for Training, Education and Research (PRR-1 SATER), started its operations in supporting the education and training of nuclear science and technology students and young researchers. It will also enhance our national capacity in research, development, and innovation. We thank the Agency for its assistance in holding the Nuclear Law Workshop to assist Philippine legislators and stakeholders in developing a comprehensive regulatory framework for the integration of nuclear power into its energy mix. In this regard, the proposed bill on the “Philippine National Nuclear Safety Act” progressing through our legislature aims to provide a comprehensive legal framework for radiation protection, nuclear safety, security and safeguards, in the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy in the Philippines.

Madame President,

In the Philippines nuclear science is now integrated in the basic education curriculum for science in its topic on energy at the 10th grade level, and as a subject in science and engineering programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels. At the regional level, the Philippines is spearheading efforts towards sustainability in nuclear technology in the Asia-Pacific as Chair of the Asian Network for Education in Nuclear Technology (ANENT), a regional partnership supported by the Agency for cooperation, capacity building, human resource development, and knowledge management. We are also a founding member of the recently established Nuclear Science and Technology Academy (INSTA), which aims to build strong, growing and empowered NST educators to advance the safe, secure, peaceful, and beneficial use of NST.

My delegation is also pleased to announce that the Philippines will host the first International Nuclear Science Olympiad (INSO) in August 2024, an annual international science competition for secondary school students, where we hope to welcome participants from all countries present here.

We hope that through these collective efforts, the benefits of nuclear science will encourage young people to choose nuclear science as a viable career path and a vocation for a better future for their respective communities.

6. The Philippines appreciates the Agency’s continuing efforts to develop and scale up nuclear applications to address the world’s most pressing development challenges, leading to the introduction of flagship initiatives such as ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics, Rays of Hope, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme (MSCFP), Lise Meitner Programme, Atoms for Food Partnership, and ReNuAL2, the latter of which the Philippines provided a voluntary contribution just this year.

Madam President,

7. Beyond immediately tangible applications at the community level, the Philippines continues to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology at various multilateral fora. During the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held in Vienna recently, the Philippines organized a side event with the generous support of the Agency focusing on how practical applications of nuclear science and technology are scaled up to achieve the intended multiplier effect. In this regard, we strongly reiterate our message delivered during that event – that **Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy should not be deemed ancillary, but rather co-equal to disarmament and non-proliferation.**

8. The Philippines considers the Agency's safeguards and verification function as the backbone of the global nuclear non-proliferation agenda, as it provides the international community assurances that nuclear material, facilities and activities remain exclusively under peaceful uses. We reiterate the paramount importance of States' compliance with their respective obligations under the relevant safeguards agreements, as well as full cooperation to the Agency as it fulfills its independent and impartial work.

Madam President,

9. We look forward to strengthening our national capacity in **nuclear and radiation safety, including radioactive waste management, as well as in nuclear security**, to protect people and the environment from the adverse effects of ionizing radiation. We appreciate the Agency's issuance of guidance and technical documents, advisory and peer review services, and training events on the safe and secure use of nuclear science and technology.

10. The Philippines is pleased to support efforts to improve gender equality and parity in the nuclear and scientific field. Our primary government agency responsible for peaceful uses, the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute, has been enjoying gender parity for several decades now, including in its top leadership and technical positions. Our nuclear research reactor was designed and built by one of our female nuclear scientists. Our international outlook is shaped by this key feature as we simultaneously advocate for gender balance and equitable geographic distribution in the world's leading organizations for non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses.

Finally, Madame President,

11. As we work toward achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, we are fortunate to have nuclear technology as a tool with unlimited potential at our disposal. The Philippines will continue to work constructively with other member states to harness the potential of nuclear technology while ensuring its safe and secure use.

Thank you, Madame President.