

Finding a New Role

Giovanni Verlini spoke with Ruud Lubbers after the conclusion of the 11th IAEA Scientific Forum.

Question: What are in your view the nuclear issues of the 21st century?

Ruud Lubbers: The nuclear issues of the 21st century are essentially those of the past, as they haven't really changed.

There are two dimensions to them: the world agreed to promote atoms for peace and prosperity, while at the same time find a way to gradually reduce and ultimately ban nuclear arms.

This was many decades ago, but if you take stock today, at the beginning of a new century, this is still the call: to do these two things together.

Q: What do you think is the current status and role of the IAEA? Is the IAEA equipped to deal with the challenges lying ahead?

RL: The IAEA has a good name and reputation. I would not say it is in difficulty, but it is facing challenges nonetheless.

Firstly, it needs reinforced financial means. Secondly, in reducing nuclear arms and preventing proliferation the IAEA is in a difficult position.

Q: In the past you spoke of the need for supranational means to address the nuclear challenge. What role should the IAEA play in a reinforced global nuclear order?

RL: I believe that the role of the IAEA should be strengthened anyhow. But let me give you a couple of examples more to the point.

After World War II, when six European countries decided to get together in a community, they also concluded that it would be wise for them to organise an "atoms for peace" as one community. That tradition is still there in Europe: when a country builds a nuclear power plant, still, legally speaking, the fissile material is property of the EU.

In the Middle East, there have been talks of establishing a nuclear weapons free zone. For this to happen, you need a supranational agency in charge of



Ruud Lubbers, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, chaired the 11th IAEA Scientific Forum held from 30 September-1 October 2008 in Vienna, Austria.

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fissile material in the region. That's the only way it could be done.

Q: Do you think the IAEA should have a role in disarmament and nuclear weapons monitoring as well?

RL: Yes. An Agency with a monitoring and reporting role would create confidence in the public at large. But it is for the international community to entrust the IAEA with this role.

Q: What should be the role of international partnerships between the IAEA and other international organizations?

RL: There are many issues on the table today: Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), climate change, water resources, etc. There is an awareness of the fact that these problems should be addressed together. The IAEA is in the centre of these issues and should play a key, partnership role in addressing them.