

PHILIPPINES
Statement at the 61st Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference
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Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We congratulate you on your election as President of the 61st Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference. It is especially an honor for me to see a fellow Filipino at the helm of this important meeting. Indeed, it is only the fourth time since the establishment of the Agency in 1957 that a Filipino has been given the privilege and the duty to preside in an IAEA General Conference. Also worthy of note is the fact that it is only the third time that a woman chairs the annual policy making Conference of the Agency. We hope that it is a portent of the future: when more women and more representatives from developing countries can assume the dignity and responsibility of the Presidency of the IAEA General Conference.

I wish to assure you, Madame President, the members of your Bureau, and the Secretariat of the Philippines' full support for a seamless conduct of the 61st Conference leading to a fruitful and successful conclusion.

Madame President,

The Philippines was one of the first Member States that had publicly endorsed the re-appointment of Director General Yukiya Amano for a third term. We congratulate him and express appreciation for his able stewardship of the Agency.

Likewise, the Philippines welcomes the membership of Grenada to the growing family of IAEA.

Indeed, the rising membership of the Agency attests to the value and high expectations of States on the mission of the IAEA. In particular, the contribution of nuclear science and technology and its applications to the achievement of development goals commands a premium among developing countries.

The Philippines is no exception. On a platform of poverty reduction and inclusive growth, the Philippines, has become one of the region's best-performing economies. In this regard, nuclear science and technology have supported our efforts towards growth, development and prosperity.

For example, nuclear science and technology have helped plant growth promoters to increase rice yields. The collaboration between the Philippines International Rice Research Institute and the Agency has underpinned progress in the 'climate-proofing' of rice, thereby promoting food security. We take this opportunity to invite you to visit the side event: "*Climate Proofing of Rice*."

To ensure safe access to water, the Philippines partnered with the Agency as one of three pioneer countries in the IAEA Water Availability Enhancement or IWAVE project, and

adopted the integration of isotope techniques in our national groundwater assessment program. Furthermore, as an archipelagic country with extensive marine resources, we are pleased to have been re-designated as an IAEA Collaborating Center for Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Studies.

Madame President,

Building on the gains of the 3rd Philippine Nuclear Congress which focused on reaching out to the youth, the Philippines remains active as the Team Leader for the expanded regional project “Compendium Materials on Nuclear Science and Technology for High School Teachers” for the 2018-2019 cycle.

Madame President,

The Regional Conference on Prospects of Nuclear Energy in the Asia-Pacific Region held in Manila last year not only re-ignited public discussions on the merits of nuclear energy as a green, economically-sound, and reliable power source but has also accelerated national efforts in drawing up a viable plan which would have social acceptance and public support that would lead to the inclusion of nuclear power in our country’s future energy mix. Indeed, Energy is one of the priority areas we have listed in our Country Program Framework 2016-2021 which also includes: Food and Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Industry, Human Health, and Nuclear Safety and Security.

Under the new framework, we will apply nuclear analytical and isotope techniques in the attenuation of flood and natural calamities in areas which historically suffer the impacts of severe flooding. Using nuclear techniques, we will continue to ensure food safety of our seafood products for export, protect our high value crop exports and consumers from possible adulteration of both local and imported products. We expect to have the full automation of Co-60 Multipurpose Irradiation Facility which would be made available to industries and researchers. We will work on the recovery of commercially valuable elements and minerals from locally mined ores.

In the area of health, we will focus on the development and production of radiopharmaceuticals, ensure quality management in Nuclear Medicine and Radiotherapy, and foster more accurate and optimized radiotherapy treatments. Working closely with the Agency, we also aim to develop capacities in sterile insect techniques against mosquito-borne diseases, including dengue which has claimed countless lives in the region.

We will continue to build on our progress on safety concerns, by focusing on the work on a Radioactive Waste Repository, building capacities in Emergency Preparedness and Response through the establishment of more stations in the various regions, and to operationalize the monitoring stations to have a baseline data and real-time data of radiation levels during a radiological emergency. We also look forward to working with the Agency in the Capacity Building of a New Nuclear Regulatory Body with the expectation that a new nuclear regulatory body would be established by law very soon.

The success of the Agency in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was evidenced by the wide-ranging participation of Member States in the *‘International Conference on the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme: Sixty Years and Beyond – Contributing to Development*. Similarly, the Philippines looks forward to participating actively in the *Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Applications* scheduled next year.

Management

Madame President,

Cognizant of the debates regarding the allocation of the Agency’s limited resources to its various programmes, the Philippines has consistently called for the provision of sufficient, adequate, and predictable resources for the technical cooperation programme of the Agency. At the same time, we have called for ensuring the balance in the allocation of resources for the promotional and non-promotional activities of the Agency. We have continued this call, including in the resource allocation for evaluation and audit activities of the various programmes of the Agency, particularly in the Board of Governors where we have served for two years now.

We appreciate the value of the Agency’s One House Approach and welcome the developments in the coordination of the various Departments in the Secretariat as well as between the Secretariat and the Member States. While recognizing strides made, we reiterate the importance of a more balanced representation of developing countries in the Secretariat, particularly in the senior and policy-making level. We are encouraged by the increase in the number of women in the Agency and we strongly urge the Secretariat to establish benchmarks to monitor the progress made in bridging the gender and country gaps, as part of best management practices. As everyone is aware, what cannot be measured cannot be called a success.

Nuclear Safety and Nuclear Security

The Philippines recognizes the valuable work of the Agency in striving to strengthen the global nuclear safety regime by filling in gaps in the overall nuclear safety framework through supplementary Guidance documents. Nevertheless, the Philippines reiterates its comments made during the 11 September 2017 meeting of the Board of Governors that consensus should not be at the expense of weakening the overarching imperative of safety. We call on nuclear supplier Member States to fulfill their obligations in accepting back radioactive sources that they or their domestic entities or corporations have sold should “return to supplier” be in the terms of the contract agreement. Unfortunately, the Supplementary Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources provides loopholes which do not create confidence. In sum, the Philippines will regard the said Guidance as a non-binding supplementary document. .

Nuclear security is another important aspect of the Agency’s work. We commend the Agency in holding the recent *International Conference on Nuclear Security: Commitments and Actions* – held at the Ministerial Level, which highlighted the central role of the IAEA.

In this regard, we welcome the the Nuclear Security Plan for 2018-2021 which provides part of the roadmap for the Agency's work on nuclear security in the coming years.

For its part, the Philippines is committed to playing an active role in strengthening nuclear security and will be holding the 4th ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy meeting (ASEANTOM) in Manila this December in cooperation with the IAEA. We hope that this meeting will be another building block in consolidating the global nuclear security architecture.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation and IAEA Safeguards

In July this year, guided by the provision of the Philippine Constitution which prohibits nuclear weapons in Philippine territory and by our obligations under the Bangkok Treaty establishing a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, we actively participated in the negotiations and joined 121 other nations in adopting a legally binding treaty that will prohibit nuclear weapons. The treaty is a crucial step towards the total and complete elimination of nuclear weapons which we have been pushing for since the early days of the UN. We consider this treaty as the capstone of the global disarmament architecture. We believe that the nuclear ban treaty will not supplant, but rather reinforce, the NPT, particularly the nuclear disarmament pillar.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's drive to be recognized as a Nuclear Weapon State through its persistent and increasingly alarming nuclear and ballistic missile tests is matter of grave concern. It reinforces our belief that a universal treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons may be the solution and the third way to a safer world. The Philippines strongly urges the DPRK to abandon all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, in compliance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, return to the NPT, and cooperate with the Agency in implementing its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. As the Chair of ASEAN, the Philippines facilitated the adoption of the statement of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers which, *inter alia*, supported the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and called for the resumption of dialogue on the Korean Peninsula to defuse tensions and create conditions conducive to peace and stability.

Thank you, Madame President.