

**Statement by Mrs. Madurika Weninger, Chargé d'affaires (a.i) of Sri Lanka
at the 59th Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference,
Vienna, Austria, 14-18 September 2015**

Mr. President,

Director General

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, let me at the very outset congratulate you on your election as the President of the fifty ninth regular Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We are confident that under your able stewardship, this august forum would achieve a successful outcome.

My delegation would like to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Germany as well as those of the United States of America, Russian Federation and China on reaching the comprehensive Agreement they reached on the Iranian Nuclear Issue. We also commend the Director General of IAEA and Iran for the Joint Statement.

The IAEA Annual Report 2014 provides concise, comprehensive information about the activities undertaken by the Agency in delivering on its multi-faceted mandate. Promoting peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology, enhancing nuclear safety and security, assisting to strengthen global nuclear verification and non-proliferation efforts, and providing technical assistance for the economic and social development of Member States remain the areas in which the Agency has shown further strength.

Mr. President,

Nuclear technologies and techniques make many contributions to the achievement of development targets in Member States. In 2014, the Agency continued to assist Member States in building, strengthening and maintaining capacities in the safe, peaceful and secure use of nuclear technology in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. When the new Agenda for Development and a new set of SDGs are adopted by the United Nations later this month, these will go a long way to help achieve the relevant goals in the new Development Agenda.

Mr. President,

IAEA assistance has helped many countries in addressing challenges that they cannot handle all alone. Malnutrition is one such challenge. Malnutrition in early life can lead to lifelong disadvantages such as diminished cognitive development and a higher risk of metabolic disorders and chronic diseases. The Agency 's assistance in evaluating programmes designed to prevent and treat malnutrition in early life using stable isotope techniques is highly commended. Sri Lanka hopes to receive technical assistance under Agency's TC programme to improve the capacity to screen and identify Sri Lankan adolescents at risk of cardiovascular diseases and intervene in order to prevent future disease.

The same goes for Chronic Kidney Disease which has affected almost 80,000 persons in the North, North-Western and North-Central regions of Sri Lanka. We look forward to technical assistance from IAEA.

Mr. President,

The global nuclear community continued to make steady progress in strengthening nuclear safety throughout the world in 2014. The Agency and its Member States continued to implement the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, which is encouraging for all members.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Department of Nuclear Security of the Agency to train the officers of Sri Lanka security forces, Sri Lanka Customs etc. in the recent past, and in particular, training of experts and deploying of such experts in other regions, where their services were in need. We are pleased to note that the lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident, continued to improve work on safety standards including through international experts meetings.

However, despite the disaster and the dangers illustrated by this incident, interest in nuclear power remains strong in some regions, particularly in countries which are fast growing. The International Conference on Human Resource Development for Nuclear Power Programmes: Building and Sustaining Capacity, held at the Agency's Headquarters in Vienna, in May

2014, was useful even for countries which may contemplate using nuclear power, as a component in their national energy mix.

Sri Lanka is proposing to examine the possibility of using nuclear power as an option to meet the country's future energy demands, which are growing day by day as its economy expands and industry diversifies.

The new Government of His Excellency Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka gives utmost priority to addressing the energy needs of Sri Lanka through adopting an appropriate energy mix for the country. With the support of the Agency Sri Lanka has been able to build capacity in the area of Human Resources and in the use of IAEA energy planning tools.

The expert service provided to Public Utilities Commission of Sri Lanka for Technical Support for Generation Planning Study for Sri Lanka is highly appreciated.

The principles that have been incorporated into the several IAEA instruments to provide for a safe and secure regime are significant and require cooperation at international level to ensure that nuclear materials and technological capabilities are not diverted towards non-peaceful uses.

This is essential for international security and for the protection of humanity, society and the environment.

Sri Lanka, under the new Government, has adopted Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law as an important policy plank. It is proceeding with many development activities, aimed to accelerate the economic growth and social development with these principles as policy imperatives. The Government is conscious of the need to strengthen technology and research institutes, in order to be able to accomplish the benefits of nuclear science and technology, for the advancement of national development.

Recognizing the importance of adhering to international requirements in radiation safety, security and safeguards and creating the necessary legal framework for the purpose, the Parliament of Sri Lanka enacted a new Act titled "Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Act No.40 of 2014 " which came into effect on 1st January 2015. This Act will facilitate promotion of peaceful application of nuclear technology, meeting international requirements. With the enactment of the new Act, two separate entities, namely the Atomic Energy Regulatory Council and the Atomic Energy Board have been established. The enactment of this new Law would not have been possible

if not for the timely substantive assistance provided by the Office of Legal Affairs of the Agency.

The establishment of an independent regulatory authority which is also responsible for meeting the obligations of Sri Lanka under the Safeguards Agreement and other international conventions of the IAEA demonstrates Sri Lanka's dedication and commitment towards ensuring absolutely peaceful nature of nuclear applications and the use of nuclear technology in Sri Lanka. The Authority will take forward its programme according to the policy priorities of the Government of Sri Lanka in an independent manner. The Government of Sri Lanka is currently studying the possibility of becoming a signatory to the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again recall the assistance being given by the United States Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration under Global Material Security Programme to strengthen physical protection of Category-1 sources used in Sri Lanka. This assistance covers enhancing nuclear security regulatory infrastructures by introducing new regulations and providing training for staff in the regulatory authority and other stakeholders.

Building upon this positive engagement, Sri Lanka has initiated preliminary consultations with a view to establishing collaboration with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission of the United States under its Radioactive Sources Regulatory Partnership Programme.

Enhancing food security and sustainable agricultural development through Plant Mutation Breeding remains a key priority for Sri Lanka in the agriculture sector. The Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture presented an award last year to the Department of Agriculture of Sri Lanka in acknowledgment of the promotion of sustainable crop varieties. Knowledge, experience and exposure acquired by Sri Lanka scientists working in the field of agriculture through the IAEA Technical Cooperation programme was much more contributed to receive such award to building capacity in this regard.

I am pleased to state that Chito-power, the new product developed by the Radiation Processing Section of the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board (SLAEB) in collaboration with the Horticultural Research and Development Centre (HORDI), won an award at “Sahasak Nimavum 2014” on 16th December 2014 from the Sri Lanka Inventors Commission. This product,

free of hazardous elements, developed using radiation technology and natural polymer extracted from shrimp waste (Chitosan) can be used as a natural plant growth promoter as well as an elicitor with antimicrobial activity in agriculture applications, and is environment friendly.

The Government-owned Multipurpose Gamma Irradiation Facility, which commenced its commercial operation at the beginning of last year, continues to provide our industries irradiation services for industry products, spices and other foods. We wish to place on record our appreciation of the Agency's technical assistance to train technical staff working in this facility.

The expert mission to Sri Lanka under agency's Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) took place from 8th - 10th December 2014. This was carried out with the objective of assessing the status of radiation medicine, and reviewing the progress that has been made and how best the Agency can provide further assistance under this programme as Sri Lanka is experiencing a high incident rate in cancer.

Sri Lanka acknowledges with appreciation the assistance to these and many of other initiatives extended through the Technical Cooperation

Programme of the IAEA. The newly established Atomic Energy Board of Sri Lanka carries out qualitative, dedicated work in advancing cooperation in the technical areas, facilitating coordination of technical assistance in addition to performing other mandated tasks.

In the past twelve months alone, the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board has hosted three IAEA international events. While contributing to the development of knowledge and skills of international participants, Sri Lankan scientists also have benefited from the exposure and the interactions that these events provided. We look forward to more opportunities to enhance skills and capabilities in the field of nuclear science and technology.

Sri Lanka is also making arrangements to co-host a Regional Training Course with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in collaboration with the Geological Survey and Mines Bureau (GSMB) from 29 November to 05 December 2015.

Sri Lanka is currently receiving technical assistance from the Agency for setting up of a National Centre for Nuclear Agriculture and National Centre for Marine Applications in collaboration with national stake holders, the

Marine Environmental Prevention Authority (MEPA) and the National Aquatic Resource Authority (NARA). Gamma Cell Irradiator, a valuable scientific equipment provided under technical cooperation programme to Department of Agriculture of Sri Lanka is of great value as this equipment can be used for various research purposes in the country.

The Regional Cooperative Agreement (RCA) of which Sri Lanka has been a participant since 1976 has to a great deal enabled assistance in developing Non Destructive Testing (NDT) in following up the programmes introduced by the RCA. Sri Lanka has recognized the importance of the NDT in enhancing safety and productivity in industry. The National Centre for Non-Destructive Testing (NCNDT) which has commenced its work from 14th October 2014, will perform this task on an enhanced scale. While thanking the Agency for the support extended, we would look forward to further assistance under a new national project to be implemented during next TC Cycle to strengthen this Center to be able to provide the service according to demand.

We are pleased that technical assistance will be forthcoming for the establishment of a Regional Centre for Research and Training in Medical and Molecular Entomology for vector-borne disease control in the

University of Kelaniya, under the next biennium programme commencing 2016. This is one of the five projects which are nationally important, expected to be implemented under the next TC cycle of the Agency.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our call for assistance from the IAEA to help contain the fast spreading Chronic Kidney Disease in parts of Sri Lanka. This is one of the urgent priorities currently for the health and water management sectors.

During previous years, Sri Lanka has noted that the number of professional posts held by Sri Lankan Scientists, Administrative and Management professionals has decreased. This is of concern to Sri Lanka and should receive the attention that it deserves.

Finally, Mr. President, we regret the failure of the NPT Review Conference held in April/May 2015 in New York to reach an outcome. It is important that we reconsider the rigid positions which led to this failure. Enduring Peace and security for all is a crying call of humanity.

Mr. President, in concluding I wish to thank the Secretariat of the Agency for the impressive arrangements made for this important Session of the GC

as well as for their excellent cooperation with Sri Lanka in all aspects of Agency's work. Sri Lanka wishes to place on record our deep appreciation to the Director General Mr. Amano and to the staff of the IAEA. Sri Lanka had the privilege of chairing 58th Session of the General Conference with satisfaction. I thank you, Mr. President, for your able leadership and all the delegates present for understanding and patience. We look forward to working with the IAEA in a spirit of cooperation.