



**STATEMENT BY
MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
AT THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR SAFETY
20 JUNE 2011, VIENNA, AUSTRIA**

Director General Yukiya Amano

President of the Conference, Ambassador Antonio Guerreiro

Distinguished Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, I wish to take this opportunity to extend our deepest sympathies to the Government and people of Japan for their tremendous loss and suffering caused by the Tohoku earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The disaster was a major tragedy but the Japanese people had reacted with impressive composure and resilience. As our Japanese friends continue to fight on to stabilise the situation at the Fukushima nuclear plants, I would like to convey our best wishes for their early success. I am confident that the Japanese Government, with the help of the IAEA and the entire international community, will eventually resolve the crisis.

2 Secondly, I wish to thank the IAEA for organising this timely conference and to Ambassador Guerreiro for his able chairmanship of the Conference.

3 The Japanese Government's willingness to share the lessons of the Fukushima crisis, at a time when the stabilisation efforts are still ongoing, is highly commendable.

4 The Fukushima crisis has triggered a chain reaction that will impact on the nuclear energy industry for decades to come. The EU has decided that all its nuclear power plants would be subjected to stress tests by the end of this year in order to ensure minimum safety standards. Germany has decided to shutdown all its nuclear power plants by 2022. Spain and Switzerland have indicated their intentions to shut down their reactors at the end of the

operating lives. In Italy, plans for a nuclear energy revival are all but scrapped. In Asia and elsewhere, the surge in public concern over the health and environmental hazards of nuclear energy has added to the complexity of policy-making in many countries on whether to introduce nuclear power into their energy mix.

5 However, the fundamental reasons that drove countries to explore nuclear energy have not changed. Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, strong economic growth and a rising population will continue to push up demand for energy. The lack of viable alternative energy sources faced by many countries and climate change concerns render it difficult for them to foreclose the option of nuclear energy. Hence, many countries remain intent to proceed with their nuclear energy plans. By 2030, 321 out of 550 new nuclear reactors in operation will be located in Asia. By then, 7 of the 18 newcomers to nuclear power would come from Asia.

6 Given that nuclear energy is here for the long haul, what lessons can we draw from Fukushima? Allow me to share some thoughts and suggestions.

7 First, the Fukushima crisis is a reminder that low probability high impact accidents can and do occur. Every critical stage in the building of nuclear power plants must be based on thorough risk assessments with zero tolerance for accidents, be it man made or an act of God. This includes site selection, design, construction and operations. Safety should be a key consideration.

8 Second, although the primary responsibility for nuclear safety rests with individual states, we must not forget that nuclear accidents have far reaching and potentially devastating trans-boundary impact. Individual states therefore have a moral responsibility to be prompt and transparent in sharing information on nuclear accidents and their implications with other states.

9 Third, the IAEA's role in setting and promoting the highest and most robust nuclear safety standards is critical and should be strengthened. The IAEA's recommendations on nuclear safety should be applied universally. We should also strengthen the peer review mechanism in the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

10 Fourth, international, regional and national emergency preparedness and response capabilities must be strengthened. Countries potentially at risk of nuclear fallout should be provided relevant information promptly. Timely

and transparent information on the status of the reactors, the radioactive contamination to the environment and food supply are important to enable governments to take necessary precautionary actions against the transboundary effects. Without proper information, many governments in the region tended to over-cater to the emergency. For instance, countries were using different standards to delineate contamination buffer zones to issue travel advisories and restrict food imports in order to safeguard public health. There was also the difficulty of translating the complex nature of a nuclear crisis into simple and easy to understand terms for effective public communications. The IAEA should be in a position to provide objective technical assessment as the crisis unfolded and to advise countries in need. This is particularly important for countries, such as Singapore, which lacked the expertise to have a complete understanding of the technical information involving nuclear accidents.

11 Following the Fukushima accident, ASEAN has taken steps as a region to address the issue of nuclear safety. At the recent 18th ASEAN Summit in May, ASEAN Leaders discussed the need for greater regional cooperation on safety and security in the development of civilian nuclear energy. ASEAN has pledged its support to the IAEA's efforts to strengthen the global nuclear safety framework and to develop a coordinated regional approach that could meaningfully contribute to global undertakings to improve nuclear safety.

12 At the Asia-Europe Meeting (or ASEM) Ministerial Meeting held in Hungary earlier this month, the Foreign Ministers of the ASEM countries have also agreed that there was a need to enhance cooperation between Asia and Europe on nuclear safety. To this end, an ASEM nuclear safety seminar will be held in Singapore next year.

13 As we spend the next few days deliberating on how to strengthen the IAEA's role in nuclear safety and how to prevent another nuclear accident, I would like to encourage officials to deliver a concrete action plan and commit to its full and effective implementation. Singapore hopes that this conference will help both countries with nuclear power reactors and countries who are planning to build them reassess their nuclear safety plans. After all, we owe as much to our people as to the generations to come.

Thank you.

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