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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO IAEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR SAFETY
Vienna, 20 June 2011

Delivered by Mr. Sergio Duarte, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

This ministerial gathering takes place in the still-sombre shadow of the nuclear tragedy at Fukushima.

I thank Director General Amano and the IAEA for their swift response to the accident and for the Agency's continuous follow-up efforts. Recognizing its central role in nuclear safety and security, I look forward to the Agency's development of concrete proposals, including for strengthening cooperation among international organizations.

To the people of Japan, I offer my deepest sympathies as well as my pledge to do all I can to ensure that no such tragedy ever happens again at a nuclear facility.

During my visit to Chernobyl in April, I witnessed the devastation first-hand, a moving experience which provided an opportunity to reflect upon the impact of the disaster. As we witnessed the nuclear disaster at Fukushima when the international community commemorates the 25th year of Chernobyl, we have to take it as a serious wake up call.

Nuclear safety is not a fixed condition, but an evolving process. Much of this process involves technological innovations, improvements in training and oversight mechanism, as well as enhanced disaster preparedness.

I believe the lessons of Fukushima will help to move this process forward, so that countries will reflect on their current system on nuclear safety and renewed nuclear safety culture is introduced.

The future of nuclear energy is critically dependent upon the maintenance of the highest safety standards. This is why nuclear safety is widely viewed as a global public good; its success serves the interests of people everywhere, but its failure can lead to disasters that respect no national boundaries.

Fortunately, political momentum is growing for additional concrete steps to enhance nuclear safety, including the measures considered at the most recent G8 Summit, the Ministerial Seminar on Nuclear Safety hosted by France, and the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

And as a global public good, nuclear safety also deserves close attention at the United Nations.

With that in mind, last month I launched a UN system-wide study on the full implications of the Fukushima accident. This report is now in preparation and will be submitted to the High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security to be held on 22 September during the Sixty-sixth Session of the UN General Assembly. I thank the IAEA for its important cooperation in the preparation of this study. In producing this study, it is my intention to highlight the need to strengthen the capacity of the relevant international organizations, particularly the IAEA, recognizing its central role.

A new page of history is about to be turned in our relationship with nuclear energy. The challenge of nuclear safety merits our utmost ingenuity and will, and I wish all participants well in your important deliberations. When it comes to nuclear safety, nations must remain united.