

Finland

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Mr Chairman,

Finland would like to express once again its solidarity and sympathy to the people and government of Japan for the tragic loss of human life which has resulted from the 11 March earthquake and the tsunami, and the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Power Plant.

We acknowledge that it is a choice for all nations to benefit from the use of nuclear power. However, rights come with responsibilities. The utilization of this energy source has to be responsible and safe. The tragic accident in Fukushima underlines the need for a high-grade safety culture and regulation.

In Finland, nuclear power plants have been in operation since late-1970s. The safety record is good and the performance figures are excellent. At present, Finland's fifth nuclear power unit is under construction in Olkiluoto and two further units were given green light by the government and the parliament last year.

In countries using nuclear energy, legislation and responsibilities have to be clear and regulatory bodies need to be given required competence and resources to fulfil their tasks. The safety culture needs to be developed in the nuclear sector as a whole, and requires continuous updating.

The Fukushima accident reminded us, in particular, of the need of a thorough assessment for the lessons learned. We welcome the stress tests underway in many countries, focussing on the preparedness to respond to natural disasters and loss of power. In Finland, the national risk assessment was launched immediately after the accident. Preliminary results show that there are no immediate safety concerns regarding Finnish nuclear facilities. However, the assessment by the regulator, STUK, is still on-going together with European-wide stress tests and will most likely lead to safety improvements.

The next step should be the consideration to improve nuclear safety provisions both at national and international level. The international conventions and the IAEA safety standards are of primary importance. The Agency plays an ever increasing role in addressing global nuclear safety issues. The focus should be on how to prevent accidents as well as how to handle emergency situations.

International peer reviews and audits are effective tools for developing nuclear safety. Both nuclear facilities and regulators should be assessed regularly. In this regard, Finland has plenty of nuclear safety expertise to

offer, concerning both the existing nuclear power plants and designing safety features for new units. The work should aim at continuous improvements in all safety relevant aspects of nuclear energy: technical safety, operation of facilities, and regulation.

Nuclear waste management is an essential part of overall nuclear safety. A strategy on how to plan and implement the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel is necessary in all countries using nuclear energy. At the same time, the financing of nuclear waste management and decommissioning has to be organised in a sustainable way.

In Finland, the Government took a line on spent fuel management already in 1983. Of course, plans have advanced after that, but the main decision is still valid: the readiness for final disposal should be reached by 2020. All waste management and decommissioning costs have to be fully covered by the nuclear power companies.

Finally, we find it necessary to develop a more effective international regime on nuclear liabilities. Nuclear accidents do not obey national borders and a global nuclear liability regime is needed. We have just decided to increase those liabilities nationally. From the beginning of 2012, the amount of operator's insured liabilities has to be 700 million euro. In addition to that, the operators will face unlimited liabilities in the case of accident.

Mr Chairman, The Fukushima accident has shown in a drastic manner the paramount importance of nuclear safety. The Ministerial Conference and the adopted Declaration provide an opportunity that must not be missed. We also look forward to the Director General's Action Plan. These initiatives should launch a process in the course of which the international legal framework on nuclear safety would be reviewed.

Thank you Mr Chairman.