

STATEMENT

**BY
GHANA'S MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY,
MS. SHERRY AYITEY, AT THE IAEA MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON
NUCLEAR SAFETY. VIENNA, AUSTRIA, 20-24 June 2011**

Mr. President,

The Director-General of the IAEA,

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Government of Ghana, I wish to congratulate you on your election as President of this very important Ministerial conference, and I assure you of the full support of my delegation. Let me also commend the Director-General of the IAEA, Mr. Yukiya Amano for convening this conference which is intended to take a critical look at the issue of nuclear safety in the wake of the nuclear incident in Japan and measures to strengthen emergency response capabilities.

Mr. President,

The People and Government of Ghana learnt of the earthquake and tsunami which occurred on 11th March, 2011, with profound shock and sadness. The magnitude of the earthquake and the accompanying tsunami, the scale of destruction and devastation and sadly, the loss of thousands of lives were indeed overwhelming. Of particular concern was the effect on the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant, as we followed the efforts made to contain and mitigate radioactive contamination. Indeed, the Government of Ghana joined other member states to console with the people of Japan, and today, we join others to commend the government and people of Japan for the commitment to rebuild the affected areas for the resumption of normal social and economic activity. We also commend the coordinated international and inter-agency response as well as the collaborative efforts of various international organisations to address the crisis.

Mr. President,

Since the incident, the Agency has undertaken fact-finding missions to the Fukushima nuclear power plant to assess first hand the extent of damage in order to take measures necessary to handle such accidents in future. There is no doubt, however, that the Fukushima incident has severely shaken the public's confidence in the safety of nuclear power plants. It has also brought to the fore questions about the safety of nuclear power plants, and highlighted the need for better operating procedures, a strengthened and more effective regulatory environment and a strong safety culture.

At the 54th General Conference in 2010, the Director-General in his opening address, stated the importance of nuclear energy in the Agency's work and the growing international interest in nuclear power as a clean and stable source of energy. Indeed, it was in this knowledge that Ghana and other developing countries decided to include nuclear energy in their energy mix. It is therefore important that we do not let the Fukushima incident impair our people's appreciation of the benefits of nuclear energy.

That is why Ghana welcomes the convening of this Conference and looks forward to fruitful exchanges in the coming days.

Mr. President,

As a newcomer country, Ghana is following the situation keenly and looks forward to learning valuable lessons. In that connection, we welcome the information provided in the Japanese government's report to the Conference, noting, inter alia, the effects at other nuclear power stations in the Fukushima area, such as the Onagawa plant. We also welcome the preliminary report of the IAEA Expert Mission to Japan and it is hoped that the conclusions therein will enrich our discussions at this conference, and contribute to the strengthening of nuclear safety worldwide, as well as lead to new technologies and innovation which could improve and enhance safety in nuclear power plants.

Mr. President,

The Government of Ghana remains committed to the work of the Agency and to the implementation of the relevant international instruments of nuclear security. In that regard, Ghana recently acceded to the 'Convention on Nuclear Safety' and the 'Joint

Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radio-active Waste Management'. The Government of Ghana is also determined that the Fukushima incident will not affect its decision to include nuclear power in its energy mix. It is hoped, therefore, that the outcome of this conference will not only help us to improve nuclear safety and enhance the emergency preparedness procedures for Ghana's nuclear programme, but will adequately address the concerns of the general public on the safety of nuclear energy.

Thank You Mr. President.