

**IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety  
Vienna 20-24 June 2011.**

**Statement of the Head of the Italian Delegation, Ambassador Gianni Ghisi, Governor and Resident Representative**

Mr President,

At the outset, let me congratulate you for your election and for having wisely and effectively conducted the consultations paving the way to the most fruitful results of this conference. I would also like to thank Director General Yukiya Amano for convening this high level event in the aftermath of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Power Plant which provides an opportunity to draw lessons from this sad event as well as to further strengthen nuclear safety worldwide, in all its aspects. Tangible results in this direction will be the best way to commemorate the victims of the devastating East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Allow me to renew, on behalf of Italy, the heartfelt solidarity and condolences to the people and Government of Japan and to praise the courage, composure and resilience of the Japanese people throughout these hardships.

Mr. President

The events in Fukushima, 25 years after Chernobyl, highlighted the leading role of the IAEA and underlined the importance of international cooperation on nuclear safety, including cooperation among governments, regulatory bodies, industry and research institutions.

The Declaration we have adopted is just the beginning of a comprehensive process which, building upon the report of the IAEA International Fact Finding Expert Mission of the Nuclear Accident as well as upon the proceedings of the Working Sessions, will lead us to the approval of a comprehensive Action Plan at the next General Conference.

Mr President,

To better see the way ahead it is important not to forget where we come from. The International Atomic Energy Agency's mission was to pave the way for an era of "Atoms for Peace and Prosperity". Our Statute foresaw

that in any project or other arrangements to which the IAEA was requested to apply safeguards it should have the right “to require the observance of any health and safety measures prescribed by the Agency” and that the IAEA’s inspectors would have the responsibility of determining whether “there is compliance with those health and safety standards”. However, in 1976, the Board of Governors by revising the document on “The Agency’s Health and Safety Measures”, replaced the routine inspections to verify compliance with these measures with a voluntary system. As a matter of fact, the Agency waived its statutory right to verify compliance with its own safety standards

In the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, the Agency considerably raised its profile on nuclear safety by launching a process that saw, among other initiatives, a meeting of international experts to review the causes of the accident and the preparation of two international conventions, on Early Notification of Nuclear Accidents and on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident. These conventions were adopted, setting a speed record, at a special meeting of the General Conference in September 1986. Following a European initiative, the diplomatic conference convened by the Agency in 1994 approved the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the first international legally binding instrument to ensure the safety of land based nuclear power reactors. It is not the first time, therefore, that the Agency is confronted with a major nuclear accident and is mobilizing all its expertise and resources in order to reinforce the global system of nuclear safety, adapting its mechanisms and procedures to the new challenges.

Mr President,

The challenges of the Post Fukushima environment are clearly indicated in the declaration we adopted, namely: to enhance the safety of nuclear installations worldwide, to reinforce the effectiveness of emergency preparedness and response and to strengthen the global nuclear safety framework.

A thorough assessment of the accident, based upon the Report of the Fact Finding Mission as well as an independent, international radiological assessment of its consequences is a prerequisite for future concerted efforts and we are confident that the brainstorming in the working sessions will lay the groundwork for the subsequent drafting of the Action Plan.

First of all, we deem urgent to enhance the effectiveness and

transparency of the existing peer review process, and to pursue the goal of gradually strengthening its mechanisms by encouraging Member States to implement recommendations, bearing in mind that immediate priority should be ~~to~~ the universal effective implementation and enforcement of the comprehensive IAEA Safety Standards. We therefore took note with great interest of the five programmatic points announced by the Director General in his introductory statement. We welcome the initiative to strengthen some of existing standards so as to reinforce the preventive layers against the occurrence of severe nuclear accidents, with particular attention to the effects of multiple severe hazards. My Delegation wishes also to support the proposal to complement national assessments of operating NPPs with IAEA international experts peer reviews, in the respect of the principle of national responsibility for safety. In this regard, let me mention that Italy is already committed to actively participate in the peer review mechanism envisaged by the “stress test” programme launched by EU Institutions and Member States for a targeted reassessment of operating NPPs and under construction in Europe in front of the Fukushima accident.

As to the enhancement of the safety of nuclear installations, Italy encourages all Member States to make use of the relevant IAEA capabilities and help<sup>to</sup> enhance the safety of their nuclear installations. In this context, I would like to draw your attention on the existing tools such as the review missions already provided by the Agency to assess: their regulatory framework and activities (IRRS, Integrated Regulatory Review Service), the design of nuclear power plants (IRS, Integrated Safety Review) and their operation (OSART, Operational Safety Review Team). Careful consideration should be given to the improvement inspection and reporting procedures of the review missions and to agree on mission schedules for Member States, thus including these missions in their regulatory framework.

Emergency preparedness and crisis management mechanisms can be further improved by enhancing international cooperation, in particular at the regional level. The Fukushima accident was the first important real test of the mechanisms introduced by the Convention on Early Notification and on Assistance in Case of a Nuclear Accident, in practice of the post Chernobyl emergency system. Although this system by and large worked well we have still a lot to learn from the Fukushima experience in order to further enhance its effectiveness.

A qualitative jump forward is urgently required to reinforce the international legal framework, starting from the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which is the cornerstone of the international safety regime.

In this regard, Italy welcomes the extraordinary meeting of contracting parties to take place in August 2012. The meeting will review measures that could strengthen the Convention, notably regarding safety objectives, the responsibility of governments for timely and sufficient measures on accident prevention and management, including the adjustment of procedures for coordination and interaction between the government, the operator and the safety authority, as well as an effective peer review mechanism.

The independence of the National Regulatory Authorities is one of the pillars of the Convention on Nuclear Safety as well as of the Euratom Safety directive. The Declaration we adopted rightly underscores our shared commitment to strengthen their authority, competence and resources.

Italy also urges Member States that have not yet done so to ratify the other relevant international conventions adopted under the auspices of the IAEA (Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, Joint Convention on the safety of Spent Fuel Management and of Radioactive Waste Management), which are crucial to the international safety regime.

Mr President,

following the results of the public consultation held last week, Italy will continue its commitment of assigning adequate resources for maintaining the existing level of competences, as well as to the to manage the heritage of the past nuclear programme being committed to ensure the highest level of the safety in decommissioning and waste management activities. Furthermore Italy is determined to contribute to all the initiatives that will be undertaken under the IAEA umbrella to strengthen the global nuclear safety regime, including new efforts in the research field. My Delegation is ready to take an active part in the working sessions.

To conclude Mr. President: now it is time for action. The political commitment for enhancing the nuclear safety is clear. The Member States and the Agency shall now translate the Political Declaration into concrete steps, constituting an effectively structured and realistic plan of action. This is what our citizens expect.

Thank you for your attention.



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Thank you for your attention.

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