

**FUKUSHIMA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
DECEMBER 2012 - NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT**

Mr Co-Presidents

First, let me offer New Zealand's congratulations to you both on assumption of the Co-Presidency of this Conference. It is a great honour for me to be here in Fukushima and let me assure you both of New Zealand's full cooperation toward our work to make this conference a success.

Mr Co-Presidents

The antecedents of this conference are particularly poignant for New Zealand. On the 22 February last year New Zealand's second largest city, Christchurch, experienced a magnitude 6.3 earthquake, following a 7.1 quake in the same location six months earlier.

When New Zealand called for international assistance following this quake, Japan was one of the first countries to offer help. Within two-days a 66-member search and rescue team from Japan was in Christchurch.

Less than three weeks after arriving in New Zealand the same Japanese rescuers had to turnaround to go back to a far greater disaster at home. On 11 March 2011 the Great East Japan Earthquake struck devastating this province and leading to the accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations.

Within hours of hearing of the tragedy here, New Zealand arranged to send a 54-person urban search and rescue team to Minami-Sanriku in Miyagi Prefecture.

The enormity of what Japan suffered was felt deeply by New Zealanders. We have an overwhelming sense of sympathy and solidarity for our Japanese friends.

Mr Co-Presidents

The tragic Fukushima nuclear accident that stemmed from the earthquake here was a sobering reminder of the inherent danger of the atom.

The accident and its aftermath reinforced the interest of all countries in ensuring that international nuclear safety and security standards are adhered to and constantly reviewed and updated as technologies improve.

In this regard New Zealand greatly appreciates the rationale for this Conference. This meeting will aid both as a practical measure for us to assess our progress but also a symbol of our collective political will for all states to address nuclear safety.

We thank the Japanese Government and the International Atomic Energy Agency for their co-hosting and we welcome the opportunity for the international community to further review this critical work, in particular as a follow-up to the Declaration of the June 2011 IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety.

Mr Co-Presidents

New Zealand acknowledges the many reports disseminated by Japan and the IAEA international fact finding and peer review missions on the accident and its aftermath. These, in tandem with the on-going International Experts Meetings, have allowed critical discussion and review of international efforts to respond to the Fukushima disaster. There are many lessons to be learned.

For New Zealand, the importance of enhanced transparency - secured in part through events such as this Conference - is one of the key measures that can be put in place in light of the disaster. Effective communication, both before and after an accident, can help ensure adequate and timely responses are taken on the basis of scientific and objective information. Close cooperation between local, national and international authorities can further assist in properly informing both decision-makers and the public in the event of an accident.

From within the first few hours of this incident the IAEA played a vital role in leading and coordinating the international response. Over a year on, the IAEA's Nuclear Safety Action Plan approved at the 2011 General Conference, remains a credible response to the Fukushima accident and to member states' joint desire to strengthen the global safety regime.

While we welcome the efforts of the Agency it is essential that we maintain our sense of urgency until the Plan is implemented in full. As we are all aware it is not to be treated as static. Member states and the Agency must continue to provide the needed resources to promote nuclear safety culture worldwide and fully implement the Plan. The Action Plan is a living document, and one that must be reviewed, updated and not simply sit on a shelf.

Mr Co-Presidents

New Zealand joins others in recognising the right to decide to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as part of the existing or planned energy mix for a number of countries and in conformity with Articles I, II, III and IV of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

For New Zealand the generation of electricity through the use of nuclear energy is not an option we intend to utilise. We emphasise that the development and use of nuclear energy must be accompanied, through all stages of the nuclear fuel cycle, by the highest standards of safety and security, waste management and disposal and non-proliferation safeguards. Nuclear safety must be a prerequisite for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Mr Co-Presidents

Like other NPT states, New Zealand benefits from the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In fields such as human health and water and environmental management, New Zealanders contribute to and benefit from advances in nuclear science, both in our own national institutions and in cooperation with others.

New Zealand's international engagement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is particularly directed to supporting cooperation on non-power applications within our region, such as the IAEA's Peaceful Uses Initiative where we have contributed to the marine benchmark study on the possible impact of Fukushima radioactive releases in Asia-Pacific, and through the IAEA's Regional Cooperation Arrangement.

Mr Co-Presidents

As we saw from the accident last year the risk of lapses in nuclear safety have the potential for ramifications beyond national boundaries. In this regard shipments of radioactive material, by air, land or sea, are an inevitable by-product of growth in the use of nuclear energy.

As an island nation New Zealand is concerned to ensure that such shipments are conducted in the highest possible safety and security conditions, and that communication between shipping and other interested states is timely, transparent and takes place within a well-defined framework, including proper emergency preparedness and response systems. We welcome the work underway in the IAEA in this

area. In addition, improving the international nuclear liability regime, particularly through addressing issues of concern around transport, remains a priority for New Zealand.

Mr Co-Presidents

International developments in the last two years have reminded us that the use of nuclear energy entails not only national rights, but also global responsibilities. The renewed international focus on safety is critical.

But we must recognise that achieving nuclear safety is not an absolute, not something that can simply be done and left. Nuclear safety is a process and one in which we all have a stake. There can be no complacency and we must remain vigilant. We welcome this Conference as an opportunity to continue this process.

Finally I would like to thank the Government of Japan, the IAEA and the province and people of the Fukushima Province, including Governor Yuhei Sato, for their hosting of this important Conference.

Thank you Mr Co-Presidents.