

Ireland.

**Draft statement for Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety**

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen

Our participation in this international conference in Fukushima Prefecture less than two years after the extraordinary material destruction and tragic loss of life caused by the Great East Japan earthquake and the subsequent accident at TEPCO's nuclear power plant should be interpreted first and foremost as a sign of our solidarity with the Japanese people and government and of our shared humanity in the face of catastrophe.

Your loss, your grief and your suffering resonates deeply with the Irish people.

Our presence is also an acknowledgement of the extraordinary courage and determination of those in the emergency services whose bravery and resourcefulness was and continues to be an essential element in the recovery process.

And, looking to the future, our discussions here will hopefully enable us to come to an even better understanding of the underlying causes of the events of March 2011 and, by drawing the necessary conclusions, seek to avoid a repetition.

The holding of the IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety in Vienna in June 2011 allowed us all to consider how some of our assumptions concerning nuclear safety had been challenged. Ireland greatly values the work that has been done since then, including as part of the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, to strengthen the global system of nuclear safety.

I welcome the presentation by the Secretariat at this conference of the reports of the three international experts' meetings organised in 2012 in relation to the Action Plan. The results of these meetings, the outcome of the Second Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, as well as the results of peer reviewed stress-tests, should provide valuable inputs that will help to shape safety standards to the highest degree of protection. The IAEA's assistance to member states, including to those planning to embark on a nuclear power programme, and in capacity building, is an important contribution in this regard.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I speak as the representative of an IAEA Member State that has freely chosen not to pursue the option of nuclear power generation. We acknowledge the sovereign right of all states to determine the composition of their energy mix, including from nuclear energy. The trans-boundary nature of the grave environmental and health risks associated with nuclear power mean, of course, that States that opt for nuclear power generation bear a heavy responsibility, undiminished by time or circumstance, to ensure that their facilities are operated to the highest possible safety standards. That much is indisputable.

But because accidents happen- and Fukushima represented a realization of our deepest and darkest fears - I must emphasise that our work is not complete, nor can it ever be. We can and must continue to learn, through national efforts, international peer reviews and the sharing of knowledge. The safe use of nuclear technology requires all national authorities to ensure now and in the future that they use the strongest possible nuclear safety infrastructure, underpinned by effective, independent, competent and authoritative regulation. Transparency, at national and regional levels, in the operation of nuclear facilities, is paramount especially in the event of a natural disaster or an accident.

As we consider the valuable lessons learned since 2011, it is essential that we continue to be aware of the risks posed by possible future incidents, no matter how unlikely they may now appear. I look forward to discussions on how we can further strengthen nuclear safety. As part of this effort, we must all work to support the IAEA and its mandate, including as regards emergency preparedness and response and safety oversight of facilities.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

Nuclear safety covers much more than just nuclear power stations. The transport of radioactive material creates risks for populations and states which have nothing to do with nuclear power generation. The IAEA is a unique international forum in which such issues can and should be discussed, in the interest of reaching accommodation and encouraging cooperation. Last year's IAEA international conference on the Safe and Secure Transport of Radioactive Materials as well as the ongoing and productive dialogue on this topic are examples of how different states can work together towards the shared objective of nuclear safety.

Ireland strongly values the IAEA's role in promoting safe, secure and peaceful nuclear technologies. The importance of its mission will further increase in the years ahead as new demands, technologies and challenges arise. Ireland remains committed to working with the Agency and with other member states in attaining our common goals.

Thank you.