



Israel Atomic Energy Commission

Statement

By

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Office

to the Fukushima Ministerial Conference

On Nuclear Safety

15-17 December 2012

Mr. Chairman, IAEA Director General, distinguished Ministers and delegates,

Israel would like to congratulate the Government of Japan and the Director General of the IAEA for the initiative to convene this high-level Ministerial Conference to raise awareness to the importance of maintaining high standards of nuclear safety on the national, regional and global level.

Nearly two years have passed since the accident in the Fukushima Da'ichi nuclear power plant. We are here today, to draw on the lessons of that accident and its ramifications.

Israel has offered its assistance to Japan during the Fukushima crisis and our hearts are with the people of Japan, as they still struggle to repair the massive damage caused by the force of nature.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel supports the efforts of the IAEA to implement the lessons learned from the accident, as expressed in the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety which was approved by the IAEA General Conference in September 2011. In the past year, we have seen further increase in the number of IAEA activities and events dedicated to promoting nuclear safety as well as emergency preparedness. IAEA efforts are commendable indeed. I would also like to convey Israel's support for the joint initiative by the IAEA and the Government of Canada to convene in April an International Conference on Effective Nuclear Regulatory Systems, which have such critical role in addressing nuclear safety.

Mr. Chairman,

In the context of the global effort to promote nuclear safety I find it highly important to stress, once again, Israel's strong commitment and actions to ensure the strictest application of nuclear safety standards.

Israel operates two nuclear centers, the Soreq Nuclear Research Center and the Nuclear Research Center Negev. Both centers are located within a safe distance from populated areas and operate according to high safety standards, which are compatible with IAEA safety standards, specifically the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Research Reactors.

Israeli experts actively participate in the Safety Standards Committees of the IAEA, including the Commission on Safety Standards. Israel allocates appropriate resources to maintain and to operate its nuclear centers by qualified and experienced personnel. It also engages with various global partners to share information, resources and training skills for the mutual enhancement of nuclear safety.

Part of Israel's efforts in the field of nuclear safety includes an emphasis on reactor ageing management. In this context, during the years Israel has upgraded a considerable part of its nuclear infrastructure to bring it up to date with the latest developments in the field. Reactor components which could not be replaced were thoroughly reviewed using novel techniques such as ultrasonic non-destructive testing for the ultrasonic scanning of the research reactor tank wall, without removal of the vessel top cover.

In the last IAEA General Conference, Israel has announced its decision to request an IAEA Integrated Safety Assessment for the Soreq Research Reactor, IRR-1. We look forward to receiving this mission to demonstrate our strict observance of safety standards and, where necessary, to apply additional measures and recommendations for further improvements.

One of the most important issues which are addressed by the IAEA action plan on nuclear safety is the strength and independence of national regulatory bodies. In Israel, safety of research reactors is supervised both by the IAEC Nuclear Licensing and Safety Office, which I have the honor to head, and by an independent public Advisory Committee on Nuclear Safety, that reports directly to the Prime Minister. The national radioactive waste disposal site, located at NRCN, is also under the supervision of the Nuclear Licensing and Safety Office.

In February 2011 – prior to the events in Fukushima – a Government Decision in Israel approved the independent status of the IAEC Nuclear Licensing and Safety Office. This is another step forward in bringing nuclear safety in Israel in line with the highest international standards. In addition to the supervision by these two bodies, the Ministry of Environmental Protection conducts routine monitoring of the areas adjacent to the nuclear research centers, as well as supervision of the control of radioactive sources.

Mr. Chairman,

Another important lesson of the nuclear crisis in Fukushima is the need for regional and international concerted emergency preparedness and response. Israel is a member of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in Case of a Nuclear Accident and supports IAEA efforts to strengthen coordination under these conventions through workshops and exercises.

Israel respects the aspirations of its neighboring countries for peaceful nuclear research and energy. As the consequences of a possible nuclear accident cannot be contained within national boundaries, Israel emphasizes the merit of national and regional emergency preparedness and response, including regional cooperation. Israel has proposed in the past to study

jointly in the region the lessons learned in Fukushima and to promote such cooperation.

At the national level, Israel has long put in place all necessary emergency response procedures. Though Israel considers the probability of leakage or emission of radioactivity from its nuclear research centers as very low, it has placed a contingency plan for such an emergency. Israel also conducts periodic national preparedness exercises for the same purpose. The last major national exercise was held in September 2011.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the Fukushima nuclear accident, it is important to note that nuclear energy remains a valuable source of energy for the future. Nuclear science, engineering and research will continue to play an important role in the world in the 21st century. Israel, like many states in Europe, Asia and elsewhere in the world, will continue to operate its nuclear centers for the promotion of science and energy, while taking measures to preserve and constantly increase nuclear safety in all its aspects.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.