

Statement of the Head of Delegation of the Republic of Italy
Mr. Stefano Laporta,
Director General of the Institute for Environmental Protection and Research,
Italian Nuclear Regulatory Authority ,
at the Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety

Honourable Presidents, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Italian delegation, let me join other delegations in congratulating Your Excellencies K. Gemba and M.J. Ongkili as the Co-Presidents of the Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety. Let me assure you of the full support of my delegation in discharging your duties.

Messrs. Presidents,

The Italian Government would open its statement by commending the high commitment and the extraordinary effort made by the Japan local population and Authorities for recovery and reconstruction of the affected areas after East Japan's great earthquake and tsunami.

Italy kept up with anxiety and participation with the deployment of measures decided by the Japan Authorities to protect the population while striving to restore from the Fukushima Daiichi accident.

Messrs. Presidents,

In the framework of all the considerable initiatives and measures implemented in the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, I would like also to acknowledge the process recently completed by the Japan Government to reorganize the national governance of the nuclear safety so to primarily respond in a more effective way to the independence principle of the regulatory control function.

Messrs. Presidents,

Even if , after the public referendum, held on June 2011 Italy abandoned the starting of a new national nuclear power programme, our Country keeps unchanged its commitment to ensuring high levels of nuclear safety and their continuous improvement.

Such our commitment is devoted both at national level, primarily in relation to the decommissioning of the four Italian NPPs and other nuclear facilities, and at international level by participating in regional and international initiatives addressed to strengthen nuclear safety throughout the world. Although nuclear safety is a national responsibility, its factual implementation has also become more and more a collective responsibility.

Messrs. Presidents,

Being among the founding States of the European Union, Italy has strongly supported the EC stress tests initiative which, complemented with a transparent peer review process, provided a unique opportunity to develop a common understanding on the status of nuclear safety in Europe, to promote its improvement following Fukushima Daiichi Accident and to offer an important contribution to harmonization of safety standards and approach, based upon work done by WENRA.

Having noted the positive evaluation internationally acknowledged to the European Stress Tests and Peer Reviews exercise, Italy would strongly rely on a wider use of such an European experience, as a basis for performing safety assessments on NPPs in other Regions.

Even if a non nuclear country, Italy participated through its Safety Authority in the peer review activities both in the topical review meeting and in the country visits. In this regard I would underline the commitment of Italian Government to ensure resources and legislative provisions suitable to the keeping up-to-date of the national competences and capabilities in the safety and in the technology of nuclear installations.

The recent establishing of the International School on Nuclear Security of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, is a significant example of the initiatives supported by our Government.

Messrs. Presidents,

The Italian Government would express its support also to the initiatives promoted by the IAEA in the aftermath of the Fukushima accident and in particular to the development of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety. In this regard, while welcoming the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan, we would highlight the importance of continuing this process in a framework conceived to ensure, also through the IAEA support, a more open and effective sharing of progress and results among Member States.

As far as the coordinating role the AIEA has taken on the various areas of nuclear safety I would express the full support of Italy in particular on the revision of safety standards currently under consideration. Representatives of our Safety Authority are committed to ensure an active participation in their respective committees.

Messrs. Presidents,

Having noted the outcomes of the second Extraordinary Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety held on last August, we would underline the importance and value of international safety review missions. Aiming at enhancing the effectiveness of the CNS and considering the achievements already established at EU level by the Safety Directive 71/2009, Italy would welcome a wider use of international safety review missions, a public disclosure of the outcomes and of the implementation of recommendations.

In that context we welcome also the reported undertaking of national assessments of the design of nuclear power plants against site specific extreme natural hazards and the measures taken to implement the necessary corrective actions. We consider of the utmost importance that Member States would voluntarily host IAEA peer reviews of such national assessments as well as implement resulting recommendations.

With reference to the safety and security interface we would highlight the need of sustained efforts to address the potential issues of nuclear safety and nuclear security in a coherent and integrated manner.

Messrs. Presidents,

As mentioned, Italy is primarily committed to close the large nuclear legacy of the power programme started on early 60ies. Implementation of decommissioning projects are in progress for the four Italian NPPs and the other nuclear facilities as well as of the associated waste management projects.

Such projects would require a prompt definition of the siting of a national repository for low and intermediate level waste including an interim storage facility of high level wastes coming back from reprocessing. Such a site will host also a technological park for research and training activities as well as for public information.

In this regard, our Safety Authority will make public in few weeks technical criteria for such a repository siting as basis for the development of a national chart of potential suitable sites.

Taking into consideration the experience our Country is developing in the mentioned decommissioning and waste management projects both at regulatory and industrial level, Italy is open to participate in multilateral initiatives eventually promoted by the IAEA in this field.

Messrs. Presidents,

The international community cannot afford the occurrence of a new severe accident affecting operating NPPs, and in this respect, Italy also emphasizes the need to strengthen the prevention and mitigation measures with the objective of avoiding off-site contamination. Any lesson learned has to be taken in due consideration, in order to enhance off-site emergency preparedness and response arrangements.

In this regard, any tool to enhance international exchange of information and mutual assistance need to be reinforced, both at multilateral (e.g. IAEA) and bilateral level.

In the light of these considerations and objectives, Italy is confident in the success of this Conference in promoting a concrete advancement in nuclear safety.