STATEMENT TO THE SIXTY-NINTH REGULAR SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK

3 NOVEMBER 2014

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DIRECTOR GENERAL

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY
Mr President,

There have been important developments in many areas of the IAEA’s activities since I last addressed the General Assembly a year ago.

I will highlight some of them briefly.

The nations of the world are presently considering new sustainable development goals for the years after 2015.

I believe nuclear science and technology have much to contribute to sustainable development, in areas such as human health, agriculture, water management and industrial applications, as well as in energy.

I ask all Member States to help ensure that the importance of science and technology is explicitly recognised as a central part of the post-2015 development agenda.

The IAEA technical cooperation programme plays the key role in ensuring that developing countries gain access to nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes.

The impact of our work in the daily lives of millions of people around the world is extraordinary and deserves to be better known.

For example, food irradiation helps to keep food fresh for longer and to protect it against parasites. This process does not impair food quality and it enables growers and producers in developing countries to export more food.

The IAEA makes techniques such as isotope ratio analysis available to help determine the authenticity of foodstuffs, including wine and honey. This
helps to combat growing world-wide fraud in foodstuffs, to protect legitimate producers and to ensure that food is safe.

Cancer control in developing countries remains a high priority.

This year, the IAEA helped Uruguay’s University Hospital to acquire a linear accelerator to provide radiotherapy treatment for cancer patients.

Our Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy works with partners such as WHO to save thousands of lives in developing countries by helping them establish comprehensive cancer control programmes. This year, for example, an IAEA mission to Fiji identified the need for a national programme that incorporates cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment linked with follow-up care.

Last month, I announced that the Agency will provide specialized diagnostic equipment to help Sierra Leone to combat Ebola Virus Disease. Similar support is planned for two other affected countries – Liberia and Guinea.

This will help the countries to diagnose the disease quickly – within a few hours, in fact, rather than the days it can take using other techniques. Diagnosis is made using a nuclear-derived technology known as RT-PCR.

Early diagnosis, if combined with appropriate medical care, increases patients’ chances of survival. It can also help to curtail the spread of the disease by making it possible to isolate and treat patients earlier.

This is the latest example of our work to make modern diagnostic techniques available on the ground, where they are needed and when they are
needed.

A key element of the IAEA’s special contribution to development is our unique cluster of nuclear applications laboratories near Vienna.

They offer training in nuclear applications to scientists in Member States; support research in human health, food and other areas; and provide analytical services to national laboratories.

I have previously reported to the General Assembly about my plans to modernise the laboratories, which are more than 50 years old.

I am pleased to inform you that the ground-breaking ceremony took place in September. When this important project is completed in 2017, we will have modern laboratories that will meet Member State needs for decades to come.

In September, we also marked the 50th anniversary of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture. This unique partnership has helped many developing countries to feed their growing populations and brought considerable socio-economic benefits.

Mr President,

A key challenge facing the world in the coming decades will be to provide reliable supplies of energy as the population grows, and, at the same time, to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Many countries believe nuclear power can help them to address this challenge. Nuclear power is one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide –
alongside hydro- and wind-based electricity – when emissions through the entire life cycle are considered.

Today, there are 437 operational nuclear power reactors in 30 countries, producing about 11 per cent of global electricity. Seventy-two reactors are under construction, mostly in Asia. Our latest projections show continued growth in the use of nuclear power by 2030.

This year’s IAEA Scientific Forum in September focussed on the management and disposal of radioactive waste. This is an issue for all countries, not just those which have nuclear power programmes. Radioactive sources are widely used in industry and medicine, as well as many other areas, and these sources must be safely disposed of at the end of their working life.

Waste disposal must be given proper consideration by all States when they embark on any use of nuclear technology. There are widespread misperceptions about the feasibility of disposing of radioactive waste. In fact, well-established technologies exist to address this issue and are already in use.

Mr President,

Progress continues to be made in improving nuclear safety. I have seen concrete improvements in safety features at every nuclear power plant I have visited since the Fukushima Daiichi accident.

In the immediate aftermath of the accident, the focus was on helping Japan respond to the crisis and ensuring that the necessary lessons were learned, and acted upon, everywhere. Next year, we will publish an important report on the accident.
However, nuclear safety is not simply about guarding against severe natural hazards. While taking forward the lessons arising from Fukushima Daiichi, I believe it is time to start considering a broader approach to strengthening nuclear safety. In the coming years, we need to look at safety aspects of other important issues, including decommissioning old facilities and extending the operating life of nuclear power plants, always keeping as our vision the goal laid down in our Statute: the “protection of health and minimization of danger to life and property.”

Mr President,

The central role of the Agency in helping to strengthen the global nuclear security framework is widely recognized.

With its broad mandate, technical capabilities, and the support of 162 Member States, the Agency is well placed to help the world act in unison against the threat of nuclear terrorism.

The most important area of unfinished business in nuclear security remains the entry into force of the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. There has been real momentum in recent years towards its entry into force, which is one of the most significant measures which the world could adopt to strengthen nuclear security. I appeal to all countries which have not yet done so to adhere to the Amendment.

The next high-level IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security will take place in December 2016. It will be an important opportunity to review progress achieved and to map out our work for the future.

Mr President,
I will now turn to nuclear verification.

Safeguards agreements are now in force with 181 States. However, twelve non-nuclear-weapon States have yet to meet their obligation under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the Agency.

For these States, we cannot draw any safeguards conclusions. I urge all these States to conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements as soon as possible.

I am pleased to report that the number of States with additional protocols in force continues to rise. It now stands at 124. This is very encouraging because the additional protocol is an essential tool for the Agency to be able to provide credible assurance that there are no undeclared nuclear material and activities in a country.

The nuclear programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea remains a matter of serious concern.

I call upon the DPRK to comply fully with its obligations, to cooperate promptly with the Agency, and to resolve all outstanding issues, including those that have arisen during the five-year absence of Agency inspectors from the country. The Agency will maintain its readiness to play an essential role in verifying the DPRK’s nuclear programme.

In the case of Syria, you will recall that, in May 2011, I reported that it was very likely that a building destroyed at the Dair Alzour site was a nuclear reactor which should have been declared to the Agency. The Agency has not received any new information that would affect that assessment.
I again urge Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency in connection with unresolved issues related to the Dair Alzour site and other locations.

There have been important developments concerning safeguards implementation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In November 2013, the Agency and Iran agreed to cooperate further to resolve all present and past issues under a Framework for Cooperation. Iran has implemented most of the practical measures agreed under the Framework, but not all of them.

Separately, our Board of Governors authorised the Agency to undertake monitoring and verification in relation to nuclear-related measures set out in a Joint Plan of Action agreed between the E3+3 and Iran.

This has meant a large additional workload for Agency staff. In fact, our verification effort in Iran has doubled under the Joint Plan of Action.

The Agency continues to verify the non-diversion of nuclear material declared by Iran under its Safeguards Agreement. However, we are unable to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. The Agency therefore cannot conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.

In order to resolve all outstanding issues, it is very important that Iran implements, in a timely manner, all practical measures agreed under the Framework for Cooperation. I also ask Iran to propose new practical measures for the next step of our cooperation.

Mr President,
The Agency is likely to face tough budget constraints for some years to come, reflecting financial difficulties in many countries. In response, we are doing everything possible to make prudent use of our limited resources and ensure we deliver maximum benefit to our Member States. At the same time, demand for our services continues to grow and it is not possible to meet these growing needs within existing financial means. We must therefore strike a delicate balance between the capacity of Member States to contribute and Member State needs, while seeking additional sources of funding.

Finally, let me note that I continue my efforts to encourage well qualified women to apply for senior positions in the Agency. The number of women in senior positions has risen steadily since I took office nearly five years ago. However more needs to be done. I urge Member States to encourage suitably qualified women to apply for positions at the IAEA.

Thank you, Mr President.