Statement by Australia

Delivered by Ms Anastasia Carayanides, Minister-Counsellor, Australian Mission to the United Nations

3 November 2014

Mr President

Australia commends Director-General Yukiya Amano for his report on the achievements of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the challenges it faces over the coming years.

Australia is honoured to be a member of the IAEA Board of Governors and a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2013-2014, and takes very seriously the responsibilities this entails. Australia attaches great importance to the central role played by the IAEA in improving the safety and security of nuclear activities; enhancing social and economic development through the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology; and verifying States’ non-proliferation commitments.

Australia fully supports the right of IAEA members to enjoy the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in accordance with their international obligations. The IAEA makes a valuable contribution to economic development, human health and environmental protection. We are heartened that the Director General has quickly established a task force to enhance response capacities of Member States in regard to outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, including the Ebola virus.

We note that global demand for nuclear medicines is increasing at a time when a number of major radioisotope producing research reactors are either closing or entering extended maintenance in the next few years. In response, Australia is expanding its production of molybdenum-99, which is used in over 80% of nuclear medicine procedures. When our new facility comes online in 2016, we will be able to produce over 20% of the estimated global demand for this vital radioisotope. Consistent with our current production, this increased capability will be fully based on low-enriched uranium technology.

Mr President

All members of the Agency must work together to ensure an effective safeguards system. Confidence in this system provides necessary assurances about the peaceful nature of nuclear activities and is the basic foundation for nuclear trade and cooperation, security and continuing progress on nuclear disarmament.
Australia welcomes the Director-General’s continued efforts to improve the effectiveness of the safeguards system, including through the Supplementary Document to the Report on the Conceptualization and Development of Safeguards Implementation at the State-Level.

Australia urges all States yet to do so to sign and bring into force an Additional Protocol as soon as possible, in order to maximise the effectiveness of the safeguards system.

Mr President

As Director General Amano reminded us in July, constant vigilance and collective action is necessary to ensure nuclear security. We are pleased to see the Agency continue to take an active lead in this field, including by participating in the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague and hosting an International Conference on Nuclear Forensics this year. We encourage Member States to ratify the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material to ensure its early entry into force.

Australia acknowledges the ongoing efforts of the IAEA in nuclear safety. We look forward to the report of the Director General on the causes and effects of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, as well as the subsequent integration of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety into the Agency’s normal programme of work.

Finally, Mr President

The external environment in which the Agency operates is highly fluid, and the Agency must maintain the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to these developments, be they related to nuclear safety, physical protection, nuclear proliferation or sustainable development.

Australia will continue to support Director-General Amano’s efforts to strengthen the contribution the Agency makes to the promotion of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to provide assurances that all nuclear activities are exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Australia is pleased to co-sponsor and support the resolution on the Report of the IAEA.

Thank you.