

**STATEMENT TO SECOND SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE**

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DIRECTOR GENERAL

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY



INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

Thank you, Madam President.

It is a great honour for me to be appointed Director General of the IAEA. I am deeply grateful to all Member States for the confidence they have placed in me.

It is a happy coincidence that this General Conference takes place under the presidency of Mexico, a country which has made a significant contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation, not least through the Treaty of Tlatelolco – as you mentioned, Madam President.

I express my respect to my five predecessors, including the late Director General Yukiya Amano, with whom I had the honour to work for a number of years. Each of them in his own individual way helped to make the IAEA the highly respected organization it is today.

I warmly thank Mr Cornel Feruta for his important contribution as Acting Director General. He was helpful and gracious in ensuring a smooth transition for me in the last few weeks.

Madam President,

Let me start with a quote: "The IAEA's work is of incalculable importance." That is what the Norwegian Nobel Committee said when it awarded the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize to the Agency and its Director General. It is as true today as it was then.

We live in a world of great uncertainty, with conflict and tensions in many regions.

The IAEA makes a unique contribution to international peace and security by verifying that nuclear materials are not being diverted from peaceful purposes. No-one else does what we do. And we should not take this for granted. The world is safer because of the dedication and vigilance of our inspectors.

They provide assurance that countries are abiding by the agreements they have entered into. The fact that the Agency is known to stick to the facts has immense value and gives us unique credibility. Countries recognize this. Not everyone always likes what we report. But the Agency cannot be accused of being politically biased or of lacking objectivity.

Thanks to the impartiality of the Agency's reports, countries can have confidence that other nations are not secretly building

nuclear weapons. This makes it possible for countries to work together without suspicion. They do not have to rely on mere expressions of goodwill from each other.

Today, it is unthinkable that the international community would try to resolve any issue involving suspected nuclear proliferation without the involvement of the IAEA. We have the mandate, the professionalism and the technical expertise. We will always be asked to play an important role.

Madam President,

As we all know, there is so much more to the IAEA than nuclear verification.

In fact, for most of our 171 Member States, the Agency's work to make nuclear science and technology available to improve living standards and boost economic growth is what draws them to us.

We touch the lives of millions of people by improving access to nuclear medicine and radiotherapy, enabling farmers to grow more food, supporting the management of scarce water resources – and in countless other areas.

Our technical cooperation programme has made a huge contribution over the decades. But the needs of developing countries are great and they expect us to do much more.

It is unrealistic to expect a significant increase in our budget in the coming years, so we must find new sources of funding. I will lead the Agency in moving out of our comfort zone and seeking new and innovative sources of funding wherever I can.

I will actively pursue new forms of partnership with other international organisations, regional organisations, banks and major international companies.

When we explain to potential donors and partners what the Agency does to save the lives of cancer patients, fight the Ebola and Zika viruses or help countries hit by earthquakes, we find a great willingness to help. I intend to provide strong leadership and take a proactive approach in tapping into the goodwill that is undoubtedly there.

Madam President,

The IAEA Statute authorises us to work on the “development and practical application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, including the production of electric power.”

Nuclear power now provides about 10% of the world's electricity. But it contributes one third of all low-carbon electricity.

Contrary to many perceptions, use of nuclear power continues to grow. Over the last five years, 37 nuclear power reactors have been connected to the grid. Fifty-three more are under construction.

Four countries have started building, or are nearing completion of, their first nuclear power plants. Around 25 others are actively considering adding nuclear power to their energy mix. Our job is to help them at every step of the way.

Nuclear power emits no greenhouse gases. As many countries recognise, it has a vital contribution to make to mitigating the effects of climate change. Last week's *Emissions Gap Report* from the UN Environment Programme warned that the world is simply not doing enough to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. "We are on the brink of missing the opportunity to limit global warming to 1.5°C," it said.

The challenges of climate change and ensuring sufficient supplies of energy for the future are issues on which the Agency's

voice must be heard. I will take our message to the 25th session of the UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP 25, in Madrid next week. This is important as 2020 is the year in which countries are supposed to submit new and updated national climate action plans.

I also aim to step up the support which we offer to countries which have opted to phase out their nuclear power programmes. In the coming years, we will see considerable decommissioning work on power reactors, research reactors and other types of facility. The Agency will work closely with Member States on addressing these challenges.

Madam President,

When considering the future of nuclear power, we must acknowledge that there is substantial public concern about whether nuclear power is safe.

Everyone remembers Chernobyl and Fukushima. The fact that nuclear power actually has an excellent overall safety record is not widely understood.

I believe that science-based analysis of the risks and benefits of nuclear power, compared with the risks and benefits of other

sources of energy, can help people better understand its role and potential. We should work on the basis of facts, not ideology.

I know that, for the nuclear power industry, safety is the first priority. People must never be put at risk of harm.

Nuclear safety and security are, of course, national responsibilities. But the IAEA provides the essential forum for international cooperation. The Agency develops safety standards and practices to ensure that people and the environment are protected as well as humanly possible.

Our work on safety treaties and conventions is also vitally important. We help countries to put in place a solid safety and security infrastructure and establish effective regulatory systems. When it comes to nuclear safety and security, the Agency is where it happens.

The existence of nuclear material inevitably draws malevolent interest from terrorists and other criminals. It is vital that we remain ahead of the curve in guarding against nuclear terrorism. The Agency already brings together senior government officials and technical experts from around the world to consider the best ways to do this.

I intend to build on the great political impetus seen in nuclear security in recent years, expand our support to all Agency Member States and work to transform our nuclear security guidance into mainstreamed norms.

Madam President,

I briefly touched on the issue of Agency funding earlier. Managing the resources which Member States entrust to us wisely and productively, with discipline and restraint, will be fundamental to my approach.

I commit to making our activities more efficient, transparent and understandable to everyone. I am determined to bring Member States closer to the Director General. Financial constraints should not lead us to passivity or paralysis. On the contrary, they should be a spur to creativity and imagination. I aim to make the Agency more agile and responsive.

It is a cliché to say that staff are an organisation's greatest asset. In the case of the IAEA, it happens to be true. Our staff – in Vienna, Seibersdorf, Monaco, Tokyo, Toronto, New York and Geneva – are widely respected for their outstanding technical competence. They deserve the best possible working conditions.

I will work to create an atmosphere in which all staff feel encouraged to contribute their very best ideas and to take initiatives, confident that they will be listened to.

Women play a vital role throughout the Agency, but they are still not adequately represented.

I welcome the fact that the proportion of women in the Professional and higher categories has increased to 30 percent. But, to me, gender parity means 50 percent women and 50 percent men – and that is the goal I set for myself. It will be challenging, but it is not impossible. Other international organisations have done it. UN Secretary-General Guterres's initiatives on gender have delivered impressive results in a relatively short time.

The Agency faces particular challenges in finding well-qualified female candidates in some areas, given the highly specialised, technical nature of much of our work. But I repeat – it is not impossible. I invite Member States to send us their very best female candidates and I encourage groups representing women in the nuclear field to give us their best ideas about how to achieve gender parity as soon as possible.

Madam President,

In the mid-1980s, I had the privilege as a young diplomat of attending a meeting – in what had been a secret nuclear power plant in southern Patagonia – at which my country's president and his Brazilian counterpart embarked on a new era of cooperation and confidence-building in the nuclear field. Their historic meeting ended the very real risk of a nuclear arms race between Argentina and Brazil.

It led to the establishment of the *Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials*, known as ABACC. It also paved the way for the entry into force of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a heavily populated area. It meant that the resources of the two countries could be devoted to peaceful purposes and not squandered on weapons of mass destruction.

This was a decisive turning point in my life. It gave me a conviction that patient diplomacy – along with hard work and tenacity – could be a transformational force for good in the world, making a real difference to the lives of millions of people. It led me to pursue a career in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. It gave me a belief in the value of international law,

negotiation and bridge-building. These convictions form a common thread that led from southern Patagonia to my standing before you today as the sixth Director General of the IAEA.

The Agency is a formidable institution that deals with issues of war and peace, of human health, of energy, food and water – fundamental concerns of all human beings.

It is truly a great honour to serve as IAEA Director General.

In the coming years, with the support of our Member States, I will devote all my energy to helping this remarkable organization to achieve its full potential for the benefit of all humankind.

Thank you.