

Canadian Intervention
for
IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety
June 20, 2011

Thank you, Secretary-General Amano, Ambassador Guerreiro, Excellencies, colleagues.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I would like to assure you that Canada is committed to working with you in developing a concrete roadmap that will strengthen nuclear safety in the aftermath of the events in Japan.

I would also like to extend our kindest thoughts to the Government and people of Japan who continue to struggle to rebuild after the earthquake and tsunami

We recognize that the Fukushima nuclear accident offers lessons to us all, and not only those Member States currently operating nuclear power plants. My delegation is looking forward to the outcomes of this conference and all lessons learned and, we hope, identification of root causes of the accident. These will need to be considered by all in order to sustain the use of nuclear power, upon which Canada will continue to rely as part of its overall energy mix. It is in this regard that this Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety is particularly important.

Canada underscores the central role of the Agency in terms of international nuclear cooperation. This includes the stewardship

of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident as well as the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. The international community has rightly looked to the Agency and its Secretariat for leadership following the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident.

Fukushima reminds us that, to deal effectively with as serious and complex a matter as nuclear safety, it is necessary that decisions reflect the best available science, that we foster timely and effective global coordination and collaboration, and that the chain of authority must be clear and comprehensive.

One of the lessons learned from Fukushima, as well as earlier accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, is that we must avoid a situation where a multiplicity of actors are tasked with, or undertake, mandates that are not clearly defined or that are overlapping, such that energies are lost, effectiveness is diminished, and public information is either lacking or erroneous.

The IAEA is the lead agency in the technical response to any nuclear accident and in the development of enhanced international safety regimes. In this, the Agency will be effectively supported and its action complemented by the Nuclear Energy Agency, the World Association of Nuclear Operators, as well as national regulatory authorities, and operators, among other important bodies. These organizations can provide expertise and mechanisms in specific areas of action that are consistent with their own missions.

From Canada's perspective, recognizing the front-line responsibilities of nuclear station operators and independent national regulators, we see an opportunity to clarify and strengthen the role of the IAEA and other key institutions and organizations such as the Nuclear Energy Agency, engaged in international coordination and collaboration on nuclear safety issues.

Canada has always placed priority on the importance of peer reviews, both those conducted through the IAEA's Integrated Regulatory Review Service, as well as those conducted by other organizations such as the World Association of Nuclear Operators. In 2009, at Canada's request, the IAEA conducted a peer review of Canada's nuclear regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, and the results and subsequent management responses were made public. We have found that peer reviews, and making them publicly accessible, serve us well, and embody the importance Canada places on transparency and meaningful follow-up and accountability. Currently, there are multiple discussions in a number of fora on strengthening peer reviews, and increasing their transparency. Canada fully supports, and is actively participating in these initiatives. We look forward to proposals on how the peer reviews by the IAEA can be strengthened.

In the current call for higher safety standards, we should not lose sight of the fact that for safety standards to be effective, they require communication, implementation and enforcement.

Member States should adhere to the Agency's various nuclear safety codes of conduct and apply the Agency's safety standards, security guidance material and emergency management

framework in as consistent and harmonized manner as possible. Member States should also avail themselves of periodic safety review service missions and the Secretariat should disseminate to all Member States common or recurring findings from these review services, similar to what is done for operating experience amongst utilities.

Canada supports the call by the G8 in the Deauville declaration for the highest levels of nuclear safety. Therefore, the Conference should call on the IAEA for strong leadership and collaboration with national authorities for the development, application and verification of minimum safety standards for nuclear power plants worldwide. Minimum safety standards should be objective, technology- neutral and transparent. Reviews of existing safety standards should be done within the Agency s well-established processes. Vendors and particularly operators, who have the prime responsibility for the safety of their nuclear facilities, have important contributions to make in the development and implementation of these standards. Focusing on outcomes will ensure that nuclear safety standards are core and paramount in the evolution of technology and its operation.

However, it does not suffice to have safe — and safer — facilities, or to have solid — and better coordinated — emergency response plans. It is also critical that the public, or publics, be well informed with accurate, scientific and understandable data.

In a future crisis, in the environment of the Internet and its 24/7 media and social media, the ability to amass such data will require dedicated, real time effort so that authorities — domestic and international — are ahead of the curve with fact-based,

science-based information in transparent and plain language.

For if there is a vacuum of information from authorities, it will rapidly be occupied by others who will claim — some times rightly, some times wrongly — to be knowledgeable experts.

There must be a clear place or set of places - domestic and international — where our citizens can go for reliable information on nuclear energy — in times of tranquility as in times of crisis — so that discussion about the place of nuclear energy in our energy mix today and tomorrow may be based, as much as possible, on fact and science.

In conclusion, Canada is looking forward to the late-2012 Nuclear Safety Conference to be hosted by Japan in order to study the comprehensive and final reports of the Fukushima accident. The safety agenda in 2012 is already quite charged. The organization of these conferences, including timing as well as scope and substance, should be optimized in order to make them as effective as possible.

With these comments, Mr. President, Canada looks forward to working with other participants of this conference to ensure a successful outcome.