

Brief remarks of Amb. J. Enkhsaikhan at the OEWG on preparations
for the high level ministerial conference on nuclear safety

Vienna

April 15, 2011

Thank you, Amb. Guerreiro,
Distinguished delegates,

Allow me first of all to join the previous speakers in congratulating you, Amb. Guerreiro of Brazil, for having been appointed by the Director-General as the coordinator for the preparations to the ministerial conference.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the Director-General and Secretariat for detailed briefings organized for member states on the evolving situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi NPP which my delegation found very informative and useful. I would also like to thank CTBTO Prepcom's PTS for its highly useful briefings as well.

My delegation welcomes the proposal of the Director-General to hold a special high ministerial conference. Regarding the organization of the conference, many important, useful and interesting suggestions have been made that, I am sure, you will bear in mind in preparation for the next meeting of the working group in early May. Therefore I would like at this stage to focus briefly on some substantive issues.

Just like the post-Chernobyl and the Three Mile Island accidents led to improvement of the safety of plants, the post-Fukushima period should start with further improvement in safety, especially emergency power supplies. In this respect the experience of EPREV¹missions or of PROSPER²services would be most useful.

The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake/tsunami (with a magnitude of between 9.1 and 9.3 on Richter scale), the increase in the frequency and ferocity of natural disasters, which is believed to be to some extent connected with the climate change, is a sign that such disasters would repeat, if not even increased. Therefore the international community should brace itself for more disasters and thus focus without delay on even safer technology, better preparedness, and, to the extent possible, timely prediction and warning.

Conducting “stress tests” and safety reviews

We believe that a strong message in support of immediate measures to conduct “stress tests”, like what is being done in EU countries, and strengthen the emergency safety measures at all NPPs, especially those that are located at earthquake or tsunami prone regions, are important. For that purpose, in our view, the Agency should establish, together with the WMO, CTBTO's PTS, the newly established International Seismic Safety Center (ISSC) and relevant regional

¹ EPREV – Emergency Preparedness Review mission

² Peer Review for Operational Safety Performance Experience service

organizations an ad hoc (at this stage) body to provide advice and assistance and give assessment on the actual state of emergency preparedness and the state of the safety of NPPs.

The safety review need not be limited to preparedness to and coping with natural disasters only. It should be wider, and also include review of the preparedness to accidents and deliberate attacks on nuclear facilities as well, since that would also cause nuclear disaster and havoc. There would be no point to get back to the issue again after an accident or an attack or an attempted attack on such a facility occurs.

The Fukushima accident and the past one month since then have also shown that in cases when INES level is 5 or higher, i.e. when the accident has “wider consequences”, the role of the Agency needs to be more pro-active and forceful, since it could negatively affect other countries and peoples as well, and not only of one single country. I believe that this needs to be reflected in the final document of the ministerial conference.

Since a nuclear accident anywhere is a nuclear accident everywhere, it is important that all states with operational NPPs or those that are building be included in the review. Especially, as the Dai-ichi case demonstrates, the four layers of protection, starting with guarding against the loss-of-coolant accident (LOCA) need to be thoroughly checked since safety equipment and procedures are the first line of defense against accidents. Openness to international reviews by all states with nuclear activities should become an international norm. This would complement the IRRS³, the EPREV missions and the OSART⁴ services.

Possible consequences of the March 11 mega-earthquake and the ensuing tsunami also need to be carefully analyzed, especially how they are affecting tectonic behaviors, the rupture of geological faults, etc. and try to predict future disasters.

Message of the outcome document

Reiteration of commitment to nuclear safety and security by the conference would not be enough nor credible if member states, that have not done so, do not accede to the four key nuclear safety conventions, or if they do not apply broadly the safety standards and make use full of existing IAEA and regional safety services. Since nuclear security knows no boundaries, civilian nuclear facilities of all member states, irrespective of their status within or outside the NPT, should be subject to IAEA’s inspections for safety, security and compliance with international standards and agreed norms.

Civil liability

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the issue of civil liability for accidents and ensuing nuclear damages. We believe that all states, especially those that have NPPs or other nuclear facilities, need to become parties to the internationally agreed norms of civil liability. This would not only raise the degree of responsibility of the operator, but also of the vendor and the recipient government as well. Thus vendors and those that would be financing NPPs or

³ Integrated Regulatory Review Service

⁴ Operational Safety Assessment Review Team

related projects would need to be bear in mind not only the established safeguards requirements, but also require stricter feasibility study requirements of citing decisions of NPPs, nuclear waste facilities or repositories bearing in mind the latest achievements of geological surveys. For the sake of better safety, the parts of international agreements dealing with safety, security and safeguards need to be made more transparent. In short the safety culture, like the security culture, needs to be strengthened and widely accepted.

Nuclear waste safety

As the Fukushima accident has clearly demonstrated, safety of not only of the front end but also of the back end of the fuel cycle needs to be seriously addressed. Safety of spent nuclear fuel in separate cooling ponds/pools at NPPs, being outside the primary containment vessel, can cause severe nuclear threat as the fuel rods inside the reactors, if not more. On a larger scale, the issue of the 70.000 or so metric tons of nuclear wastes, needs the serious attention that it deserves. Just because there is no viable practical solution to the final disposal of nuclear waste or that there is almost no international market for spent fuel disposition does not mean that the issue needs to be either ignored or put on hold. This, in my view, also needs to find reflection in the final document of the conference.