

THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY AND THE WORLD ORDER

Statement by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, to the 35th Annual General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, 16 September 1991.

I would like to congratulate you Mr President [Dr Jose Luis de Santana Carvalho, President of the National Nuclear Energy Commission of Brazil], on your election as President of this 35th Annual General Conference. This is, I believe, the most important General Conference since the International Atomic Energy Agency was established in 1957. The events of the past year have underlined the challenges that the Agency faces and the importance for the common security of us all of it succeeding. The international community will be encouraged to deal seriously with these issues, Mr President, by the joint decision of your own Government and that of Argentina to conclude a fullscope safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Developments in the world since the last General Conference have been momentous, but have only reaffirmed the conviction of Australia that we cannot relax our efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The international community, acting through the United Nations against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, has successfully demonstrated both the primacy of principles of justice and the efficacy of collective security in upholding them. The United States and the Soviet Union have agreed on important reductions to their arsenals of strategic nuclear weapons. Solutions at last seem imminent to long-festering regional problems in southern Africa and Cambodia, and efforts are gathering pace to address problems in the Middle East and the Korean peninsula.

But international security, particularly as it is affected by nuclear weapons, actual and potential, is not assured. The two nuclear super-powers still possess nearly 50 thousand nuclear warheads between them. Three other countries are acknowledged nuclear powers, while a small number of countries seem still to wish to retain the option of joining them. The Gulf War was a reminder that

regional tensions can develop into armed conflict and that states involved in those conflicts can still find reasons to justify, at least in their own eyes, acquisition of a nuclear capability. The world needs, more than ever, to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In this respect, and at this crucial and uncertain time in the evolution of events in the Soviet Union, we would welcome the newly independent Baltic States, whose membership of the U.N. and the IAEA we heartily endorse, becoming non-nuclear weapon states parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This would reassure the international community that the spectre of an increase in the number of nuclear weapon states is not in prospect, and would tangibly contribute to a stronger non-proliferation regime. Accession to the NPT would involve submitting all peaceful nuclear facilities on their territories to IAEA safeguards. We welcome in this connection indications from the Congress of People's Deputies - the highest Soviet legislative authority - that component republics of the Union should forsake any right to possess nuclear weapons as a condition of their sovereignty. We also welcome the approval of a resolution by that Congress on 6 September requiring immediate accession to the Treaty as a condition for their independence.

The Gulf War underlined the dangers for international security of the combination of regional ambition, ruthlessness and a determination to acquire capabilities in weapons of mass destruction. It demonstrated the importance of efforts to discourage proliferation. It showed that the only long term means to eliminate these weapons is through effective multilateral institutions of the sort represented by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency. But the discovery of the extent of Iraq's violations of its obligations under the NPT sent a sobering message that the international community will have to make that system even more effective. And this Conference can help do that.

We need to see clearly the enormity of Iraq's unrepentant violation of its obligations in the context of the Treaty's importance. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA's safeguards system are vital for international security. Without them the world could well be caught up in a vicious cycle of suspicion and nuclear armament. The NPT has been an extraordinarily successful arms control treaty and confidence-building measure. It continues to build up momentum towards universal adherence. Australia applauds warmly

the long-awaited decisions by France, China and South Africa to join the Treaty, and the decisions, too, of Zambia and Tanzania. The accession to the Treaty of all five Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council will be of the utmost importance, in view of the political influence of the Permanent Five and their role in nuclear trade.

The finding of the Agency's Board of Governors at an extraordinary session that Iraq had breached its NPT safeguards agreement is the first and only such case in the history of the Treaty. The main task of this Conference is to deter other states which might contemplate developing a clandestine nuclear program like Iraq's. The UN Security Council's recent resolution 707 condemning Iraq should reinforce that message. The most effective way to do this is by strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the IAEA safeguards system on which that regime depends. There are concrete, practical steps we can take to achieve this.

First, since international agreements are one of the foundations of our world order and our collective security, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to violations. If we do, it will be at our future peril. Many states that are NPT members still have not concluded their obligatory safeguards agreements. Failure to conclude those agreements is a breach of the terms of the Treaty and should not be looked on as something of little consequence. I would like to see renewed efforts by the depositary states, other NPT Parties and the Director-General to have these agreements concluded promptly. We must firmly encourage these states to live up to their obligations, emphasizing that the issues involved affect the security of all. In this respect, I commend South Africa for the negotiation of its NPT safeguards agreement within weeks of its joining the Treaty and its commitment to bring the agreement into force upon signature.

This contrasts starkly with the case of North Korea.

Australia is very concerned about the time it is taking to have NPT safeguards applied in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea has operated for some time an unsafeguarded reactor and has, reportedly, been building other nuclear facilities. It is the only non-nuclear weapons state in the history of the NPT to have persisted in operating an unsafeguarded facility after accession to the Treaty. It has thus left open the question of whether it is pursuing a nuclear weapons program. This lack of confidence in North Korea's nuclear intentions has generated suspicion in what remains one of the world's

most dangerous security fault-lines. As an Asia Pacific state, Australia is particularly concerned about the destabilising consequences of North Korea's behaviour.

North Korea should not bring into operation any further unsafeguarded facilities. It should provide the Director-General with information on the facilities under construction so that, after such a long delay, safeguards can be applied promptly by the Secretariat. I called directly and bluntly on North Korea to conclude and apply a safeguards agreement when I addressed the Fourth NPT Review Conference a year ago. I welcome the approval by the Board of Governors of the safeguards agreement with North Korea last week. The resolution adopted by the Board called on North Korea in the clearest of terms to sign and fully implement the Agreement. Australia wants to see the agreement applied promptly and without conditions in order to reassure the international community that North Korea is not pursuing a nuclear weapons capability.

Non-nuclear weapon states which operate unsafeguarded facilities inevitably generate suspicions about their nuclear intentions. The way is open to them to end that suspicion by accepting international legal obligations not to develop nuclear weapons. Brazil, Argentina and South Africa are as a result of recent important decisions proceeding to do so. Australia hopes earnestly that Israel, Pakistan and India will follow their lead.

The second way we can consolidate the non-proliferation regime is to strengthen the Agency's safeguards system. This is one of the starkest lessons of the Gulf War and the subsequent discovery of the extent of Iraq's manipulation of that system. IAEA safeguards are an essential part of the framework of international security. They are of crucial importance for the prevention of nuclear proliferation and for trade and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a major supplier of uranium to the nuclear energy programs of many IAEA member states, Australia has a particular interest in the effective application of safeguards.

We are now learning the extent of Iraq's violation of its obligations. For these revelations we must thank the unprecedented authority accorded the inspection teams, the intelligence made available to them by IAEA member states and the resolute international response to Iraq's aggression. While the use of force to

ensure compliance with international obligations cannot be ruled out in exceptional circumstances, we should not have to rely on the use of force to ensure compliance with the obligations under the non-proliferation regime.

But we cannot ignore the fact that Iraq's violations have cast doubt on the adequacy and effectiveness of IAEA safeguards. And it is not in our interests to ignore that reality. We need to act now to strengthen the operation of safeguards and to provide the Agency with a better flow of information for it to take quick action on inconsistencies. I would like to see this conference adopt a clear statement on prompt and effective action to strengthen the safeguards system. My delegation will be introducing a draft resolution to this effect.

The Director General has pointed out that the case of Iraq shows that Agency inspectors can uncover clandestine nuclear activities if three major conditions are fulfilled. These are that member countries provide intelligence information; that the Agency have an unequivocal right to inspect sites at short notice; and that the UN Security Council support such inspections.

Australia agrees with these conditions. Member states should provide the Secretariat with design information on new nuclear facilities at the earliest possible time and I urge an early decision on this question by the Board of Governors. Universal reporting of nuclear material and equipment transfers would improve the Agency's ability to detect clandestine facilities outside the safeguarded fuel cycle. This would require an extension of the current reporting practices. Member states should also provide the Secretariat with national information on activities or trade that affect the application of safeguards, including court proceedings on violations of nuclear export controls.

At this point, while on the subject of inspections, I want to praise the Agency for its execution of the tasks entrusted to it by the Security Council under Resolution 687. I congratulate the Director-General and his staff for the professionalism they have shown. The activities in respect of Iraq have been more demanding and arduous than any previous inspection task. Australia has been pleased to contribute by providing expert personnel for the Agency's inspection teams.

Unequivocal right of access to suspect sites is a key element in strengthening the safeguards system. The Fourth NPT Review Conference last year called on

the IAEA to examine the scope, application and procedures for special inspections. The Board of Governors is considering this. But we need quick action, and Australia wishes to see the consideration of this issue completed by the February Board meeting.

The UN Special Commission exercise on Iraq will provide useful information on the details of inspection practices and assumptions. The Secretariat should study this carefully as a matter of priority with the help of the Standing Advisory Group on Safeguards Implementation.

The third measure we need to take is to tighten supply and export controls. Nuclear suppliers, mindful of their obligations under the NPT, have already begun to establish export control understandings on nuclear dual-use items where there is a clear gap in current arrangements. Australia urges all countries to review the adequacy of their export controls, using the control lists of the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers Group as a standard.

All current and potential nuclear suppliers should adopt the principle that new nuclear supply take place only when accompanied by a legally binding commitment to non-proliferation and the application of fullscope safeguards. The Fourth NPT Review Conference called for this a year ago. I find it extraordinary that a number of major suppliers, despite the events of the last twelve months, have still not endorsed that principle. Their number includes four of the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Permanent Five have said a lot in recent months about setting an example for other states in the area of arms control. This is not the sort of example they should be setting. I call on France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China to take the necessary action as soon as possible.

A stronger safeguards system has to be backed up with the necessary human and financial resources. In a climate of international financial stringency this is a challenging task. The Director-General has said that the Agency can carry out its responsibilities for another year with a budget showing no real growth. But the importance of strengthening safeguards, the growing safeguards obligations from increased NPT membership and developments in the nuclear industry all have implications for the resources needed by the Agency. I find it difficult to see how the safeguards program can be held to zero growth for much longer. The development of a Medium Term Plan for the period 1993 to 1998 should

improve the management of the Agency's limited resources in a decade of financial restraint. All member states will need to review their attitude to the IAEA's budget and to look critically at the programs funded by the Agency. Australia has already started to do so.

Australia remains firmly committed to the Agency's technical cooperation program. This constitutes fulfilment of our obligation under the NPT to assist developing countries to benefit from the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

Over the past year Australia has hosted and funded two IAEA training courses. We have provided training for 30 IAEA fellows in fields such as radiation protection and nuclear medicine. Australian scientists undertook about 30 expert missions for IAEA technical assistance projects and we supplied a range of equipment.

I am pleased to announce that this year Australia will again pledge its full contribution of A\$1,050,000 (US\$814,000) to the Technical Assistance and Cooperation Fund (TACF) for 1992. As well as our TACF contribution, we will continue to contribute considerable amounts of extra funding for technical cooperation, particularly in support of the Agency's Regional Co-operative Agreement for Asia and the Pacific (RCA). We are examining a program for the next RCA triennium involving an expenditure of A\$1.5 million (US\$1.16 million) on projects in radiation protection, nuclear medicine and industrial applications of radiation technology.

Much of this assistance is extended through the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). Developments at ANSTO this past year underline Australia's determination to build on our expertise in nuclear science and technology. Three major facilities have recently been commissioned: a large tandem accelerator, a national medical cyclotron, and a supercomputer centre. ANSTO has also arranged major new collaboration projects for Australia's scientific community with Japan's Institute for High Energy Physics and with the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN) at Geneva. I should note also that development of the Australian-invented high level waste form, Synroc, continues to proceed, with the addition this year of the Soviet Union to the growing list of international Synroc collaborators. A group of Australian industrial companies has decided to proceed to the next stage of their study of

Synroc's commercial viability.

I have focused so far on the military-related dangers of nuclear proliferation. But security is multidimensional. Environmental developments also can pose a threat to security. Clearly, there will be more nuclear plants around in the years to come, and standards of safety will, if anything, need to be observed even more stringently. The IAEA has a vital role to play through its technical work in nuclear safety. This is not a matter that can be left for individual states alone. The international community as a whole has a common interest in the highest safety standards for nuclear plants. Australia was pleased to contribute to the International Conference on Nuclear Safety held in Vienna earlier this month. Its results are before this General Conference and warrant careful study. Australia supports the idea of an international framework convention on nuclear safety and would like to see it examined further.

The past year has reminded those of us who had forgotten or become complacent of the dangers of a world of nuclear weapons proliferation. We had a look over the precipice. The forgetful and the complacent have now realised, once again, the crucial need for the nuclear non-proliferation regime to work well.

The institutions on which our common security is based need to adapt to changing circumstances. Given the enormity of the changes over the past few years, this is hardly surprising. It is true even of institutions such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and this Agency, which have served the international community so well. We need to act to ensure that the non-proliferation regime responds to the rapid pace of change. But we need also to ensure universal acceptance of the basic fact that any international agreement, even one so manifestly in the common interest as the NPT, will work only when we all fulfil our obligations under it.

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