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STATEMENT
by
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Secretary General

Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety

Fukushima Prefecture, Japan
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(if still in plenary) Hon. Koichiro GEMBA, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,

Co-President, Hon. Fadillah bin Hj Yusaf, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology & Innovation

Mr. Yukiya AMANO, Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency,

Honorable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor to speak before you today, as INTERPOL's Secretary General.

Last week, hearing of a new earthquake off the coast of Japan[1], the minds of millions worldwide rushed back to the events of March 2011 at Fukushima's Daiichi Plant.

[1] On 7 December 2012 a 7.3-magnitude quake struck 150 miles off Japan's eastern coast, triggering a small tsunami and sparking evacuations. A one-meter wave hit Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture, however all alerts were later lifted due to the small impact of the event. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20638696

Personally, the images of those tragic days in turn brought even older memories back to my mind.

On what seemed like an average night in 1979, the worst accident in U.S. commercial nuclear power history rapidly unfolded at the Three Mile Island plant[2], only 70 miles away from the borders of my home state, New Jersey, where my family lived.

Eventually, that accident became known as another "near-miss", which, however, left an indellible mark on many in the US and around the world.

7 years later came Chernobyl. The first Level 7 nuclear event in history[3].

[2] The accident at the Three Mile Island Unit 2 (TMI‑2) nuclear power plant near Middletown, Pa., on March 28, 1979, was the most serious in U.S. commercial nuclear power plant operating history, even though it led to no deaths or injuries. Due to technical failures, because adequate cooling was not available, the nuclear fuel overheated to the point at which the long metal tubes which hold the nuclear fuel pellets ruptured and the fuel pellets began to melt. It was later found that about one-half of the core melted during the early stages of the accident. Although the TMI-2 plant suffered a severe core meltdown, the most dangerous kind of nuclear power accident, it did not produce the worst-case consequences that reactor experts had long feared. The accident was ranked 5 out of 7 on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/3mile-isle.html

[3] The International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) is a worldwide tool for communicating to the public in a consistent way the safety significance of nuclear and radiological events. the Scale explains the significance of events from a range of activities, including industrial and medical use of radiation sources, operations at nuclear facilities and transport of radioactive material. Events are classified on the scale at seven levels: Levels 1–3 are called "incidents" and Levels 4–7 "accidents". The scale is designed so that the severity of an event is about ten times greater for each increase in level on the scale.

25 years later, an earthquake; a tsunami; and another level 7 nuclear event struck Japan all at the same time, simply defying imagination.

These events tell us that yes, we should learn from the past – but only with a view to the future.

To the crisis that hasn't happened yet….the one we never thought about, but which may even be the worst ever.

Truth is, no matter how much we have learned, there is simply no way to exactly predict what the next incident will look like.

Yet our duty, our collective duty, is to do all in our power to prevent it. But, should worse come to worse, we must all in our power to make sure that we will be absolutely ready for it.

How to do it? First and foremost, by relying on those pillars that will always be there, no matter what the next crisis will look like or when and where it will take place.

Among those pillars are the men and women in uniform who protect your citizens every day around the world.

Their primary role in preventing nuclear incidents is to oppose those seeking to attack or penetrate into nuclear facilities to harm others. That is the realm that saw INTERPOL first launch its cooperation with IAEA and its Nuclear-Radiological Terrorism Prevention activities.

But police will also always play a role in the aftermath of nuclear incidents. It will be in support of others, but an equally pivotal one.

When most will be trying to escape from danger, the brave men and women of law enforcement will be running towards it to maintain order and limit damage, because that's their job: risking their lives so that others might live.

We saw it in Fukushima, as officers from Japan's National Police Agency and Fukushima Prefecture bravely joined the efforts of

staff and emergency responders to cool the spent fuel pools at the Daiichi Plant[4], participated in the evacuation by driving buses in nearby neighborhoods[5], and helped identify bodies in the areas most hit by the disaster[6].

It was in thinking about officers like them, that INTERPOL was first created and one of the reasons why INTERPOL is today an organization assisting police from 190 countries around the clock in their work, including during major crises.

48 hours after the Tohoku earthquake had struck, INTERPOL was ready to mobilize a multinational Incident Response Team[7]. Over the past 10 years, we deployed almost 70 such teams at the request of our member countries. We witnessed the challenges police will face in crises, and what they will need to overcome them.

Most importantly, they will need to be trained to be ready.

[4] "Cooling the Spent Fuel Pools" TEPCO (reactor operator) website http://www.tepco.co.jp/en/nu/fukushima-np/review/review1_2-e.html

[5] "Loss of life after evacuation: lessons learned from the Fukushima accident", *The Lancet*, Volume 379, Issue 9819, 10 March 2012

[6] Mishima, T,"Fukushima police conduct year's last major search for bodies", *The Asahi Shimbum*, 30 Dec 2011

[7] By 13 march 2011, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany and Indonesia have informed INTERPOL DVI Unit that they had activated their DVI Teams and placed them on standby for deployment to Japan. The IRT was eventually not deployed, following Japan's declining of the offer for assistance by CCC.

That's why over the past year alone, thanks to key partners like the IAEA, our Radiological and Nuclear terrorism prevention programme trained close to 170 officers from more than 40 countries on how to handle radiological crime scenes and disaster management.

INTERPOL fully supports the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety and its reliance on emergency preparedness and capacity building as part of its key components[8].

And today, INTERPOL renews its pledge to assist all the countries represented here and your first responders and police, and to share across the globe those lessons learned in the field that will prepare us for the future – including the crisis we hope we'll never face.

[8] Following a call by the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety held in June 2011, the Action Plan was drafted and approved by the IAEA Board of Governors on 13 September 2011, as endorsed by the IAEA General Conference during its 55th regular session on 22 September 2011. The Action Plan includes 12 main actions, focusing on: safety assessments in the light of the accident at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station; IAEA peer reviews; emergency preparedness and response; national regulatory bodies; operating organizations; IAEA Safety Standards; international legal framework; Member States planning to embark on a nuclear power programme; capacity building; protection of people and the environment from ionizing radiation; communication and information dissemination; and research and development.

That’s the day a single individual will cross the borders of your countries, to detonate a nuclear or radiological device and take and terrorize as many innocent lives as possible.

That’s the day we will know for sure whether we have learned the lessons of history, and whether we have chosen carefully what to take as examples for our actions.

Once again, we need to look no further than to the tragic events of March 2011.

To the courage, the resilience and the strength shown by the great people of Japan.

May that powerful example inspire us all as we work – together- to bring about a safer world.

Thank you.