

Statement by Mr. Toshimitsu Motegi
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Delegate of the Government of Japan
At the Forty-eighth General Conference of the
International Atomic Energy Agency

1. Opening Address

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 48th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I am convinced that your extensive experience and outstanding abilities in steering the proceedings of international conferences will contribute to the success of this General Conference. I would also like to extend a hearty welcome to the Republic of Chad, the Republic of Togo and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania as new members of the IAEA.

Mr. President, Mr. Director General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international non-proliferation regime is currently facing serious challenges. The North Korean nuclear issue as well as other non-proliferation issues have become more serious than before, particularly in light of the recent discovery of the existence of an underground network of nuclear proliferation. The strengthening of the non-proliferation regime has become one of the most important and urgent issues for the international community to address.

At the same time, the importance of nuclear energy as an energy source that is not only stable in supply but also contributes to the prevention of global warming has increased. As the representatives of the Member States present here are well aware, the peaceful use of nuclear energy in such fields as medical treatment, agriculture and industry is extremely beneficial for social and economic development of the international community.

Therefore, Japan strongly believes that the role of the IAEA in both the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the peaceful use of nuclear energy is becoming increasingly important.

2. Strengthening of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime

Mr. President,

The strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime is one of the most important pillars of Japan's foreign policy. Next year, the NPT Review Conference, which is held every five years, will be convened in New York. Next year also marks the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings in Japan. Therefore, the year 2005 presents the international community with an opportunity to renew its commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to make further efforts to this end.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Japan, as the only country that has suffered the tragedy of atomic bombings, will continue to uphold its "Three Non-nuclear Principles" of "not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan".

It is the responsibility of the entire international community to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime by closing any loopholes in the current regime. Both U.S. President Bush's proposal on non-proliferation and IAEA Director General El-Baradei's initiative on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle underline the necessity of preventing the proliferation of sensitive nuclear technology, such as enrichment and reprocessing. Japan fully shares the concerns indicated in both initiatives. However, at the same time, I believe that any discussion of these initiatives needs to carefully consider the reality of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and people's desire for it.

Mr. President,

The strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system is vital to reinforcing the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Therefore, Japan continues to make efforts towards the universalization of the Additional Protocol as the most realistic and effective means of achieving this objective. However, to date, the Additional Protocol has only come into force in 60 states, which is not a standard we can be satisfied with. I urge those states that have not yet concluded an Additional Protocol to do so as soon as possible.

The implementation of integrated safeguards started in Japan last week on 15th. It is the first time that integrated safeguards have been implemented in a country with large scale nuclear activities like Japan. We consider this an important achievement which will be a good example to other states.

Japan attaches importance to further enhancing the efficiency of the safeguards system through the efficient use of limited resources of the IAEA. The implementation of integrated safeguards is also beneficial from that point of view.

3. Nuclear Issues of North Korea, Iran and Libya etc.

Mr. President,

North Korea's nuclear program not only presents a grave threat to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, but it also poses a serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime. We strongly urge North Korea to comply fully with all its obligations under the NPT and other relevant international agreements, and to immediately dismantle all nuclear programs under credible international verification. We believe it is essential to achieve a peaceful solution to this issue through the Six-Party Talks process. It is therefore important to hold the fourth round of the Six-Party Talks without delay.

As for Iran, Japan is concerned that there still remain outstanding issues, in spite of the fact that almost two years have passed since the IAEA first recognized Iran's undeclared activities. Japan has, on occasions of bilateral foreign ministerial talks and Disarmament/Non-proliferation consultations with Iran, strongly urged the Iranian government to faithfully implement all the requirements of the past IAEA Board of Governors resolutions and also to ratify promptly its Additional Protocol in order to dispel international concerns. In order to solve Iran's nuclear problem promptly, it is essential that Iran improve its transparency. Japan would like to once again take this opportunity to urge Iran to faithfully implement all the requirements of the past IAEA resolutions including the one which was adopted at the Board of Governors Meeting last week.

Japan would like to commend Libya for its decision to abandon its weapons of mass destruction program, including its nuclear weapons program, as well as for its increased cooperation with the international community. Japan strongly hopes that other countries of nuclear proliferation concern will follow the example of Libya and cooperate fully with the Agency.

Japan understands that the Republic of Korea has extended cooperation with the Agency in a transparent manner, and we appreciate such an attitude. At the same time, from the viewpoint of maintaining the credibility of the NPT and the IAEA Safeguards regime, Japan has deep interest in this issue and is paying close attention to the statement by the Director General that "it is a matter of serious concern." Japan expects that the Republic of Korea will continue to fully cooperate with the Agency and maintain its level of transparency for the clarification of these past instances of concern.

Japan believes it is important to resolve this issue at the earliest opportunity.

4. Nuclear Security

Mr. President,

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the threat of nuclear terrorism has become an important issue that the international community needs to address. From this viewpoint, Japan commends the IAEA's initiatives in this area, including the Nuclear Security Fund, and looks forward to the early convening of a conference to amend the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We take note of the progress of Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI), which was proposed by the United States. We will continue to cooperate with this initiative in an appropriate manner, bearing in mind the Findings of the recent International Partners' Conference.

5. Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy

Mr. President,

Japan recognizes the significant role played by the Agency in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Of particular importance is technical cooperation with developing countries to promote radioisotope applications in such fields as medical treatment, agriculture and industry.

Japan has continuously contributed 100% of its share of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund. We strongly encourage all Member States to make further efforts to pay their share of the Technical Cooperation Fund in full and without delay. We also urge recipient countries to fulfill their shared responsibilities.

Nuclear power is one of the main power sources in Japan. Japan has continued to develop a nuclear fuel cycle in order to enhance the advantages of nuclear energy.

We are currently preparing a new "long-term program for research, development and utilization of nuclear energy" seeking better public acceptance of our basic policy through the active participation of all stakeholders.

Japan believes in the importance of taking long-term perspectives on the future nuclear energy policy. In this respect, ITER project is extremely important. We therefore hope that a decision on the site for the ITER project to realize nuclear fusion energy will be made with consensus among the six parties. We continue to invite this project to Rokkasho and we strongly believe that it is of the utmost importance to implement this project through international partnership.

6. Mihama Accident : Nuclear Safety

Last month, an accident involving a gush of steam due to a pipe burst occurred in one of our nuclear power plants. Though it was not a nuclear accident, it was certainly a tragedy that resulted in workers' casualties.

We are fully aware of the importance of ensuring safety in nuclear power plants and are committed to doing everything necessary to further improve safety and prevent similar accidents from happening again. We attached importance to international cooperation in this area of nuclear safety. We think highly of the initiatives taken by the IAEA and will continue to cooperate actively with them.

7. Transport of Radioactive Material

The smooth transport of radioactive materials is indispensable for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In particular, international transport of radioactive materials is based upon the right of free-navigation established under the international law. In conducting such transport, Japan employs the most stringent safety measures in accordance with international standards set by the international organizations concerned.

Furthermore, I am pleased to report that Japan has requested that the Agency organize a TranSAS mission to Japan.

8. IAEA Budget, Personnel Affairs

I understand that sufficient financial support is necessary for the Agency to carry out its expected role. To this end, Japan has supported the Fiscal Year 2005 regular budget, including the increased safeguards budget. However, I would like to call on the Secretariat to continue its efforts towards improving efficiency in budget management through the prioritization of projects and reduction of costs.

9. Closing Remarks

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude my address by reiterating Japan's commitment to actively supporting the IAEA so that the Agency can fulfill its noble mission.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.