

**Statement by Hon'ble Mr. B. Mahtab, Member of Parliament and Member
of the Indian Delegation on
Agenda Item 14: Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency at the
58th Session of the
UN General Assembly on November 4, 2003**

Mr. President,

The Indian delegation has taken note of the Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency, presented by the Agency's Director General, Dr Mohamed El-Baradei.

Mr. President,

According to the 2003 World Development Report of the World Bank, the population of the world crossed the 6-billion mark in the year 1999. Most current estimates suggest that around 2 billion people more will be added over the next 30 years, with another billion in the following 20 years. Virtually all the increase will be in the developing countries, with the bulk in urban areas. The core challenge for development would thus be to ensure availability of productive work opportunities and access to basic amenities for these people. At present, however, there are wide disparities. The average income in the richest 20 countries is now 37 times that in the poorest 20 and this ratio has doubled in the past 40 years. Availability of energy within the reach of everyone could significantly correct this situation. Energy is the engine for empowerment and growth. It multiplies work done through human labour and increases productivity. Availability of energy thus leads to enhanced livelihood and access to better amenities. With the sustainability issues staring at us, this realisation is possible only if the energy supply becomes abundant and within the reach of all. Only the power of atom can make it happen.

As we commemorate the "Atoms for Peace" initiative launched fifty years ago and take stock of the achievements which are indeed very impressive, both in terms of the share of nuclear electricity in the total electricity production as well as in terms of other non-electricity applications, the barriers to growth of this important technology for the benefit of the larger part of humanity are yet to be addressed. This is better done before it is too late as otherwise the threat to global climate as well as the inequality tensions could assume unmanageable dimensions. Clear signals of these threats are already visible.

Combating the dangers of malevolent use of nuclear and radioactive material by unscrupulous and terrorist elements has emerged as a new challenge. We are glad to see that this issue is receiving due attention in the Agency. We recently conducted in collaboration with the IAEA an international training course on Security for Nuclear Installations. The course was well received and the feedback is encouraging. It has been suggested that this course could serve as a 'model course' to be conducted on a regular basis.

We welcome the G-8 statement on the safety and security of radioactive sources. India has participated actively in discussions on evolving the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. India has in place appropriate legislative and regulatory infrastructure to achieve the objectives of this Code of Conduct.

Mr. President,

India's atomic energy programme, which is in its 50th year, has come a long way on its march to serve our people. Today we are on a fast-track growth, backed up by a strong research and development programme, industrial and safety infrastructure. In about four years from now, we would reach an installed generating capacity of around 4500 megawatts of electricity with pressurised heavy water reactors, the mainstay of the first stage of our indigenous nuclear power programme, and another 2320 megawatts with light water reactors, making a total of around 6800 megawatts as against the present capacity of 2720 megawatts. The Government of India has approved the construction of a 500 megawatts Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR). This indigenously-developed technology can enhance the installed power generation capacity to well above 300,000 megawatts even with our modest Uranium resources.

Nuclear electricity generation of 19,358 million units (MUs) was realised during the year 2002-03 with the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) achieving annual overall capacity factor of 90%, which is among the highest in the world. The Kakrapar Atomic Power Station-1 was judged the best performing unit amongst PHWR category during the rolling 12-month period from October 1, 2001 to September 1, 2002. For the calendar year 2002, the three NPCIL PHWR units were judged amongst the five best PHWR units in the world. Besides, all the operating nuclear power stations are now ISO 14001 certified.

Mr. President,

Growth of nuclear energy in the developing countries, particularly in fast-growing economies with large populations, should be a matter of global interest in view of its potential to protect the earth from irreversible climate changes. Wherever there are no genuine concerns, barriers to deployment of nuclear energy technologies need to be examined and brought down through a pragmatic approach. We must move towards a more peaceful and prosperous world on the basis of plenty of energy available within the reach of all. Mindless controls without addressing the core issue of meeting development aspirations of the needy do not help the situation; rather, it makes matters worse.

The International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO) of the IAEA for the development of the next generation of nuclear reactor and fuel cycle technologies is important in this context. It has the potential of providing a technological solution to address the barriers to deployment of nuclear power worldwide. Development of Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR) in India, which would more than meet the INPRO objectives in terms of sustainability, economy, safety and proliferation resistance, is progressing according to plans. In addition, this reactor system would enable us to get started with large scale energy production using Thorium.

Mr. President,

We are conscious of our responsibilities arising from the possession of advanced technologies in the nuclear field. We have a commitment and an interest in contributing as a partner against proliferation. Even as we move forward towards developing and using

proliferation-resistant nuclear technologies, we must shed the baggage inherited from the past – which still restricts the flow of equipment and technologies related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Looking from the perspective of a large and growing economy like India, with its small hydrocarbon reserves and depleting coal reserves, the development of nuclear energy based on a closed cycle approach enabling fuller use of uranium and thorium is the only way to meet development aspirations of over a billion people. We are, therefore, pursuing a comprehensive R&D programme to explore newer technologies to widen the scope of nuclear energy use.

Mr. President,

The technical co-operation programme of the Agency has been playing a valuable role in developmental activities using nuclear techniques. We have a comprehensive domestic programme on applications in agriculture, health, water resources and industry. We have been and would continue to be active in sharing our experience with other countries. We would continue our strong support to IAEA activities. We have been consistently pledging and paying our contribution to the technical co-operation fund in full. We do so this year too.

The Agency's programme on 'managing and preserving the knowledge' is timely and relevant to the nuclear industry. In India, we are in a fortunate position with respect to our very capable human resource available in large numbers. It may be also worthwhile at this stage to mention that Indian scientists have perhaps made the largest contributions to scientific publications on Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors.

Mr. President,

Looking at the present scenario in which nuclear technology finds itself, we need a proactive two-pronged strategy which safeguards the developmental aspirations that can inevitably be met by nuclear technology and at the same time, prevents its malevolent use. This is an important challenge as ignoring either dimension could lead to disastrous consequences. With science and technology-based collective wisdom at its command, we feel that the United Nations in general, and the IAEA in particular, are in a unique position to find new paths that could significantly contribute to world peace and prosperity. We all need to work together in this important task. We owe it to humanity and the future generations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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