

Statement by Mr. Ranjan Mathai, Foreign Secretary, at the  
High Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on Nuclear Safety and  
Security, on 22 September 2011

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to convey our appreciation to the UN Secretary General for organizing this High Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security. We would like to join other delegations in conveying our heartfelt condolences to Japan on the recent grave tragedy in that country. India associates itself with the Statement made on behalf of NAM member-states.

The Fukushima nuclear incident attracted worldwide attention and raised concerns about nuclear safety in the face of natural calamities of particularly large magnitudes. Just as the global nuclear industry drew valuable lessons from the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents, after Fukushima, there is a strong expectation that global safety standards, implementation and crisis response procedures will be further strengthened, consolidated and updated in a continuous manner based on a scientific and objective analysis of the lessons learned.

India views nuclear energy as an essential element of its national energy basket. We are committed to taking forward our three stage nuclear programme based on a closed fuel cycle. We envisage a major expansion of nuclear energy in the coming decades – 20,000 MW by 2020 and projected to grow to 60,000 mw by 2030. Our nuclear safety track record has been impeccable over 345 reactor years of operation but we recognize the importance of continuous improvement and innovation in our nuclear safety standards and practices covering the entire range of activities – citing, design, construction, operation and up-gradation.

The Prime Minister of India has underscored that safety of our nuclear plants is a matter of the highest priority. The Government has undertaken a number of measures. These include the introduction of a bill in Parliament to change the functional status of AERB to a *de jure* independent Nuclear Regulatory Authority. Six safety review committees have looked into various aspects of nuclear safety and while detailed reviews are being evaluated, certain enhanced safety measures are already being implemented. India will invite the Operational Safety Review Teams of IAEA to assist in its own safety reviews and audit. All reactors, whether indigenous or imported will, without exception, meet the enhanced safety standards. Safety evaluation reports and follow-up measures are being put in the public domain to enhance transparency and boost public confidence. There is increased focus on

emergency preparedness and response to a nuclear accident which are beyond design basis accidents (BDA).

India's National Disaster Management Authority has drawn up "Management of Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies" which provides a holistic and integrated approach to disaster management covering all its components – prevention, mitigation, preparedness, compliance with regulatory requirements, capacity development, response, relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

While recognizing that nuclear safety and nuclear security are national responsibilities, we consider it important to strengthen relevant international cooperative mechanisms to enhance public confidence in nuclear power as a safe, secure and clean source of energy. There is need for strengthened international cooperation, setting of new standards, peer reviews, sharing of experiences with a new emphasis of cooperation among all stakeholders- government, operators, regulators, industry, scientific and research bodies. A new international safety regime should be evolved on the basis of consultations and consensus through an inclusive and transparent process.

The IAEA has a central role to play in taking forward this process. We believe the Agency has the required mandate and has acquired considerable competence to facilitate international cooperation in this area. The Agency has, over the years, developed capabilities to undertake appropriate technical assessments through effective pooling of resources for the benefit of Member States.

The Convention on Nuclear Safety is the pillar of the international safety regime. We welcome the proposal to convene a special meeting of the Contracting Parties to this Convention to consider amendments to strengthen nuclear safety. This has to be done in a manner that does not affect the sovereign decision making process of the Contracting Parties. The Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident is an important instrument in terms of prompt information with the Agency and the states affected in cases of significant trans-boundary radiological incidents.

The IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety in June 2011 served as a platform to make an initial assessment of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident and the lessons to be drawn from it. It also provided the necessary impetus to strengthen the international nuclear safety framework and emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. The Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Conference and the draft Nuclear Safety Action Plan provides a valuable basis for taking this process forward. We welcome the proposed High Level Conference to be organized by Japan and the IAEA in 2012 on nuclear safety. India has participated and benefitted from peer reviews of WANO and will be cooperating with the multi-national design evaluation programme of the OCED-NEA.

India will actively contribute to international efforts for enhanced nuclear safety standards and practices, evolved through consultations, based on a scientific and objective approach that allows sharing of scientific knowledge and technology relating to nuclear safety, promotion of innovation and investment in new technologies and increased transparency and capacity building that allows timely response to nuclear accidents should they occur. A new global cooperative framework on nuclear safety that preserves the principle of national responsibility but goes hand-in-hand with increased international cooperation will go a long way in reassuring the public regarding the long term viability of nuclear energy as a safe and secure energy source.

India welcomed President Obama's initiative to host the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010. We support the full implementation of the Summit Communiqué and the Work Plan. The second Summit in Seoul next year will provide a valuable opportunity for participating states to reaffirm their joint determination to contribute to global efforts to combat the threat of nuclear terrorism - one of the pressing challenges facing the international community.

The NSS process has strengthened resolve of participating states to address issues of nuclear terrorism and nuclear security through a collective international response based on effective action at the national level to prevent vulnerable nuclear material falling into hands of non-state actors and terrorist groups. India has participated actively in the NSS process and will host a meeting of the NSS Sherpas' in New Delhi in January 2012.

India believes that the primary responsibility for ensuring nuclear security rests at the national level, but this must be accompanied by responsible behavior by States. All States should scrupulously abide by their international obligations. India has consistently supported IAEA's central role in facilitating national efforts to strengthen nuclear security and in fostering effective international cooperation.

Universal adherence to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (CPPNM) and early entry into force of its 2005 Amendment would go a long way in strengthening global efforts in the area of nuclear security. India is party to the CPPNM and is amongst the few countries which have ratified the 2005 amendment to the Convention. India is a party to the International Convention on Combating Nuclear Terrorism and supports its universalization.

India is establishing a Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership to facilitate international cooperation and assist in building global capacity in areas such as Advanced Nuclear Energy Systems, Nuclear Security, Radiation Safety, and the application of Radioisotopes and Radiation Technology. International cooperation will be an important dimension of the Centre which will focus not only on training

programmes, also in cooperation with the IAEA, but on new and innovative technological responses to meet the challenges of safety and security.

We are confident that through our common vision and joint action on enhanced nuclear safety and security standards we would be able to enhance public confidence in nuclear energy as a clean, affordable, safe and secure source of energy, vital to meeting global energy demands especially in developing countries. This meeting should therefore send a strong and unambiguous signal of support for nuclear energy while underlining our common determination to strengthen the mandate and resources of the IAEA to discharge its role and responsibilities.

Thank you.

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