Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all here to Vienna for this joint meeting of the Nuclear, Radiation and Waste Safety Standards Committees (NUSSC/RASSC/WASSC). While we have considerable experience in joint sessions of two Safety Standards Committees, it is less usual for three Committees to meet together. However, given the large number of safety standards to be reviewed on this occasion by NUSSC, RASSC and WASSC, this cooperation can bring a range of views to bear on technical issues of mutual interest, and this of course ensures that the final output is of the highest possible standard.

I would like to take the opportunity to bring you up to date with a number of significant events that have taken place over the past few months and to flag some important upcoming meetings.

Senior Regulators’ Meeting

Let me start with the Senior Regulator’s Meeting which was held on 25 September as part of the 58th IAEA General Conference. This was a landmark event, being the 30th Senior Regulators’ Meeting, the first of which took place in 1985. This year, as part of an overall theme of creating more adaptive and robust nuclear regulation, the meeting considered the role of the regulatory body in strengthening the implementation of the concept of defence in depth, and the regulatory needs and challenges in nuclear security. In opening the meeting, the IAEA Director General noted that “strong and independent regulators, operating under a robust legal framework, are vital for ensuring a high level of nuclear safety and nuclear security.”

A number of interesting and thought-provoking presentations by IAEA staff and international experts provided the basis for lively and interactive discussions. While we have many highly experienced regulatory bodies in our Member States, all of them recognize the importance of this forum in providing an opportunity to share experience and to learn from each other.

International Conventions

Regarding the Joint Convention, I am pleased to let you know that the fifth review cycle officially began on the 10th October, the agreed date by Contracting Parties to share their National Reports for review in preparation for the 5th Review Meeting, which will be held in Vienna from 11 to 22 May 2015 (at the same time as the Eurovision Song Contest 2015). To date, 60 National Reports have been submitted and posted on the dedicated web folder. I
am also very happy to inform about a very motivated group of Officers already preparing for their work ahead of the Review Meeting. We look forward to an even greater number of participants for the next Review Meeting, and to an active and fruitful participation in the review process.

The 6th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety concluded in April this year, agreed to convene a Diplomatic Conference in 2015 to consider a proposed amendment to the CNS text to address the design and construction of both existing and new nuclear power plants. In May 2014 an Informal Work Group, open to all Contracting Parties to the Convention, was established to prepare for the Diplomatic Conference. The IWG met here in Vienna in July, August and October 2014. The fourth meeting of the IWG is scheduled for next week on 4 December 2014. The IWG meetings have addressed the draft Provisional Rules of Procedure for the Diplomatic Conference as well as some technically relevant issues.

The Informal Working Group is chaired by Ambassador Rafael Grossi from Argentina, while the Vice-Chair is Ambassador Rolf Stalder from Switzerland.

The Diplomatic Conference will commence on Monday, 9 February 2015.

International Basic Safety Standards

The revised edition of the International Basic Safety Standards (the BSS) was approved by the Board of Governors in September 2011 and the cosponsored edition was published in July this year. The International BSS is one of the flagship documents of the Agency and is widely used by Member States as a basis for their radiation protection regulation. This newest addition identifies new radiation protection challenges, including the justification of medical exposures, the regulatory control of NORM industries, the importance of indoor radon as a source of exposure and the reduced occupational dose limit for the lens of the eye, among others. We are already working closely with individual Member States and with the other seven cosponsoring international organizations to ensure that the BSS is implemented as widely as possible and to ensure that the appropriate regulatory infrastructure is in place, and is effective, worldwide.

Waste Management Review Service

The Agency has recently launched a Radioactive Waste Management Integrated Review Service, called ARTEMIS. This service, established in cooperation with the Department of Nuclear Energy, is now offered to all Member States for the review of parts or entire radioactive waste management, decommissioning and remediation programs.

While still on the issue of waste management, let me also recall the success of the Scientific Forum on radioactive waste management organized during the last General Conference by the Department of Nuclear Energy and the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security. This Forum was an opportunity to demonstrate the progress made in the management of radioactive waste and to highlight the importance of safety in developing radioactive waste management programmes. I am pleased to announce that, in November 2016, the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security will be organizing an international conference on the safety of radioactive waste management.

Fukushima Report

Work is progressing on the preparation of the IAEA Report on the Fukushima Daiichi accident and we have now entered the review and editing process. I know that Gustavo Caruso will make a presentation covering the Fukushima Report tomorrow. For that reason I will say nothing more at this stage, except to underline the importance of this report for the Agency and for our Member States.
International Conference on Operational Safety

I would like to call your attention to the International Conference on Operational Safety that will be held here in Vienna from 23 – 26 June 2015. The topics to be discussed are international safety peer reviews, corporate management of safety, post-Fukushima operational safety improvements, operating experience, leadership and safety culture and long term operation. I encourage you to participate in this important conference.

Conference on Occupational Radiation Protection

Finally, I would like to remind you all that next week the International Conference on Occupational Radiation Protection: Enhancing the Protection of Workers – Gaps, Challenges and Developments takes place here at the IAEA. The conference is jointly sponsored by the International Labour Organization and is being organized in cooperation with 15 international organizations and associations. Since the previous International Conference on this topic in 2002, there has been a significant increase in the number of occupationally exposed workers in medicine and in industry. New reactor designs, increased emphasis on decommissioning activities and new work practices have resulted in many new challenges that need to be addressed. Under the chairmanship of Michael Weber of the USNRC, I anticipate an active discussion around all these important issues and I look forward to the development of an updated international action plan on occupational radiation protection.

Let me conclude by thanking all of you for taking the time to work with us and to allow us benefit from your experience and advice. I wish you all an enjoyable few days here in Vienna, a safe and secure trip home and a Happy Christmas to you and your families.