

4 April 2011 | Vienna, Austria

## **Introductory Statement to Fifth Review Meeting of Contracting Parties to Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS)**

by IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to address this *5th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety*.

I would like to begin by expressing - on behalf of the IAEA Secretariat and all of you - our condolences to the people of Japan over the earthquake and tsunami on 11 March, which devastated much of the country.

I also pay tribute to the bravery of the workers and rescue teams who have worked so hard to try to minimize the impact of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and alleviate the concerns of people in Japan and throughout the world.

I know you will agree with me that the crisis at Fukushima Daiichi has enormous implications for nuclear power and confronts all of us with a major challenge. We cannot take a "business as usual" approach.

Although the crisis has still not been overcome, this Review Meeting provides a first formal opportunity for Contracting Parties to the *Convention* to share their preliminary thoughts on the accident and the lessons that need to be learned.

As you know, the key objective of the *Convention* is to achieve and maintain a high level of nuclear safety worldwide through the enhancement of national measures and international cooperation. This is done principally through the peer review mechanism established under the *Convention*.

I understand that you will be discussing issues relating to safety management and safety culture, international cooperation and networking on emergency management. In view of the events in Japan, the President has also invited you to consider some additional topics arising from the Fukushima accident.

The accident at Fukushima Daiichi is a matter of concern for all IAEA Member States, not just for the Contracting Parties to the *Convention on Nuclear Safety*. Japan and the IAEA are co-sponsoring a side event on the accident, and the initial response from safety regulators around the world, at 18.30 this evening. This will include presentations by specialists from the Japanese safety agency NISA and the operating company TEPCO, as well as from the United States and Europe. This event will be open to all IAEA Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation at Fukushima Daiichi remains very serious. The immediate priority is to overcome the crisis and stabilise the reactors. But we must also begin the process of

reflection and evaluation.

The worries of millions of people throughout the world about whether nuclear energy is safe must be taken seriously. Rigorous adherence to the most robust international safety standards and full transparency, in good times and bad, are vital for restoring and maintaining public confidence in nuclear power.

The IAEA has been working at full stretch since 11 March to help Japan overcome the crisis.

Agency experts in the field of boiling water reactors are now in the country.

In the next few days, they will visit the on-site emergency control room at the Fukushima Daiichi plant to get first-hand information.

As soon as the situation at Fukushima Daiichi permits, the Agency would like to send an international expert mission to conduct an assessment of the accident, upon request from Japan. I believe this should include an element of peer review.

It is clear that more needs to be done to strengthen the safety of nuclear power plants so that the risk of a future accident is significantly reduced.

As you may know, I have invited our Member States to an *IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety* from June 20 to 24 in Vienna.

The Conference will consider policy and technical issues, including improving the protection of nuclear power plants against multiple hazards, preparedness for prolonged power blackouts, enhancing emergency power supply and protecting spent fuel under accident conditions.

The equally important aspects of effective regulatory oversight, emergency preparedness and response, and accident management generally, will also be discussed, as will the future status of IAEA safety standards and the Agency's role in nuclear safety and security.

It is already clear that arrangements for putting international nuclear experts in touch with each other quickly during a crisis need to be improved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As of the end of 2010, more than 60 IAEA Member States had informed the Agency that they were considering introducing nuclear power programmes. Almost all of the 29 countries which already had such programmes planned to expand them.

In the light of the Fukushima Daiichi accident, some countries have announced reviews of their plans for nuclear power.

However, the basic drivers behind the interest in nuclear power have not changed as a result of Fukushima. These include rising global energy demand as well as concerns about climate change, volatile fossil fuel prices and energy security.

Nuclear power has contributed to expanding the supply of energy and has also reduced greenhouse gas and other emissions.

The IAEA will continue to work closely with both established users and newcomers to ensure that nuclear power is used efficiently, safely and securely, and without proliferation of nuclear weapons.

In the light of the Fukushima accident, we will redouble our efforts to help newcomer countries to put an effective nuclear safety infrastructure in place well before the first reactor starts up.

I encourage all newcomer countries to become Contracting Parties to the *Convention on Nuclear Safety* and other relevant conventions.

Established users of nuclear power, for their part, must ensure the highest level of nuclear safety and effective regulation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that valuable lessons will be learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident which will result in substantial improvements in nuclear operating safety, regulation and the overall safety culture.

You have important work before you at this *Fifth Convention on Nuclear Safety Review Meeting*. Your deliberations will assist us, and all IAEA Member States, as we consider how best to strengthen the role of the IAEA, its safety standards and the global nuclear safety regime more generally.

With these thoughts, I wish you a successful meeting.