



Statements and Speeches

No. 75/36

THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

A Statement in the Plenary Meeting of the Thirtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly by Mr. W.H. Barton, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Office of the United Nations at Geneva and to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, on November 12, 1975.

I should like to preface my remarks on the IAEA by welcoming the three new members of the Agency, the Republic of Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar -- not only because of this further implementation of the principle of universality but because of the contribution we hope and expect will be made by these three countries to the work of the Agency.

The Agency has, since its creation, served to "enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world", primarily through its promotion of nuclear-energy programs, including assistance, training and information exchange, and through the development of constructive and dynamic safety and environmental-protection programs. It has, moreover, acted to enhance international security through the development of adequate standards for the physical security of nuclear material.

The acceleration of the demand for, and interest in, nuclear power as an alternative source of energy, brought about largely by the greatly-increased costs of oil and petroleum, has added a new dimension to the Agency's nuclear-power expansion programs and a new urgency to the Agency's safeguards work. Canada recognizes the need for the growth of nuclear power, particularly in the developing countries. At the same time, we are deeply concerned that this expansion be controlled, consistent with the obligation of the Agency to "ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it, or at its request or under its supervision or control, is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose".

I am pleased to note again this year that such a large proportion of the Agency's regular budget was dedicated to programs of direct interest to developing member states, and in particular to note the increased emphasis that the developing countries members of the Agency have placed on the introduction of nuclear power into their energy programs. It is becoming increasingly clear that, in a number of countries, nuclear energy provides a major alternative to hydrocarbons which are in short, unreliable and expensive supply. A sound

nuclear program, carefully planned, adequately staffed and efficiently operated, could now bring within reach of many countries the possibility of longer-term energy security and, with advances in resource development and reactor technology, an increased degree of energy independence.

The Agency, through its various programs, has a vital role to play in this expansion of nuclear power. One of its most important activities this year will be its study of the desirability and the technical and economic feasibility of regional fuel-cycle centres, a move Canada endorses wholeheartedly. Urgent study is needed of such possibilities in order to make the most effective use of scarce resources. The joint efforts of groups of countries to cooperate to this end could be a breakthrough in the wider introduction of nuclear power for development. Canada shares the views expressed by other countries as to the role which regional fuel-cycle centres might play in lessening the danger of proliferation of nuclear-explosive devices by limiting the number of facilities producing fissile material.

It is equally clear that the Agency is also the organization to which all nuclear-program operators must look for help in the definition of common standards of safety and environmental protection. Canada fully supports the Agency's continuing program to develop safety codes and guides. Canada is an active participant in the Agency's work in the area of radioactive-waste management, reflecting our national policy to store wastes at land-based sites in retrievable form rather than attempting to "dispose" of such materials, while recognizing at the same time that such solutions may not be possible for all countries.

One of the most controversial and fundamental issues facing the Agency concerns the environmental implications of nuclear power. In keeping with the high standards of scientific objectivity and responsibility to the international community that we have always been able to take for granted in the case of the Agency, it should continue to do its best to ensure that a comparative examination of the environmental impact of the various alternative energy sources is pursued on the highest scientific plane possible. We welcome most heartily the co-operation of the IAEA and the WHO (World Health Organization) in a study aimed at a quantitative evaluation of effects of all available options for energy production. We agree with the Director-General's remarks that it will be more useful if environmental implications of nuclear energy are examined in the context of other available energy options, and welcome his willingness to seize the opportunity for the Agency to play a most useful role towards this end in its co-operation

with the United Nations Environment Program.

I also wish to take this occasion to commend the Agency for the very useful work it has undertaken with respect to the application of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. Canada fully supported the conclusion of the final declaration of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which declared the Agency to be the appropriate international body through which potential benefits from peaceful applications of nuclear explosions should be made available to non-nuclear-weapon states and urged the Agency to expedite work on identifying and examining the important legal issues involved in, and to begin consideration of, the structure and content of the special international agreement or agreements envisaged in Article V of the non-proliferation treaty. We share the view of the review conference that the Agency should broaden its consideration of this question to include, within its area of competence, all aspects and implications of the practical applications of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes. We welcome the establishment by the Agency of an Advisory Group on Peaceful Nuclear Explosions, and shall follow its work closely.

While Canadian international development-assistance policy continues to be based, as in past years, on a preference for central funding of United Nations activities, we have once again pledged our full assessed share to the Agency's Voluntary Fund for Technical Assistance in 1976. Such an increase from the previous year (in which I am happy to note that we were able to contribute somewhat in excess of our assessed share) is justified, in our minds, by the growing needs of the developing countries for support by the Agency and the unfortunate erosion that inflation has wrought over the past year in the resources available.

In a statement to the NPT Review Conference, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, noted:

"Canada will continue to play its full part in contributing to the International Atomic Energy Agency's General Fund for Technical Assistance and to the United Nations Development Program, which also finances projects implemented by the Agency."

He went on to say, however:

"It is Canada's intention to provide, within its overall aid criteria and priorities, increased amounts of technical assistance in the nuclear area, bilaterally or through appropriate multilateral channels such as

the IAEA, to the developing countries party to the NPT."

It must be recognized that the increased interest in nuclear power has created an unprecedented demand on the resources of states such as Canada. In our efforts to allocate these most efficiently, we have taken into account our strong concern to ensure that nuclear power is restricted only to peaceful applications. Thus, we intend to give particular attention to assistance to those countries that have ratified the NPT and thereby fully subscribe to what is today the best, if still an imperfect, instrument for preventing the proliferation of nuclear-explosive devices.

I should conclude these remarks with a brief reference to the Agency's safeguards activities. Canada regards the Agency's safeguards functions as being of critical importance and inseparable from the Agency's other programs. Indeed, effective safeguards are the necessary basis for international co-operation in the transfer of nuclear materials, equipment and technology. Canada finds itself in full sympathy with the Director-General of the Agency when he declared:

"I do not think that we shall have an overall satisfactory safeguards system operating until suppliers of equipment and materials make it a condition for delivery that the entire nuclear activity in the receiving country is placed under IAEA safeguards."

My country is willing to work actively in efforts to achieve this objective of common export requirements, to which the final declaration of the review conference has already called attention.

International co-operation in the nuclear field is indispensable, but it requires an impartial international system of safeguards. Effective guarantees that the atom is safe from man as well as from accident are essential if it is to be an accepted and long-term source of energy and an acceptable, desirable area for international co-operation. Canada looks to the Agency as the international community's main instrument for giving these guarantees.

S/C