

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0467

Venerdì 20.09.2002

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 46ª SESSIONE DELLA CONFERENZA GENERALE DELL'AGENZIA INTERNAZIONALE DELL'ENERGIA ATOMICA (VIENNA, 16-20 SETTEMBRE 2002)

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Si chiude oggi a Vienna la 46ª sessione della Conferenza Generale dell'Agencia Internazionale dell'Energia Atomica (A.I.E.A.).

Riportiamo qui di seguito l'intervento pronunciato il 17 settembre u.s. dal Rev.mo Monsignor Leo Boccardi, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso le Organizzazioni Internazionali a Vienna:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. LEO BOCCARDI

Mr. President,

It is a great honour for me to congratulate you, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, on your election as President of the forty-sixth General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I am convinced that under your able guidance the work of this Conference will be successfully brought to conclusion. My Delegation would like at the same time to express its gratitude to the Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and to the Secretariat for their dedicated service, and to welcome the Delegations of the State of Eritrea, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Seychelles as new Members.

Mr. President, distinguished Delegates,

The Delegation of the Holy See has always followed with great interest the initiatives, efforts and projects undertaken by the Agency that are aimed at the improvement of the safety in the use of nuclear energy and technology. We would like to underline especially the importance of the scientific research work, seminars and symposia on the radiological protection of patients, the monitoring and reduction of occupational exposure to radiation (cf. Symposium held in Geneva in August 2002) and on the safe management of radioactive waste. The Agency – through its programs and expertise – plays an eminent role in this field and makes a valuable contribution towards creating a global nuclear safety culture.

In order to achieve these objectives, an up-to-date system of training and education has to be established and applied coherently. Much has been done in recent years. But looking at the issue on a world-wide scale, one cannot overview that there are still possibilities for improvement in regard to the implementation of appropriate safety standards and especially to the education of those who are applying nuclear techniques and penetrating radiation. It is surely very important to replace old technical equipments with modern ones that provide a higher level of safety, but it seems even more vital for a nuclear safety culture to increase the awareness of potential dangers which go with nuclear technologies. At the same time we have to follow attentively the situation in this regard in all Member States in order to prevent or eliminate, if there are some cases of it, double standards of protection and quality assurance for industrialized countries on the one hand, and developing ones on the other hand.

The radiological protection of patients and caregivers has been for my Delegation a question of great importance. We are not getting tired in repeating that it is the human person who is at the center of all scientific research and development. But this fundamental principle does not exclude the problem of environment protection and the question of the impact of nuclear technologies, notably ionizing radiation, on it.

In this connection, we would like to greet the ongoing discussion, initiated by some Member States of the Agency, carried on by the Agency itself and a group of consultants, on ethical considerations in protecting the environment from the effects of ionizing radiation. We become more and more aware that preserving our earth, its bio-diversity, is an indispensable part of our efforts to make a more human world for future generations. The generally strict regulations applied for the use and handling of radioactive and fissile material and waste should be fully enforced in order to protect the human family and the environment from potentially harmful radioactive isotopes and ionizing radiation.

One of the greatest concerns pertaining to the safety and security of nuclear material on an international scale, is the increasing problem of orphan radioactive sources. In this area the IAEA is fulfilling an indispensable task not only in assisting Member States in creating and strengthening national regulatory infrastructures to ensure that these radioactive sources are appropriately regulated and adequately secured at all times (a "cradle-to-grave" control of radioactive sources) but in aiding those institutions and States which have recently asked for assistance in emergency situations.

Mr. President,

In regard to the technical cooperation activities, we would like to commend the Agency for its significant contributions in many Member States. The assistance granted in the fields of medicine, particularly for cancer treatment, diagnostic radiology and nuclear medicine, helps numerous people in those regions where the modern forms of diagnosis and medical treatment are on a large scale not yet available and where especially the rural population has scarcely any access to it.

The Agency's efforts, in collaboration with other UN organizations, in the area of agriculture, in the fight against diseases and animal pests, in nutritional safety and in isotope applications for exploring water resources and addressing pollution problems in some large cities, have brought positive results and certainly should be continued. Tailored to the real needs of those who request them, they continue to contribute considerably to social and economic development in many parts of the world.

Technical cooperation activities, however, are by no means a one-way-road. Recent experiences with successful projects show that – in order to be fruitful in the long run – the participants of such activities are called upon to adapt these projects to their own regions, to develop them further and to hand on their knowledge to their colleagues in neighbouring countries where similar problems occur. Thus, this kind of technical cooperation across the borders is able to address fundamental issues with a deep impact on the social, economic and humanitarian situation of many societies.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by wishing the Agency much success in implementing its noble role in our world by putting the nuclear technology at the service of sustainable development, peace and well-being of the entire human family.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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