SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0458

Sabato 20.09.2003

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 47a SESSIONE DELLA CONFERENZA GENERALE DELL'AGENZIA INTERNAZIONALE DELL'ENERGIA ATOMICA (VIENNA, 15-19 SETTEMBRE 2003)

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Si è chiusa ieri a Vienna la 47a sessione della Conferenza Generale dell'Agenzia Internazionale dell'Energia Atomica (A.I.E.A.).

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

● INTERVENTO DI MONS. LEO BOCCARDI

Mr President,

The Delegation of the Holy See joins previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the forty-seventh General Conference and would like also to express its appreciation for the Director General's leadership in this very important year for the Agency. The same expression of gratitude goes to the Secretariat and to the members of the Bureau for their dedicated service.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. The news which daily assails us from various parts of the world has led to an increased sense of precariousness and fear in society. This is due, among other things, to terrorism, which appears to have launched a "war without end", to the current situation in Iraq and in the Holy Land, to the many scourges which threaten the security of our societies and to some dangerous trends in the fields of nuclear safety and security. The present moment of history brings about new challenges and new opportunities for the IAEA which has been dedicated since its foundation to the realisation and promotion of a vision of "Atoms for Peace" with the aim to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, their eventual elimination, and to share safe and secure nuclear technologies in peaceful applications for the benefit of humankind. All the three areas of the Agency's work: nuclear technology and technical cooperation programmes, nuclear safety and security, and nuclear verification,

serve this one fundamental vision.

2. Peace is a building always under construction and the whole world is called to advance the genuine promotion of a culture of peace based upon the primacy of law and of respect for human life. At the beginning of the third millennium we should tirelessly foster a climate of trust, cooperation and respect between all States. An indispensable aspect of the concrete realization of a culture of life and peace is - in view of my Delegation -, the readiness for dialogue. My Delegation would like in this occasion to recall the central role of the principles of law as a guaranty of international relationships oriented towards promoting peace among nations. In this decisive moment of history, the spirit of legitimacy must be recuperated on the international scene. The return to the value of the law and to the institutions which should be in the position to secure its validity is the best way for preventing conflicts.

Mr President,

3. The International Atomic Energy Agency has rendered great services to its Member States and the entire international community. I would like now to touch on some fields of the Agency's work which my Delegation considers of great importance.

With regard to nuclear verification activities, let me mention those who worked or work as safeguards inspectors in different Member States. Their professionalism and engagement in trying to fulfill their mandates, especially the one under United Nations Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) and 707 (1991), resumed later in 2002 under Security Council resolution 1441, have certainly earned much estimation. The experiences of the last couple of months have made it clear that the Agency and its inspectors many times did a very fine job. This fact calls our attention to another necessary requirement for a successful functioning of nuclear verification and of the work of our inspectors: all involved parties should facilitate their mission, giving them enough time, material assistance, intelligence information and scientific support. In the same vein, we urge the Agency to strengthen its safeguards system to increase the likelihood of detecting any clandestine nuclear weapons programme.

4. The past year has been very challenging for the Agency in the field of verification. This core activity becomes more and more crucial in the efforts of the international community to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is important that verification is done through impartial, international inspections, because only such activities can generate credibility and bring about good results. However, to make the world more secure, verifying the actual situation in the nuclear weapons area is not enough: we need to reinvigorate the nuclear disarmament process including real progress in nuclear weapons dismantlement. In this context I would like to quote the words addressed by Pope John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "International law, honest dialogue, solidarity between States, the noble exercise of diplomacy: these are methods worthy of individuals and nations in resolving their differences. I say this as I think of those who still place their trust in nuclear weapons and of the all-too-numerous conflicts which continue to hold hostage our brothers and sisters in humanity." (13 January 2003)

Mr President,

5. The increase in poverty, which is caused also by the lack of access to water, not only drinking water, for an ever growing number of people on the earth and the management of water resources of our planet call for new and innovative solutions. The Agency was elected to chair in the years 2002-2004 UN Water, an inter-agency co-ordination committee for fresh water. We commend the leadership of the Agency in UN Water; the active participation of IAEA staff has led to an increased number of joint programmes in this sphere. 40 years have passed since the Agency held its first international symposium on water resources; around 150 projects in 60 countries have been organized in this period to improve water management using isotope hydrology.

6. The Agency has been active in the field of using nuclear power for seawater desalination. To my Delegation, it seems to be a very good decision to focus the Agency's nuclear desalination activities to country specific projects. We urge the Agency to continue these activities in cooperation with interested Member States.

Mr President,

7. *Fugit irreparabile tempus* - wrote the poet Virgilius 2000 years ago. It means that every day we are getting older, but not only we, our nuclear installations as well. The decommissioning of nuclear plants and facilities is becoming a significant global activity. There are already some experiences in this context, but many questions are still open. As the Director General mentioned in his Report to the General Conference in document GC(47)/INF/3, "there is still no international agreement on some of the key ‘end points’ for decommissioning; in particular criteria for recycling or disposing of large amounts of very lightly contaminated construction materials and for releasing decontaminated land or buildings for general reuse". International negotiations are under way. We urge the Agency to take actively part in them, offering its vast experience and excellent human resources to bring the negotiations to a successful end.

To conclude, I would like to express the Holy See’s appreciation of the Agency’s efforts to put nuclear energy at the service of peace and of a sustainable and durable development for the entire human family.

Thank you, Mr President.

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