Statement

by

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Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba

on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement

before

The High-level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security

New York, 22 September, 2011

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Distinguished Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement at this important meeting, which represents an opportunity to exchange general views at the highest level on nuclear safety and nuclear security. Given the time limit for interventions, I will merely point out some of the most important elements of the NAM statement, the full version of which will be distributed in the room.

2. At the outset, NAM Member States would like to renew their solidarity with Japan in the wake of the disasters of earthquake and tsunami as well as the accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi Nuclear Power Plant in March this year. It is our hope that Japan recovers from these tragedies as soon as possible. NAM stresses the need to draw lessons from this accident.

3. NAM emphasizes that the IAEA is the sole inter-governmental organization within the UN system with the mandate and experience to deal with the technical subjects of nuclear safety and nuclear security, and considers that the present HLM, convened at the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, should reaffirm this principle.

4. NAM reaffirms the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. NAM also recognizes that the decision to exercise this right, including for nuclear power generation, remains an inalienable right and a sovereign choice of each country. Therefore, this meeting should send a signal of support for nuclear energy as a clean and viable source. The HLM should also signal the international community's commitment to review and strengthen the global nuclear safety framework.

5. NAM is mindful of the unique and technical nature of nuclear safety and nuclear security and their distinct implementation within the IAEA. NAM recognizes that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety and nuclear security rests with the individual States.

6. The Movement attaches high importance to nuclear safety and stresses the need for continued reinforcement of nuclear safety standards at the international level to ensure
that the highest and most robust levels of nuclear safety are in place, based on IAEA safety standards. NAM is of the view that the accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power plant, resulting from an extraordinary natural event, has demonstrated the need to further improve nuclear safety in the areas of siting, design, operation and emergency preparedness of nuclear installations. NAM therefore encourages the IAEA to further assist Member States in this regard.

7. NAM believes that the IAEA plays a central role in nuclear safety related matters including through the establishment of nuclear safety standards. The Movement stresses that the IAEA must retain this centrality in this field, owing to its mandatory functions and long-standing expertise. NAM believes that the IAEA's role in this regard, is essentially to assist Member States, upon request, in building capabilities and infrastructure to ensure safe and secure development and use of nuclear materials and radioactive sources, as well as in providing expertise and advice in this field and in promoting nuclear safety culture worldwide.

8. NAM stresses that any possible review of nuclear safety standards at the global level must be carried out within the IAEA, in an inclusive, gradual and transparent manner, and in consultation with and guidance and participation of all member states, and shall incorporate the views of all member states.

9. NAM attaches great importance to promoting international cooperation to strengthen national capacity in the field of nuclear safety and response to radiological and nuclear emergencies, in particular through the freest possible flow and wide dissemination of safety-related technical and technological information and transfer of related technology without discrimination.

10. NAM emphasizes the need to improve national, regional and international emergency preparedness and response to nuclear accidents. The Movement calls for a strengthened role of the IAEA in emergency preparedness and response. NAM is of the view that the IAEA must endeavor to assist Member States on emergency preparedness and response to nuclear accidents, through promoting capacity building, including education and training in the field of crisis management.

11. NAM underlines that States with nuclear power programs have a central role in their own countries in ensuring the application of the highest standards of nuclear safety and the responsibility for providing a timely, transparent and adequate response to nuclear accidents in order to minimize their consequences. NAM stresses the need for a rapid, timely, continuous, reliable, and transparent dissemination of information in nuclear accidents with significant transboundary radiological effects, in accordance with relevant international conventions. In this context, the Movement underscores the key role of the IAEA in receiving and spreading such information, in accordance with its Statute and relevant international conventions, and in full respect for the confidentiality of information.
12. NAM underlines the importance of greater awareness on strengthening nuclear safety, and supports the process of learning and acting upon the lessons learned from the Fukushima accident to strengthen nuclear safety, emergency preparedness and radiation protection of people and the environment worldwide. The lesson learning process must be under the leading role of the IAEA and based on expert assessment, inclusive, gradual, transparent, non-discriminatory and should take into account the interests of developing countries.

13. NAM considers that the free and open technical and technological exchange among States could have a highly beneficial impact on the strengthening of nuclear safety globally. In this context, NAM reaffirms the IAEA’s statutory responsibility to cooperate fully with Member States, specifically developing countries, on all issues relating to nuclear safety, including by facilitating access, without discrimination, to the best nuclear safety technology and expertise available globally. In this connection, NAM considers that the handling of nuclear safety related information in a proprietary manner hinders the Agency’s efforts and represents an obstacle to the continued improvement of nuclear safety globally. NAM also underlines the need for the IAEA and developed countries to further promote capacity building in developing countries, including through education and training for both regulators and operators.

14. NAM continues to note with concern that undue restrictions on exports to developing countries of material, equipment and technology, for peaceful purposes persist. NAM stresses particularly the responsibility of developed countries to promote the legitimate need of nuclear energy of developing countries, by allowing them to participate to the fullest extent possible in the transfer of nuclear equipment, materials, scientific and technological information for peaceful purposes with a view to achieving the largest benefits and applying pertinent elements of sustainable development in their activities.

15. NAM underlines the IAEA’s mandate, authority and central role in the area of nuclear security. Any multilateral norms, guidelines or rules in nuclear security should be pursued within the framework of the IAEA. Such a process shall be Member States-driven, negotiated multilaterally through a gradual, inclusive and transparent process incorporating the views of all Member States. NAM believes that any attempt to encroach upon the mandate, competence and central role of the IAEA in the area of nuclear security shall be avoided. In this context, the work of various processes and initiatives shall be in conformity with the IAEA’s role and function, and unnecessary duplication and overlap among those activities with the IAEA must be avoided.

16. The Movement reaffirms the inviolability of peaceful nuclear activities and that any attack or threat of attack against peaceful nuclear facilities—operational or under construction—poses a great danger to human beings and the environment, and constitutes a grave violation of international law, principles and purposes of the UN Charter and regulations of the IAEA. NAM recognizes the urgent need for a
comprehensive multilaterally negotiated instrument prohibiting attacks or threat of attacks on nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

17. The Movement reiterates its long standing position regarding the absolute validity of multilateralism. NAM reaffirms the significance of principles of inclusivity and non-discrimination, as well as non-intervention in the domestic affairs of states and respect for their sovereignty and independence.

18. The Movement emphasizes that measures and initiatives aimed at strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear security must not be used as a pretext or leverage to violate, deny or restrict the inalienable right of developing countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

19. On its part, NAM member countries stand ready to continue to engage and cooperate within the IAEA to make tangible progress on enhancing global nuclear safety and nuclear security.

20. NAM Member States supported the convening of the Ministerial Conference on nuclear Safety held in Vienna in June 2011, as a platform for launching an initial assessment of the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear accident and for an exchange of views on the lessons to be learned from it, with a view to further strengthening the nuclear safety framework and the emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.

21. The Ministerial Conference, which requested the IAEA to develop an Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, should be viewed as the beginning of a process that should seek to reinforce nuclear safety worldwide in all its aspects through concrete actions based on appropriate technical and objective assessments, particularly considering that a thorough international technical assessment of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident is still necessary and should continue to be pursued within the context of the IAEA. Such a process has to be Member State-driven.

22. NAM is confident that the summary of this meeting, to be prepared under the sole responsibility of the Secretary General, would include the views of all Member States. In conclusion, NAM would like to reiterate that taking into account the technical nature of nuclear safety and nuclear security, these issues should be addressed exclusively within the framework of the IAEA.

Mr. Chairman,

This concludes the statement on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. Allow me now to make some comments in my national capacity.

In Cuba’s view, the greatest threat faced by humankind in this field is the existence of huge nuclear arsenals and their possible use or threat of use. If just a small part of the existing
23,000 nuclear weapons is used, this would inevitably lead to the nuclear winter and consequently to human extinction. This alarming reality is even more aggravated by the persistence of military doctrines based on the use of those weapons.

Therefore, Cuba believes, like the Non-Aligned Movement, that the first priority in the field of disarmament is the achievement of nuclear disarmament. To that end, the Movement has adopted a Plan of Action reflecting its commitment to convening a high-level international conference aimed at determining ways and means to eliminate nuclear weapons as soon as possible.

I wish to take this opportunity to call for an agreement on a gradual program for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, and for the prohibition of their development, production, acquisition, testing, transfer, and use or threat of use, as well as provisions on their destruction.

Thank you, Distinguished Chair.