PHILIPPINE STATEMENT

BY

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On the Occasion of the
High Level Meeting on Nuclear Safety and Security

22 September 2011
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m.
Conference Room 4, NLB, UNHQ
At the outset I wish to convey the Philippines’ appreciation to the Secretary-General for convening this timely meeting on a topic of crucial importance. My delegation has always recognized the value of promoting Nuclear Safety and Security, which was brought to fore with the tragic events in Japan early this year. In this regard, the Philippines offers its steadfast support to the people of Japan and commends the Japanese people for the way in which they handled the after effects of the tsunami and the resulting nuclear incident.

The Philippines believes that what occurred in Fukushima can also happen in other countries having nuclear power plants. The Philippines itself does not have an operational nuclear power plant, but many of our neighbors currently rely on or are planning to rely on nuclear power. As shown by Fukushima recently and Chernobyl a few decades before, a single nuclear accident can have tremendous global or regional consequences. As a result the Philippines has done and will continue to do its part in promoting nuclear safety and security.

Mr. Chairman,

During the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which my country had the distinct privilege of presiding over, the Final Outcome Document included several actions on how to increase nuclear safety and security in the section on “Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy”, specifically actions 57, 60, and 62. The Philippines hopes that States Parties to the NPT will undertake these actions together with the rest of the items in the Conclusions and Recommendations portion of the Outcome Document.

Apart from the NPT, there is a body of instruments that is of particular significance in ensuring nuclear safety in the world such as the Convention on Nuclear Safety, Joint Convention of the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management and on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the 2005 Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Furthermore, the Philippines also supports the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Mr. Chairman,

Aside from supporting international agreements to improve nuclear safety and security, the Philippines believes that there should be a sharing of resources in
terms of technical support and technical expertise, which should be encouraged between countries with established capability in these areas and countries interested in developing such capability. The Philippines also calls for capacity building in nuclear detection, nuclear forensics and response, and mitigation at the national and regional levels.

In terms of regional cooperation, there should be enhanced and prompt information and knowledge sharing in the area of nuclear safety, given the trans-boundary nature and time-sensitive nature of nuclear accidents. In this regard, the Philippines supports the establishment of the Regulatory Cooperation Forum, which is aimed at facilitating the exchange of information and best practices. The Philippines further supports the continued implementation of the Asian Nuclear Safety Network (ANSN).

Mr. Chairman,

The Philippines is of the opinion that in order for countries to avoid future catastrophic nuclear disasters the IAEA must be strengthened, in particular the agency should have a central role in promoting international cooperation and in coordinating international efforts to strengthen global nuclear safety. In this regard, the Philippines supports the implementation of the IAEA Plan of Action based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Level Conference on Nuclear Safety held in Vienna on 20-24 June 2011. The Philippines also supports the role of the IAEA in the nuclear security framework and ensures assistance in the implementation of the Nuclear Security Plan 2012-2013.

Furthermore States that are embarking on nuclear power programs should commit to create an appropriate nuclear safety infrastructure based on the IAEA Safety Standards and guidance. The Philippines calls on the IAEA to continue to provide assistance including through the Technical Cooperation Program in order to ensure the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies. The Agency should also continue to conduct education and training programs as a part of human resource development, which is a key component of any nuclear program.

Likewise States that currently have nuclear programs must adhere to IAEA Safety Standards and must have action plans relating to emergency preparedness and disaster management in case of a nuclear accident. As the scope of nuclear safety and security has diversified over the years to encompass radioactive materials or non-nuclear materials, it is crucial for the international community to work closely with the IAEA to explore modalities for strengthening international cooperation in safeguarding nuclear and radioactive materials.

Given that more countries are turning or will turn to the Agency for assistance and since it needs to develop an expanded role it is only reasonable that States should increase their political and financial support for the IAEA’s programs. In this regard the Philippines recalls Actions 54 and 55 of the NPT Final Outcome
Document, which encourage States to make every effort to ensure that the IAEA's resources for technical cooperation activities are sufficient and additional contributions are made to the initiative designed to raise $100 million as extra budgetary contributions to IAEA activities.

Mr. Chairman,

Aside from strengthening the IAEA the Philippines sees the need to review the global framework for emergency preparedness and response. The Fukushima incident exposed the need to update a number of provisions of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, given that these were adopted in 1986.

Finally, the Philippines recognizes that States with nuclear power programs have a central role in ensuring the application of the highest standards of nuclear safety and that while nuclear safety and nuclear security are both important, they derive from different legal frameworks and have their respective specificities and as such, should each be approached in a unique manner.

Mr. Chairman,

In closing, the issue of nuclear safety and security affects us all. Nuclear power has been deemed an important part of the energy mix of several States and the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy has been enshrined in the NPT. Therefore it will continue to be used long into the foreseeable future. What is essential now is that countries that do choose to maintain and/or pursue the nuclear power option apply the highest standards of safety and security so as to avoid another Chernobyl or Fukushima and should another nuclear disaster occur, States and relevant international organizations are fully prepared to minimize the damage of any incident and are ready to assist the victims of such an occurrence. In this regard the Philippines remains a willing and committed partner and looks forward to continued cooperation with the international community to promote nuclear safety and security.

I thank you.