

The IAEA 62nd General Conference

Statement of the Head of Delegation of
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

H.E. Khalid A. Al-Falih

Minister of Energy, Industry, and Mineral Resources

At the IAEA 62nd General Conference

Vienna, Austria

17 - 21 September 2018

Your Excellency, Ms. Marta Žiaková; President of the General Conference,

Your Excellency, Ms. Mary Alice Hayward; Deputy Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you,

I am honoured to be here with you today at this global gathering, which reflects the key role of the IAEA in promoting regulatory, scientific and technical cooperation and focuses attention on the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology.

First, I would like to convey the appreciation of the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the great efforts made by the Agency, under the guidance of His Excellency the Director General, Mr. Yukiya Amano to whom I wish speedy recovery.

Madam President, I would also like to congratulate you on being elected as president of the 62nd IAEA General Conference, and to express the Saudi delegation's support and endorsement for every endeavour made towards the successful conclusion of this conference.

Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom, despite being one of the largest producers and exporters of oil, is keen to diversify sources for power generation as part of its ambitious transformation program, Saudi Vision 2030, and related implementation programs. This is critical to meet the increasing demand for electricity in the Kingdom, due to the growth in household uses, particularly cooling, as well as to the growing industries, desalination and other domains.

To implement this strategic vision, the Kingdom launched two ambitious programs to diversify its energy sources, namely the King Salman Renewable Energy Initiative and the National Atomic Energy Program, which was launched in July of last year with the aim to include atomic energy in the Kingdom's energy mix, to achieve an optimal balance that serves the Kingdom's comprehensive and sustainable development.

The Kingdom thus decided to introduce atomic energy into its energy mix as a key strategic option for the development and integration of a sustainable, environment-friendly and efficient energy sector that enables the Kingdom to invest in all of its natural resources and highly competitive capabilities.

Similar to other energy resources, the launch of the National Atomic Energy Program aligns with the Kingdom's endeavour to create a technologically advanced national industry consistent with the Saudi Vision 2030 which seeks to diversify the economy, create an attractive investment environment, generate new job opportunities and develop Saudi Arabia's human capital.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Realizing the sensitivity associated with the use of atomic energy, the Kingdom implements its National Atomic Energy Program in accordance with all international treaties and conventions and best international

practices, adhering to the highest safety, security and transparency standards.

In this regard, the Kingdom has maintained a close and transparent cooperation with the Agency and other states and entities with expertise in the field, to draw on their experiences in implementing the components of this project and ensure its success, in a way that realizes the objectives of international treaties and conventions, while serving the Kingdom's strategic interests.

I would like to emphasize here that the Kingdom has complied with all international nuclear treaties and conventions to which it is party, and has also concluded a number of important bilateral agreements with other states for cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Locally, the Kingdom established agencies and enacted legislations necessary for the implementation and management of the National Atomic Energy Program. In 2018, it issued the National Policy for Atomic Energy Program, the Nuclear Law, and the Law of Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, in order to form a legal and institutional framework that regulates the atomic energy sector in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom has also announced the establishment of the Nuclear and Radiation Control Authority, as an independent regulatory agency to monitor implementation work and ensure compliance with relevant laws, the protection of humans and the environment, and achieving the highest operational safety standards.

The development of the National Atomic Energy Program goes beyond enacting said legislations to cover all components of the program. We are currently studying the detailed characteristics of prospective sites for the construction of the nuclear power plant, to ensure compatibility of such sites with the national and international safety and environmental standards. In the meantime, designs for the first large nuclear reactor plant will soon commence in collaboration with the world's leading nuclear technology suppliers.

In addition, exploratory uranium mining studies are being carried out in the Kingdom in order to fully utilize national mineral resources.

To ensure efficiency and integration in the execution of its National Atomic Energy Program, the Kingdom received in July of this year

the IAEA INIR Mission to draw on the Agency's experience in the execution of the program and the assessment of progress achieved in preparing the infrastructure for nuclear energy in the Kingdom.

Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom's firm and strategic stance concerning the peaceful use of nuclear energy stems from its belief that a balance must always be maintained between a state's obligations towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and achieving nuclear security, on one hand, and its right to benefit from the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy and its indigenous natural resources.

Accordingly, the Kingdom stresses the importance of all countries to comply with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which calls for nuclear disarmament and stresses the commitment of nuclear power states to share their peaceful technologies with abiding member states.

The Kingdom also supports positive initiatives to establish nuclear-weapons-free zones (NWFZ), and reiterates its call upon the international community to cooperate towards making the entire Middle East free from nuclear weapons.

So today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through this platform calls upon the international community to take a more stringent and transparent stance against all threats to regional and international peace and security, particularly Iran, given its alarming efforts to build its nuclear capabilities, in tandem with its increasing acts of sabotage and aggression against other states in the region, and its continued and substantial support for terrorist organizations, evidenced by its provision of strategic weapons which are considered to be a component of military nuclear capabilities.

Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom calls for the highest levels of transparency regarding the safety of nuclear power plants. In this respect, we would like to note that the safety standards of the Iranian Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant are a source of great concern in the region, given its location, which is seismically active and closer to some cities in the Arabian Gulf area than to the Iranian capital itself.

Accordingly, we believe that the Agency and its technically-advanced member states are urgently required to assess the current risks associated with the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, ensure its safety, and determine the possible consequences of any potential radioactive leaks resulting from the recurring earthquakes in the Bushehr region, which may lead to a human and environmental catastrophe in the Arabian Gulf, in addition to the negative impact on the credibility of nuclear technology and confidence in its advantages to humanity.

Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by reiterating the Kingdom's commitment to all treaties and conventions governing the use of nuclear energy and exchange of its technology. In principle, we will continue to provide material and moral support to the Agency, towards harnessing nuclear energy for the benefit of humanity and prevention of hostile and unsafe uses thereof.

The Kingdom calls upon the international community to cooperate towards the development of nuclear technology, and to firmly oppose any attempt to use nuclear energy for non-peaceful and unsafe purposes.

Thank you for your time and kind attention, and I wish this conference every success.