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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SRI LANKA

Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme

IAEA Headquarters, Vienna, Austria
26 to 28 November 2024

Ayubowan.....!!!

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Honorable Ministers,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate the Director General and the Secretariat of the Agency for organizing this Ministerial Conference, which represents a new milestone after the success of the IAEA First Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology: Addressing Current and Emerging Development Challenges, held in 2018.

Our thanks also go to the Co-chairs for their hard work in chairing the discussions for the Ministerial Declaration, that was successfully adopted yesterday.

Sri Lanka reaffirms its strong support for the Agency's core objective of accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.

In this respect, Sri Lanka reiterates its support for the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP). We acknowledge the Agency's hard work and efforts in the past years and its vital role in helping Member States achieve the SDGs.

The Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board (SLAEB) in collaboration with stakeholder institutes and organizations has been executing projects/programmes for the socio-economic development of the country in a sustainable manner in line with the SDGs. Currently, the following programmes are being carried out in Sri Lanka with the involvement of SLAEB and IAEA.

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- (a) In connection with SDG2, the Department of Agriculture has acquired a new Gamma Cell (Research Irradiator) to develop crop varieties which are tolerant to diseases and climate change impacts, ensuring food security in the country in the future. New crop varieties have been introduced to the farmers during the last couple of decades and the products are now available in the market. Different varieties of rice, peanut, tomato, sesame are some of the products that have been improved. Also, food authenticity is verified at SLAEB using the isotope-fingerprinting method for food safety in local and international markets.
- (b) In relation to SDG3, the SLAEB has accredited laboratories for radioactive measurements of food items, particularly milk-based products imported to the country. To comply with the regulations imposed by the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Regulatory Council, SLAEB maintains nuclear analytical services for testing food samples on a regular basis. Gamma Camera installed at the Nuclear Medicine Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya has been providing a great service to the public in the early diagnosis of cancer in human beings. A similar facility is being installed in Base Hospital, Jaffna, under the IAEA's technical cooperation programme. In addition to that, SLAEB coordinated with the IAEA to obtain three PCR instruments with all the related accessories for fully equipped laboratories for the detection of corona virus in humans and animals. The production of radio-pharmaceuticals will be started for the use of PET scanners in Sri Lanka by a Cyclotron facility to be established in the near future. I am pleased to announce that an agreement has been signed with a private entity to establish this medical cyclotron facility to produce FDG for PET scanners. This will enhance cancer diagnosis in the country while reducing the cost per patient. The project is supported by the IAEA which provides technical assistance to operate and maintain the facility once it is established.
- (c) In connection with SDG6, the SLAEB is working on enhancing water resources management in the country with the objective of ensuring clean drinking water for the people, particularly those living in areas with water scarcity. The studies conducted have recommended specific water sources for drinking in chronic kidney disease (unknown), CKDu prevalent areas in the dry zone. Currently, SLAEB plans to link its isotope hydrology program with the national groundwater resources management program in Sri Lanka, led by the Water Resources Board.

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- (d) In connection with SDG7, the Nuclear Power Planning Project, under the IAEA's technical cooperation, aims to establish a nuclear power plant in Sri Lanka to provide affordable, clean energy in the coming decades. Several workshops, seminars, expert missions have been organized by the SLAEB through working groups identified for making the involved parties aware on nuclear power.
- (e) In relation to SDG9, the SLAEB was able to establish the National Center for Non-Destructive Testing (NCNDT) and the Sri Lanka Gamma Center (SLGC) in 2014 for the quality assurance of the products and services in the industrial sector in the country. NCNDT provides island-wide inspection service, training and certification of NDT personnel through well-established NDT methods and an accredited certification process. SLGC facilitates sterilization of surgical gloves and other selected medical equipment for all the Government hospitals in the country.
- (f) In connection with SDG13 and SDG14, the SLAEB participated in regional projects conducted by the IAEA on protection of marine eco systems against climate change impacts. The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) is closely collaborating with SLAEB for collecting baseline data of the marine eco systems all around the country.
- (g) In connection with SDG3 and SDG15, the Radiation Protection programme of the SLAEB has established facilities to maintain the necessary quality to fulfill the regulatory requirement of the country on the protection of the general public, radiation workers and the environment from unwarranted ionizing radiation.
- (h) Finally, in connection with SDG17, the SLAEB, as the national nuclear institute in Sri Lanka, has been coordinating with stakeholder institutes and organizations in different sectors (Health, Food & Agriculture, Water Resources Management, Power Generation, Environmental Protection etc...) to implement the peaceful applications of nuclear technology. SLAEB encourages and promotes such technologies while collaborating with the IAEA to obtain necessary technical assistance. IAEA has supported the development of capabilities in the field of nuclear science by providing instrumentation, expert missions, and training scientists.

We have worked hard locally to raise awareness regarding the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology.

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With the assistance of the IAEA, Sri Lanka has gained several benefits to the country in the areas of peaceful applications of Nuclear Science & Technology. Sri Lanka has succeeded in carrying out capacity-building that has helped to produce high skilled-professionals.

Sustainable energy development will continue to be a high-priority area in the near and medium-term as Sri Lanka is considering the use of nuclear power as an option to meet the future power demands of the country, which are growing as its economy expands and industry diversifies.

Sri Lanka is in the process of developing its nuclear infrastructure, led by the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board (SLAEB) and the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Regulatory Council (SLAERC), focusing on capacity development and other relevant areas, including regulatory aspects such as the establishment of new legislation and the expansion of regulatory infrastructure, including safety, security, safeguards, and liability.

-Furthermore, Sri Lanka is seeking to increase and diversify its power production capacity to tackle climate change and the challenges of energy security, by exploring the possibilities of nuclear power as a reliable and low-carbon option for its energy mix. This is in line with Sri Lanka's Green Policies and the plans to increase the share of renewable energy in the electricity mix to 70% to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and achieve the Net-Zero target by 2050.

The objective of the current Country Profile Framework (CPF) for Sri Lanka for the period of 2019–2025 is to further contribute to the national socio-economic development goals by using nuclear science and technology in the areas where they have clear advantages over other technologies.

The programme, which builds on the achievements of the previous three CPFs since 2001, focuses on the following areas:

- Nuclear and radiation safety and security,
- Food and agriculture,
- Health and nutrition,
- Water resource management,
- Energy and industry,
- Human resources development for nuclear applications

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The Technical Cooperation Programme under the CPF aims to support socioeconomic development and poverty reduction in Sri Lanka and contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 - Zero Hunger, 3 - Good Health and Well-being, 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation, 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 13 - Climate Action, 15 – Life on Land, and other relevant SDGs of Sri Lanka for the period 2019–2025.

There are six projects for the 2024-2025 programme cycle. For the 2026-2027 cycle, Sri Lanka has proposed 5 new projects in the areas of nuclear power infrastructure development, nuclear medicine, animal health, food safety, and radiation safety infrastructure development, which have been recently approved.

Co-Chairs,

Sri Lanka reiterates its support for this important Ministerial Conference for the exchange of ideas and the identification of actions that may contribute to further promoting the applications of nuclear technology and its valuable contribution to the development of Member States, fostering an environment where the benefits of nuclear technology can be shared effectively and responsibly.

I wish the Conference all success.

Thank you.