

**Statement by Ambassador A L A Azeez, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
at the 59th General Conference of the IAEA : 14 – 18 September 2015 in Vienna
as the Outgoing President of the 58th General Conference**

Excellencies,

Ladies & Gentlemen

Director General of the IAEA

We are pleased that this session today has brought together many Ministers and senior officials from all Member States, as well as other participants.

It signifies the importance that the Member States attach to the IAEA and the work it does. I welcome all of you very warmly today.

Distinguished Delegates,

As the General Conference begins its session today, the international community is also reaching the final stages in the adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and a new set of SDGs in New York. The new Development Agenda and the new set of SDGs as well as agreed targets to be achieved by 2030, together, would go a long way in making inclusive and sustainable development a reality. They would no doubt contribute to strengthening peace and security, around the globe.

At the IAEA, all this would bear upon the diverse areas of its work and on International cooperation in particular. International cooperation and peaceful and safe secure use of nuclear technology plays a significant role in promoting socio-economic development, which will be crucial in the Post-2015 era. The need for effective international cooperation is more pronounced as the demand for nuclear energy continues to increase, as forecast by the Agency in its report.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Agency's range of activities in 2014 focussed, in a balanced manner, on promoting peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology, enhancing nuclear safety and security, assisting to strengthen global nuclear verification and non-proliferation efforts and ensuring that the benefits of nuclear science and technology are shared by its Member States for their economic and social development. The achievements made are too many to recount.

Technical assistance, in particular, helps our countries in actively pursuing national development priorities. It assists IAEA members that are lagging behind in development of specific sectors, to keep pace with others in their regions.

We thank the Director General and the Agency for the continued commitment and support for advancing programmes beneficial to Member States. We also thank donor countries and other partners for the support they have extended to technical cooperation programmes, some consistently for decades.

It is our expectation and wish that the good work done by all of them would continue and the IAEA would take forward all these programmes with the support of all Member States and other stakeholders.

Distinguished Delegates,

There are a few important developments which I would like to highlight as significant from my personal standpoint. The first is the Comprehensive Agreement signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and EU3+3 and the Joint Statement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the IAEA on the Iranian Nuclear Issue. Today, as I leave not only my current charge as the President of the General Conference and shortly

thereafter my current assignment in Vienna, I do so with a sense of satisfaction that this matter has now moved towards resolution.

We appreciate all these Governments as well as the Director General for showing courage, commitment and imagination, tempered with flexibility and pragmatism, in moving forward on this important issue.

The second development I wish to refer to, is the Agreement signed between the Government of Kazakhstan and IAEA on the Management of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU). This no doubt is a significant development in recent times. As I said before, there are too many to recount, and I refrain from doing so given time constraint.

Distinguished Delegates,

I should not speak at a time like this, when we start on a high note of expectation and optimism, about lapses which we have faced elsewhere, which directly or indirectly affect the work we do. But it is a historical reality, however much we may want to wish it away. I refer, in this respect, to the NPT Review Conference held in April/May this year, which ended without an outcome, much to the disappointment of many State Parties to NPT and many others. Much work needs to be done and State Parties and others may need to consider reviewing of some of the rigid policies and positions which have prevented progress on critical concerns. Enduring peace and security for all requires a radical shift in our mind-sets, both personal and collective. I hope all of us have learnt a lesson by now from this lost opportunity.

Nevertheless, on a positive note, I would say all is not lost. The initiative of Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons had received the widest possible attention in New York. It is important in my personal view, to reflect on and advance further on this initiative, to which Austria gave a consistent leadership, with due consideration of other positions and perspectives as well.

Distinguished Delegates,

I see my Presidency of the 58th Session of the General Conference as a fulfilling and rewarding experience. It gave me an opportunity first-hand, to learn directly from delegations as well as officials of the Secretariat on a number of things bearing upon the work that the Agency does. I thank all of them for the privilege of friendship afforded me.

Now, I owe a word of appreciation to those who had rendered support and cooperation during my Presidency. First, my thanks go to the Government of Sri Lanka, which is now led by President Maithripala Sirisena, who won the election on a policy platform of Good Governance, Accountability and Rule of Law. Second, I convey my deep gratitude to the Middle East and South Asia Group (MESA) and its Chairman for the endorsement made of me for the Presidency of the 58th Session. Third, I thank the Director General and his staff and in particular my colleague Aruni Wijewardena and her very dedicated and inspiring team for the excellent cooperation and support extended to me personally. Finally, my thanks also go to all the delegations for the trust and confidence they had placed in me to bring that session into fruition.

Distinguished Delegates,

Now it is time that the mantle should pass and, the gavel should change hands. I am referring to the much awaited election of the President of the 59th Session of the General Conference today. You will elect the new President formally soon, but let me take this opportunity to convey my advance congratulations to Ambassador Filippo Formica, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Italy. He is an able and experienced diplomat and a truly great friend, dedicated to, and passionate about, the causes he espouses and promotes. I wish him very well in his new role.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

As I conclude, let me once again thank you all and wish the session every success.

