



**CONFERENCE OF THE TECHNICAL  
COOPERATION PROGRAM OF THE IAEA:  
“60 YEARS CONTRIBUTING TO DEVELOPMENT”**

**Vienna, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

Dear Friends,

Although I currently serve as President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay (by citizens' mandate and for the second non-consecutive time), I am a medical oncologist and radiotherapist by vocation and profession. Then, you may imagine how much to be here with you today means to me.

I bring greetings from my country, a Member State of the International Atomic Energy Agency since 1963 and a member of its current Board of Governors. But besides this background, a country aware of the importance of the transfer of technologies carried out by this agency through its Technical Cooperation Program.

A program from which Uruguay has benefited in areas such as regulation of activities relating to radiations through the creation of new requirements and guidelines based on IAEA guidelines.

A program to which Uruguay has also contributed from numerous national and regional projects related to nuclear applications in different fields and instances of the development of the countries since that is, in essence, the fundamental purpose of the Program and the IAEA: **to make energy and nuclear technology available for the progress and well-being of humanity.**

I do not say that just as a ruler but as a scientist as well. Because science without conscience, as Francois Rabelais taught us, is the death of the soul.

Dear Friends,

The 60<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the IAEA, held in September last year, showed an alarming contrast with respect to the Technical Cooperation Program of this Agency: the assessment of its relevance, development and results is positive and unanimous; as it was also unanimous the intention to expand and go into detail in such critical areas as health, agriculture, food security, the environment or energy.

But unanimity vanishes when it comes to allocating financial resources for it, giving rise to harsh controversy and intricate negotiations during which, usually in the eagerness to preserve forms, the content is diluted and the objectives are devalued.

One may say “*That is no news. That is politics...*”. I know that. But if I approach it this way and in this sphere is because I believe that politics is also, substantially, to democratically govern agreements and differences to transform reality with responsibility and a sense of progress for all, without anyone falling behind.

Thus conceived, such a task is not easy, but it is not impossible either. Besides being fundamental. And as it also requires collective commitments and efforts, none of those present here can remain unaware of it.

Even further, we cannot even be neutral about it.

And the above for two reasons as elementary as irrefutable:

First reason: the basic and inexcusable condition of citizens of our respective countries. Citizenship, we should bear it in mind, is a system of rights and responsibilities.

Second reason: none of us came here in representation of oneself, or the commission for development of one's neighborhood, or the football club of which one is a supporter. Each of us, from our respective identity (which also implies functions, competencies and duties), is an integral part of the international nuclear energy community.

We are not gods or owners of anything; **at most we have the mandate and perhaps the trust of our fellow men and women to make nuclear energy a factor of development and wellbeing. This, by the way, is not an easy task...**

And since things not only must be desired, described or expected, but further they need to be done, **we must seek to ensure the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Program sufficient, predictable and safe resources. Without that guarantee, everything else is reliant and uncertain.**

In this connection, I reaffirm our representation statements expressed at the 60<sup>th</sup> IAEA General Conference: **Uruguay shares and accompanies the process of strengthening nuclear safety and nuclear physics safety measures.**

**Nuclear safety** as a fundamental factor in the contingency plans of the countries, which should require a higher proficiency to their

operators and ensure the protection and safety of materials and facilities.

**Nuclear physical security** based on the implementation of relevant international legal instruments; information protection; the accounting and control of nuclear and radioactive<sup>1</sup> materials, and both the detection of traffic and response to such materials; and national contingency plans.

In this regard, we value the activities carried out by the IAEA in the framework of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety as well as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material which has been in force for a year.

Likewise, given the budgetary restrictions of the Agency<sup>2</sup>, Uruguay considers that in the area of Nuclear Physics Safety Fund, the activities of this component must be financed with the specific fund (Nuclear Physics Safety Fund), thus maintaining an adequate balance between the promotional and non-promotional activities of the IAEA.

Dear Friends,

Even at the risk of falling into a certain particularism, let me tell you that in terms of radiological protection and security, Uruguay has a system that includes, among other instances and provisions,

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of Nuclear Physical Security, the IAEA distinguishes radioactive materials from those subject to or not subject to regulatory control.

<sup>2</sup> In 2010 the IAEA budget was lower than that of Real Madrid FC in 100 million Euros. Probably the gap is even greater nowadays.

a National Regulatory Authority in Radiation Protection (created by Law 17,930 dated December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005) which authorizes, regulates and controls all activities and equipment involving the use of ionizing radiation; a Radiological Protection Law (Law 19,056 dated January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013), a Response Plan to Emergencies and Radiological Accidents (in force since 2005) and a National Strategy for the Safety of Radioactive Wastes (Decree 484 dated October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007). All of them according to international agreements and protocols in force as well as guidelines of this Agency.

This is a system in constant development and improvement, because this is what this matter requires.

For instance, Uruguay supports, together with the IAEA, the conduction of workshops in the area of radiological protection in medicine, on issues such as justification, optimization and limitation of doses and safety in intervention, mammography and computed tomography.

But as in the world of today both reality and future transcend the geographical limits of countries, it is right to emphasize the relevance of areas and instruments such as the Ibero American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Bodies or the Regional Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this context, our country promotes projects related to nuclear medicine (in particular cancer treatment), the determination of chemical agents in agricultural food products for domestic

consumption and export; and the improvement of the productive efficiency in the dairy sector.

Finally, we are neither omnipotent nor infallible, but we believe that the future can be better and assume the responsibility to participate so this trust may translate into a tangible and daily reality.

Mr. President,

Dear Friends,

It might be said that it is not the subject of this meeting, but it would be an irremediable omission and a serious mistake on our part not to refer on this occasion to the non-peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Even more so if we take into account the news headlines with which we have been living over the last few weeks.

It is true that what is fundamental in history is not the news but the trends (many of which are unnoticed or undervalued by the media), but trend also indicates that there are many powerfuls playing with fire.

A reckless game in which no one wins and, however powerful they may be, they may also be the biggest losers. Because that fire, if it explodes, will not respect borders, or riches, or destinies. I will destroy all and everything irremediably. And I do not mean it metaphorically.

Should we accept and resign ourselves to that possibility?

The answer is obvious.

However, reality shows that the facts are not consistent with the words. It is not the first time this happens in the history of humanity, but given the magnitude of the issue raised, may be the last.

In that context, is of particular significance the negotiation which, in compliance with a decision adopted by the UN General Assembly in October last year, more than 120 member countries (the largest and most representative forum in the world today) initiated last March to agree on a legally binding instrument on the prohibition of nuclear weapons, leading to the total elimination of said weapons.

Indeed, it is still suggestive (not to mention alarming) that while biological weapons were outlawed in 1972, chemical weapons in 1993, antipersonnel mines in 1997 and cluster bombs in 2008, nuclear weapons have not yet been banned.

On the contrary: organizations specialized in the subject matter estimate that today there are about 15,000 nuclear warheads that have the potential to destroy the planet several times. Of these, about 1,500 are on a state of alert and may become operational in an average time of 5 minutes...



It is true that for several decades humanity has coexisted with a nuclear arsenal that is occasionally displayed but has never been used... **but it is also true that no one has the plans of the future and that five minutes would suffice to make the human race disappear.**

It is also frustrating that the major powers and other countries with nuclear<sup>3</sup> arsenals do not participate in these negotiations.

But since even against all odds many still continue to believe that human beings are not overcome by difficulties or frustrations, but by resignation, we will persist in the attempt as those before us, and also in adverse conditions or under suspicion of being naive or heretics, persisted in fighting slavery, plague, hunger or discrimination, or in promoting freedom, democracy, justice, human rights and so many other illusions at the time that are a reality today. Because to reach the horizon one has to sail away...

In our case, we will do so with the **modesty** of being a small country in terms of territory and population.

But also with the **authority** emanating from our status as a Member country of the world's first nuclear-free zone established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco (1969) and State Party of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1970).

**While defending the inalienable right of nations to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, Uruguay reaffirms its**

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<sup>3</sup> USA, Russia, China, NATO except Holland, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea have opposed or do not participate in negotiations.

**indeclinable commitment to universal and complete disarmament within the multilateral framework.**

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen Delegates,

Dear Friends,

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there are no excuses or attenuating circumstances: **we are what we do and hence will be what we do.**

This is not a tongue twister or a rhetorical recourse: it is a challenge and a commitment to which, I repeat, we cannot remain strangers neither as scientists nor as citizens.

With such conviction and with confidence in what we are able to do and be for our benefit and the generations to come, I thank you for your attention and I greet you fraternally.

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