

**Message of the IAEA Deputy Director General for Technical Cooperation
Ana María Cetto**

**During the opening of the Special Exhibit on
Nuclear Technologies for the Environment: Protecting Air, Earth and Oceans**

19 September 2006, Austria Center, Vienna

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is indeed with great pleasure that I address you today on the occasion of the opening of this Special Exhibit. Firstly, I would like to thank His Serene Highness, Prince Albert II of Monaco, and the IAEA Director General, Dr. Mohamed Elbaradei, for their inspiring opening speeches. Secondly, I would like to extend a warm word of thanks to our special invited speakers, Mr. Malcolm Crick (on behalf of Mr. Achim Steiner), Mr. Patricio Bernal and Ms. Elizabeth Dowdeswell. Thirdly, I am pleased to note the presence of distinguished members of the delegations to the General Conference, particularly high officials from the ministries of the environment, with whom we look forward to intensifying our collaboration.

My pleasure stems from the thought that this exhibition tangibly reflects the growing interest for the environment — a theme that touches every human being on earth, whatever role he or she has in life, as an ordinary citizen, as a professional or as a political decision maker.

Fifty years ago, when this Agency was established, the study of the environment was barely a discipline in its own right. Much has changed in these five decades. As far back as 1972, the UN Conference in Stockholm adopted a first Action Plan for the Human Environment. In 1992 the Rio Summit mobilized large governmental and non-governmental sectors and crystallized a change in people's perceptions about the environment that had been gathering pace over many years. It gave rise, among other important outcomes, to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. A short decade later, the WSSD addressed all aspects of sustainable development, with a major focus on water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity. One of the main conclusions of this summit was that environmental degradation is directly linked to poverty and cannot be satisfactorily dealt with until poverty itself is addressed. Conversely, it is now well recognized that development cannot be sustainable if it does not include in an integral

manner the environmental dimension. Indeed, concerns for the environment have gradually been incorporated into developmental programmes, be it by Governments, the industry, the private sector, NGOs or intergovernmental organizations.

This exhibit reflects the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency has a special role to play in ensuring, in collaboration with other partners, a sustainable environment for the future. As a UN organization that is recognized for its expertise in applying nuclear techniques for peaceful purposes, the Agency has the responsibility to contribute directly to one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), environmental sustainability, as well as to other MDGs which bear directly or indirectly on the environment.

The record shows that even prior to the establishment of the MDGs, the IAEA worked actively in environmental management through both coordinated research and technical cooperation projects at the national and regional levels. These projects, based on Member State requests, are aimed at developing their monitoring and assessment capacity and strengthening their environmental management. The Agency's programmes have broad targets that range from protecting humans from the detrimental effects of ionizing radiation, to optimizing the environmental impact of nuclear technology, to facilitating, through the use of nuclear techniques, the sustainable use and management of natural resources. These ambitious targets require a comprehensive and integrated effort which is aimed at meeting developmental needs while ensuring the sustainability of natural resources.

As a cross-cutting pillar of the IAEA, the Technical Cooperation programme embraces the whole of the environment — air, earth and water systems — through projects that are intended to address Member States' needs with the active support of the different technical departments of the IAEA. In this sense, the magnificent exhibit in this large rotunda is one more reflection of the collaborative efforts between two of our departments, namely the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, under Mr. Werner Burkart, who will be addressing you shortly, and the Department of Technical Cooperation, which I head.

In looking at the future, we are guided by the recommendation, which followed from the review of our programmes, that we should strengthen and consolidate our environmental programme. While it is recognized that the IAEA has made a substantial contribution to environmental management, there remains a need for more work in using appropriate nuclear

technology for the management of marine resources, for protecting the air from further pollution and for optimizing the productivity of land for human use. Taking account of the Agency's Medium Term Strategy for 2006–2011 that refers especially to environmental aspects, we have created a Focus Group on the Environment which is looking in depth into these issues.

The global population is expected to reach approximately 9 billion in 2050. This implies a commensurate global increase in the demand for food, water, energy and other natural resources. There are environmental consequences that require prior understanding and where nuclear technology has an important role to play. Future scenarios show that this technology continues to be invaluable for the production of energy, for the better use and management of natural resources, and for assessing, mitigating and predicting environmental impacts.

We recognize that the Agency has a specific mandate that can only complement those of other international organizations which have broader mandates for the environment, like UNEP, UNESCO, other non-governmental organizations and funding institutions, some of which are also represented at the General Conference and here today. The challenge for the Agency lies in ensuring that through its specific expertise in nuclear technology, it contributes to the broader objectives of sustainable development, with due attention to the environment. We therefore need to optimize the role of nuclear technology and forge further alliances with likeminded partners in working for common goals. In this way, we can be proactive in responding to developmental and environmental trends, either as a leader or in conjunction with other international organizations.

I conclude with an invitation to all of you to visit this insightful exhibition and to take home with you a glimpse of our continuing work towards a better and sustainable environment. I sincerely hope that these displays will contribute to raising the awareness that all of us can and need to care for our environment.