

More action needed to improve global nuclear security, urges UN atomic energy chief

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Countries should strengthen international cooperation to defend nuclear and other radioactive materials protected from misuse, and make sure that all globally agreed instruments are in force, the head of the United Nations atomic energy today said.

Speaking at the opening of the “*International Conference on Nuclear Security: Enhancing Global Efforts*” in Vienna, Director General of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Yukiya Amano, said successful past efforts to thwart a terrorist attack involving radioactive material “must not lull us into a false sense of security.”

“The threat of nuclear terrorism is real, and the global nuclear security system needs to be strengthened in order to counter that threat,” Mr. Amano told over 1,300 participants, including 34 ministers and other representatives from some 120 countries and 20 international and regional organizations.

Aimed at senior Government officials, high level participants from UN agencies involved in making policy for and managing nuclear security, and technical and legal experts, the conference is the first held at the ministerial level on the topic of nuclear security.

“Your presence here sends an important message: that the world is serious about enhancing global efforts to protect nuclear and other radioactive material – and associated facilities – from malicious acts,” Mr. Amano said.

The [conference](#) aims to review the international community's experience and achievements to date in strengthening nuclear security, to enhance understanding of current approaches to nuclear security worldwide and identify trends, and to provide a global forum for ministers, policymakers and senior officials to formulate views on the future directions and priorities for nuclear security.

“It is my hope that this Conference will help to ensure that all countries achieve a similarly high level of preparedness,” Mr. Amano said. These range from putting necessary laws on the statute book and strengthening border controls, to training

law enforcement officers and installing radiation detectors at ports and airports.

Highlighting a recent case in the Republic of Moldova, Mr. Amano said smugglers' attempt to shield highly enriched uranium from radiation detectors “showed a worrying level of knowledge.”

“This case ended well,” Mr. Amano said noting cooperation with a well-prepared government, the IAEA and partners. “Unfortunately, we cannot be sure if such cases are just the tip of the iceberg.”

“Terrorists and criminals will try to exploit any vulnerability in the global security system,” Mr. Amano said noting that not only countries with nuclear capabilities are at threat. “Any country, in any part of the world, could find itself used as a transit point. And any country could become the target of an attack.”

The head of the UN atomic energy urged member states to bring into force the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, agreed to in 2005. The Amendment needs to be ratified by 30 countries to enter into force.

He also reiterated the need for countries to have their nuclear security arrangements peer reviewed by international experts, and for members to make sure of IAEA nuclear security guidance.

Wrapping up its first day of work, the Conference plenary adopted a Ministerial Declaration that echoes many of Mr. Amano's concerns. Despite substantial progress in strengthening nuclear security in recent years, the participants said more needs to be done worldwide to defend against the threat of nuclear terrorism and other malicious acts involving nuclear or radiological material.

The Declaration – the first of its kind for nuclear security – notes that all States are responsible for their own nuclear security, but that international cooperation is important in supporting States' efforts to fulfil their responsibilities. It affirms the central role of the IAEA in strengthening nuclear security globally, and leading coordination of international activities in this field.

The Conference participants also recognize the threat to international security posed by theft and smuggling of nuclear material and affirms the responsibility of States to keep all nuclear material secure. They encourage all States to join and participate in the IAEA Incident and Trafficking Database, the international repository of information about nuclear and other radioactive material that has fallen out of regulatory control.