

Opening Statement Switzerland, Diplomatic Conference CNS, 9 February 2015

Mr. President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first take this opportunity to congratulate you, Ambassador Grossi, for your election as President of this Conference. Under your able leadership of the Informal Working Group, we had very constructive discussions on the significant issue of nuclear safety and prepared the ground to make this Conference a success. I am convinced that you will equally well chair this meeting, and you can be assured of the full support of my delegation.

Mr. President,

Let me briefly recall why we are gathering here this week:

The nuclear catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in March 2011 was a wake-up call for all of us. I am still firmly convinced that we must not allow such accidents to happen, and that we must do everything we can to avoid long-term off-site contamination leading to uninhabitable territories. This objective can be achieved by applying the most stringent safety levels, not only to new builds, but also to existing nuclear power plants.

It is for this reason that Switzerland has chosen to anchor this widely accepted safety objective into the Convention. We are still convinced that the gravity of the Fukushima accident justifies this choice. In this sense, we firmly believe that an amendment to the CNS would be the preferable and clearest way to make such a commitment.

Mr. President,

It is now more than 10 months ago that the Contracting Parties decided to submit the Swiss amendment proposal to this conference. Following this decision an intense informal process had been initiated. During these meetings, thorough discussions on the understanding, implications and intentions of the Swiss proposal have taken place. We thank all Contracting Parties for their active participation and valuable contributions throughout this process. This prepared the ground for a better common understanding on how to implement into the CNS review process the safety objective contained in our proposal.

This Conference has the task to decide by which instrument we could best achieve this goal. In our view, and independent of the way that will be chosen, this Conference has three main objectives:

1. First: The outcome of our Conference must contain ambitious, meaningful and robust commitments to strengthen the CNS review process. There must be an added value to the already existing commitments in the CNS and its guidance documents.
2. Second: These commitments must be implemented in a lasting and continuous manner. Therefore the outcome of our Conference must become a reference for the future review process within the framework of the Convention.
3. Third: Our work is being closely followed by the public at large. Therefore, not only the level of commitment we are willing to take, but also the way in which we communicate the results to the public will be crucial to demonstrate our willingness to learn our lessons from Fukushima. Our communication must be easily understandable and visible to the international community at large.

This Diplomatic Conference provides us with the unique opportunity to prove our level of commitment with respect to strengthening nuclear safety. The credibility of the Convention as a whole is at stake. A vague and weak commitment would neither be a sign of unity nor preserve the integrity of the Convention, but might even deepen the disparities between the Contracting Parties and undermine the strong and united CNS we would like to present to the outside world.

Mr. President,

It is still in our hands to give a strong and tangible answer of the CNS to the challenge imposed on us by the Fukushima accident. The expectations are high. Let us prove to the world that we have learned our lessons.

Thank you, Mr. President.