

Prime Minister, Shri Charan Singh's speech at the inauguration of 23rd session of General Conference of International Atomic Energy Agency at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on 04/12/1979

---

Mr. President, Mr. Director General and friends. The government and the people of India consider it a great privilege and honour to host this, the 23rd session of General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I should therefore like to begin by expressing our gratitude and appreciation to the members of the Agency for having accepted our invitation to hold this session in Delhi, India. I should also like to extend to you on behalf of the people of India a warm welcome. We trust that your stay in our country, brief though it is will be pleasant and useful. I should also like to extend to you on behalf of the people of India a warm welcome. We trust that your stay in our country, brief though it will be pleasant and useful. I should also like to take this occasion to express a great happiness to see among us today the distinguished Director General of the Agency, Dr. Sigvard Eklund. During his long and distinguished stewardship the activities of the organisation have been extended in many areas and I should like to record our deep appreciation to him for the leadership and guidance which he has provided to the work of the Agency. It is also a matter of pride and happiness for us to see you, Mr. President, to provide the Chairmanship of this conference. We are at the crossroads in the history of the development of Atomic Energy and therefore the deliberations of the present session are of special importance.

We are all agreed that mankind today is confronted with an unprecedented threat of self-extinction arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced, particularly nuclear weapons. The existing arsenals of nuclear weapons which according to an authoritative estimate made ten years ago represents about fifteen tonnes of TNT per person on the globe are more than sufficient to destroy all life on Earth many times over. And yet the nuclear arms race continues unabated.

At the same time certain events such as the one commonly referred to as Three-Miles Island accident, which took place in the U.S.A. earlier this year have aroused public feelings not only in United States but also in other countries against any form of nuclear energy. On the other hand the energy crisis facing most of the world today and the fact that at least for several decades to come nuclear power will continue and possibly in an increasing proportion to constitute a major component in the energy sources in many countries. Even those countries which today have no nuclear programmes, will turn to this source of energy. In this process the International Atomic Energy Agency which was established with the objective as clearly stated in its statute "By accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, has an important role to perform. It is our fervent hope

that discharging this important role the agency will function in strict conformity of the letter and the spirit of this statute. We should also remember that the Agency was established primarily to help in strengthening the international co-operation for the promotion of the transfer and proliferation of nuclear energy economic and social development especially in the developing countries. While it is true that the Agency also has regulatory functions, it cannot be contested that such regulatory functions can only be ancillary to the main promotional role of the Agency. I mention this because we are concerned to know that in recent years., increasing stress is being placed on the regulatory rather, than the promotional aspects of the Agency's functioning. Safeguards have become more important that technical assistance all the more what technical assistance continues to be provided by the Agency is being subjected to restrictive and preferential preconditions. This trend should be reversed in order to avoid losing or the credibility of the this great organisation which in the past has made very significant contributions to the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the benefit of the mankind.

During the past decade much has been said and written on the question of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. India has always believed in the concept of genuine and comprehensive non-proliferation and we have consistently held that non-proliferation measures in order to be truly effective must be applied uniformly and universally to all nuclear activities in all the states. It is not merely of historical interest to record but the concept of non proliferation of nuclear weapons was for the first time introduced by India in 1964 when by inscribing a new item under that agenda was taken for the first time. We asked the United Nations to make a debenture from early discussions which were based on the necessity to avoid further spread and proliferation of nuclear weapons. This initiative was in line with the proposal made by India exactly a decade early in 1954 for the complete cessation of nuclear weapon tests. Our approach then as now was based on the correct premise drawn out of the bitter historical experience that both horizontal and vertical proliferation being integral parts of the same problem have to be dealt with as a whole-always together and simultaneously if the problem of proliferation of nuclear weapons was to be really solved. In 1965 United Nations reached the early conclusions of a non proliferation treaty which should be embodied and acceptable balance of mutually responsibilities and obligations of nuclear and non nuclear powers. The very key word here was 'embodied'. And yet the treaty when it finally emerged was almost totally silent on the problem of proliferation of nuclear weapons the goal of nuclear non proliferation of the final document of United Nations ' special session' devoted to disarmament in last year clearly states "This on the one hand to prevent the emergence of any additional nuclear weapon state besides the existing five nuclear weapon states and on the other progressively to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons altogether". The final document went on to say that "This involves obligations and responsibilities on the part of nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear states. The former undertaking to stop the nuclear arms race and to achieve nuclear disarmament. And all the states

undertaking to prevent this kind of nuclear weapons. "And yet in practice you find that while various measures have been initiated to check the possible spread of nuclear weapons, it is yet to witness a single significant step to slow down let alone stop or reverse the former absolutely and irrational nuclear arms race that is actually going on.

I am convinced that you cannot expect any progress in one without corresponding progress in other without corresponding progress in the other watching more in distress with the fact that many of those who preach the virtue of horizontal non-proliferation claim in the same breath their right based on the theory of nuclear deterrents not only to possess that even to use nuclear weapons to safeguard national security. Non-proliferation is a much-abused word. In the name of non-proliferation efforts continue to be way of developing countries who are trying very often at considerable sacrifice to develop indigenous facility for the peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy. In the name of non-proliferation the smaller nations are forced to accept restraints and restrictions none of which nuclear powers are prepared to accept for themselves. In the name of non-proliferation there are even moves towards institutional measures, in that limiting set of nuclear fuel cycle activities to refuse so called safe and secure locations thereby introducing a razor with vast majority of countries place economical and technological disadvantage. This is in spite of the clear injunction laid down in the unanimously adopted final document of United Nation's special session on disarmament that non proliferation measures should not jeopardise the full exercises of inalienable rights of all the states to apply and develop the programmes for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for economic and special development in conformity with their priority, interests and needs.

The document went on to say that all the states should also have access to and be free to acquire technology, equipment and materials for peaceful uses of nuclear energy taking into account the particular needs of the developing countries.

These are important considerations which should be constantly be kept in mind by the members of International Atomic Energy Agency which has a primary role in the promotion of peaceful utilisation of atomic energy. I understand that in recent years one of the major functions of the Agency has been the strengthening of international safeguards covering national nuclear installations. All are agreed that safeguards should be non-discriminatory. At the same time the views are held to which we cannot agree that safeguards are relevant only in the case of horizontal proliferation. The international verification what which is sought to be ensured through safeguards is a non-proliferation measure. It must apply equally to the horizontal and vertical aspects of proliferation of nuclear weapons. It is contended that jurisdiction of the International Atomic Energy Agency covers only the peaceful applications of atomic energy and as such it cannot consider the question of imposing safeguards on non-civilian nuclear establishments.

I would sum it that time has come for the Agency to carefully reflect and session this aspects of proliferation. This is particularly important when we know that the only reported cases of large-scale divisions of weapons containing nuclear material which exactly what safeguards are meant to prevent are taking place in the countries of nuclear weapon states.

The international community has already declared the use of nuclear weapons is a violation of U.N. Charter and a crime against humanity. The Geneva protocol of 1925 which prohibits the use in war of chemical and biological weapons have proved invaluable in current efforts towards the elimination of both these categories of weapons of mass destruction. A single treaty or convention prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons would prove a asset in nuclear disarmament besides being useful in itself.

India has been in the field of nuclear energy for over three decades. At the end of the Second World War when most nations looked upon the atomic energy as a force, as a force of destruction, India was already thinking in terms of harnessing atomic energy solely for economic development. The development and growth of nuclear science in India from the laboratory stage to the industrial stage largely on its own indicates the hypothesis that developing countries need not follow the path covered by the advanced countries for the application of science to societies. But can and must jump certain stages of technological development through planned utilisation of advanced science and technology. Direct benefits of Indian atomic energy programme are more profound and of immense significance. The knowledge and skill imparted to Indian industry has considerably enhanced the technological capability, quality, consciousness and self-confidence. The contribution made by Atomic Energy has helped in the generation of nation of scientific culture. At the same time we have never deflected from our commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I have always state that International Atomic Energy Agency has an important role to play in the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy. I hope that the deliberations on this and succeeding conferences of International Atomic Energy Agency will succeed in formulating a long-term plan. That should help the developing countries particularly to utilize the benefits of atomic energy for their national development. The Agency should also seek to establish means to implement such a plan. In this process the Agency should look at the existing norms of international co-operation and not non co-operation. In this area as in many others the task before us calls for wisdom and maturity coming with a high degree of mutual trust and understanding.

In conclusion, what we in India, the Government and the people of India convey to all of you, distinguished delegates assembled here our very good wishes and our hope for the success of this conference. Thank you.

---