Statement by Geoffrey Shaw
Representative of the Director General of the
International Atomic Energy Agency to the United Nations

On the occasion of the 65th
General Assembly First Committee

New York, 13 October 2010
Mr. Chairman,

The IAEA works to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to promote the safe and secure use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The IAEA also has a role to play in verifying nuclear disarmament. I would like to provide you with a brief overview of the Agency’s activities in these areas given their relevance to the work of First Committee.

The current landscape

Most countries around the world use nuclear technologies for a wide variety of peaceful purposes – diagnosing and treating diseases such as cancer, for numerous industrial applications and for the improvement of agricultural production and food preservation, just to name a few. Further, some 30 countries currently use nuclear power to generate electricity, and more than 60 countries – mostly in the developing world - have informed the Agency of their interest in launching nuclear power programmes. It is expected that between 10 and 25 countries will bring their first nuclear power plants online by 2030.

At the same time, the world faces increasing risks of nuclear proliferation, and the threat of a terrorist accessing nuclear or radiological material cannot be discounted. It is imperative, therefore, that any expansion in the use of nuclear energy by both existing users and newcomers is done in a way that is safe and secure, and does not contribute to proliferation.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

IAEA verification seeks to ensure that nuclear materials and technologies under safeguards remain exclusively in peaceful use and are not misused for military purposes.

So what is the current state of play of the safeguards system?

The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference recognized that IAEA safeguards are a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The conference reaffirmed that comprehensive safeguards agreements pursuant to article III of the Treaty provide for verification by the IAEA of the correctness and completeness of a non-nuclear-weapon State’s declaration. In other words, the Agency is to provide credible assurance of the non-diversion of nuclear material from declared activities and of the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities.

How can the IAEA do this?

Although the Agency has the authority under a comprehensive safeguards agreement to verify the peaceful use of all nuclear material in a State, the tools available to the Agency under such an agreement are limited. The additional protocol equips the Agency with important supplementary tools that provide broader access to information and locations,
measures which significantly increase the Agency's ability to verify the peaceful use of all nuclear material in a State with a comprehensive safeguards agreement.

However, at this time, the Agency's legal authority for verification is not universal in the non-nuclear-weapon States party to the NPT.

Eighteen NPT non-nuclear-weapon States parties have yet to bring into force a comprehensive safeguards agreement, as required under the NPT. For these States the Agency cannot draw any safeguards conclusions and, therefore, cannot provide any assurance that nuclear materials and activities in these States remain exclusively peaceful.

For States with a comprehensive safeguards agreement but without an additional protocol, the Agency can only provide assurances that declared nuclear material remains in peaceful use.

**Nuclear Disarmament**

I would now like to turn to nuclear disarmament.

You may ask what can the IAEA do to contribute to nuclear disarmament? While the IAEA is not a negotiating forum like the Conference of Disarmament, it can make an important contribution to the implementation of nuclear disarmament through its verification activities.

Credible verification is vital to nuclear disarmament. With its knowledge and experience, the IAEA can facilitate disarmament by independently verifying that nuclear materials from dismantled weapons are never again used for military purposes. This would serve as an important confidence building measure within the international community.

In this regard, the Agency recently received a joint letter from the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Secretary of State, requesting IAEA assistance to independently verify implementation of their agreement on the disposition of plutonium no longer required for defence purposes.

The IAEA can also assist in the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, when requested. The existing nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, which cover more than 100 States in different regions of the world, recognize the verification role of the IAEA through the implementation of Agency safeguards. The IAEA has been asked to facilitate the early application of full-scope Agency safeguards in the Middle East to support the efforts by States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

**Nuclear Security**

Finally, let me turn to nuclear security.
While responsibility for nuclear security rests with each state, the Agency’s nuclear security program assists States to develop a sustainable nuclear security capacity.

Great progress has been made in securing nuclear and radioactive materials. This has helped States to counter the risk of nuclear terrorism, which remains a real and immediate threat to international security.

But nuclear security still needs to be strengthened further globally. On average, the IAEA receives a report every two days of a new incident involving improper use of nuclear or radioactive material – things like theft or smuggling. Just in the past week there have been media reports of the seizure by authorities of nuclear materials illicitly held by criminals.

Adherence to the relevant international legal instruments on nuclear security has increased gradually. However, while it is five years since the adoption of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, progress towards entry into force remains slow. Global nuclear security needs a strong CPPNM and parties to the Convention are encouraged to work towards accelerating the entry into force of the Amendment.

The Agency helped to protect against possible attacks with nuclear or radiological materials at the World Cup in South Africa this year, as it did at the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008. After the tragic earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, the Agency helped to verify that no nuclear or radioactive material had gone missing. The IAEA has supplied some 3,000 nuclear detection instruments to approximately 50 countries and, since 2002, trained over 9,000 people in 120 countries on all aspects of nuclear security, ranging from physical protection at facilities to radiation detection and response.

The IAEA will continue to assist States, upon request, to prevent nuclear terrorism through the provision of practical support, in terms of guidance, training and equipment – such assistance also helps States to meet the requirements pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1373 and 1540. The role of the IAEA in this regard was duly recognized at the IAEA General Conference in September, the NPT Review Conference in May and the Washington Nuclear Security Summit in April.

Conclusion

Let me conclude where I started. The IAEA, through its verification activities and nuclear security program, is making a positive contribution to ensuring the safe and secure use of nuclear technology, and is assisting efforts toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.