Strengthening nuclear security

Working paper submitted by Switzerland

Introduction

1. The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons adopted an Action Plan containing several actions on strengthening nuclear safety (actions 43, 57, 59, 60 and 62).

2. The accident in Fukushima, Japan, in April 2011 has raised significant concerns around the world about the safety of nuclear energy. As this event demonstrated, nuclear accidents have transboundary and multidimensional consequences. Therefore, nuclear safety clearly is not and cannot be solely a national affair. To make the benefits of nuclear energy in its many applications available to the largest number of States, the international nuclear community has a common interest and responsibility to prevent future accidents and to manage nuclear safety with a global approach. By its very nature, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must play the role of coordinating all international efforts in strengthening nuclear safety.

3. Switzerland welcomes the adoption in September 2011 of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety by the IAEA Board of Governors, which was endorsed thereafter by the IAEA General Conference at its fifty-fifth session. Nevertheless, Switzerland would like to recall that following the adoption of the Action Plan, the Chairman stated that several Member States had expressed their regret that the Action Plan did not ensure committed actions by the Member States regarding peer reviews; that the principle of transparency, especially regarding the sharing of information, was not given due consideration; that there was a need to address the current global nuclear safety regime through a more ambitious, stringent and binding Action Plan; and that the Action Plan was a living document that had to be developed further, reviewed and updated.

4. Nevertheless, Switzerland welcomes the rapid establishment by the IAEA Director General of a Nuclear Safety Action Team to coordinate the implementation of the Action Plan. Similarly, Switzerland welcomes the commitment made by the IAEA Director General to regularly inform the Member States on progress in implementing the Action Plan.
Elements for strengthening the nuclear safety review process

5. Switzerland considers the IAEA Action Plan to be a first step in a process that should lead to a stronger global nuclear safety regime. In this respect, Switzerland strongly encourages all States parties to the Treaty to rapidly implement the IAEA Action Plan. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the nuclear safety regime, Switzerland suggests for consideration the elements set out below, in accordance with the IAEA Action Plan.

National regulatory bodies

6. Switzerland proposes that the regulatory bodies subject themselves periodically to a review by external experts with regard to their compliance with the requirements of the Agency.

Rationale: The Fukushima accident has demonstrated the importance of a competent and independent regulatory body provided with adequate authority and resources. The IAEA Action Plan calls for regular reviews of the regulatory bodies in this respect, including periodic Integrated Regulatory Review Service missions to Member States.

Operation and peer reviews

7. Switzerland proposes that the operation of a nuclear installation be periodically reviewed by external experts with regard to its compliance with the requirements of the Agency.

Rationale: According to the IAEA Action Plan, Operational Safety Review Team missions should be hosted by Member States on a regular basis.

8. Switzerland proposes that the design of a nuclear installation be reviewed by external experts with regard to its compliance with the requirements of the Agency.

Rationale: The Fukushima accident has demonstrated the importance of the adequate design of nuclear power plants against extreme natural hazards. The IAEA Action Plan calls on member States to reassess the design of their nuclear power plants against site-specific extreme natural hazards, and calls on the IAEA secretariat to support the member States in this respect. Furthermore, the Action Plan requires IAEA to strengthen its peer review services, including design safety reviews.

Transparency

9. Switzerland proposes that the regulatory bodies’ findings and decisions on the safety of nuclear installations be made available to the public.

Rationale: According to the IAEA Action Plan, transparency, effectiveness of communication and dissemination of information should be improved. This should include information to the public.

10. Switzerland proposes that the States parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety make available to the public their reports and the questions and comments received from other States parties during the review process.

Rationale: According to the IAEA Action Plan, transparency, effectiveness of communication and dissemination of information should be improved. The Action Plan already provides for a mechanism to publicly report on the IAEA peer review
missions. In the IAEA guidelines regarding national reports under the Convention on Nuclear Safety (INFCIRC/572/Rev.3), member States are encouraged to make public their national reports as well as the questions and comments received from other contracting parties during the review process of these reports.

11. Switzerland proposes that the summary of the debates during the review of the reports at the meetings of the Convention on Nuclear Safety be made available to the public.

**Rationale:** According to the IAEA Action Plan, transparency, effectiveness of communication and dissemination of information should be improved.

12. Switzerland will propose the above-mentioned elements during the August 2012 special session of the States parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety.