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Statement by Austria
on behalf of the European Union
at the IAEA Board of Governors
6. - 10. March 2006 (item 5b)

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, [the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova] align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairman,

On 27 February 2006, the Foreign Ministers of the European Union adopted inter alia the following conclusions on Iran and I quote:

1. The Council welcomed the resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors on 4 February with the overwhelming support of Board members. It supported the Board's decision to involve the United Nations Security Council. The Council believed that if Iran continues to fail to heed the repeated requests made in successive IAEA Board resolutions, the Security Council should now put its weight behind the Board's requests and the IAEA's efforts to resolve outstanding questions.
2. The Council regretted Iran's decision to withhold voluntary co-operation with the IAEA, contrary to the Board's requests and to Iran's earlier decision to implement the provisions of its Additional Protocol. Iran's decision to limit co-operation further increases international concerns and suspicions about Iranian intentions and makes it more difficult for the IAEA to resolve outstanding issues.
3. The European Union deplored Iran's resumption of enrichment-related activities, including enrichment at Natanz. Iran's introduction of nuclear material into centrifuges on 13 February in defiance of repeated calls by the IAEA Board of Governors and the international community is also a step in the wrong direction. The IAEA Board has repeatedly called for Iran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities as an essential confidence-building measure. The restoration of international confidence requires full transparency and cooperation from Iran.
4. The Council reaffirmed the EU's continued support for a diplomatic solution. It urged Iran to reinstate a full suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. The Council called on Iran to meet in full all of the Board's requests in good time before the next Board meeting on 6 March. The Council welcomed Russia's efforts to seek a way forward involving the offer to Iran of a financial stake in an enrichment joint venture on the territory of the Russian Federation, conditional on Iran's resumption of the moratorium on all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.
5. The EU does not question the right of Iran to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its obligations under the NPT, a right which the EU has consistently reaffirmed. If international concerns about Iran's programme are fully addressed, the EU would be prepared, as already stated in its August 2005 proposal, to support the development of a safe, sustainable and proliferation-proof Iranian civilian nuclear programme.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

6. Recalling the European Council conclusions of 16 December 2005, which agreed on the need to keep the EU's diplomatic options under close review and continue to calibrate the EU's approach in light of Iranian declarations and actions, the Council agreed that Iran's resumption of enrichment activities is a negative development. It is time for Iran to reconsider its position on these activities and other areas of concern in order to avoid further deterioration of its relationship with the EU.

(end of quote)

Referring to the above call by the EU-Council of Ministers on Iran to meet in full all of the Board's requests in good time before the next Board meeting on 6 March, the EU regrets that Iran has not taken the opportunity to heed those requests and that progress has not been made. The EU reiterates its call on Iran to return to full suspension of all enrichment and enrichment-related activities, including research and development.

The European Union would also like to thank the Director General for the detailed report contained in document GOV/2006/15 of 27 February 2006 on the implementation of the NPT-Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran. We would like to commend the Agency for the diligent and professional work in addressing this difficult matter. Unfortunately, this latest report reiterates that Iran has not yet complied with the repeated calls of the Board for full cooperation and transparency. Key questions remain unanswered and major gaps continue to exist in the history of Iran's nuclear programme.

These open questions, which are of particular concern include the history and extent of the centrifuge programmes and several other issues, some of which, as indicated in the Agency's report, could have a nuclear military dimension, such as the document related to the fabrication of nuclear weapon components. There are also other matters of concern that could involve nuclear material and appear to have administrative interconnections.

The EU therefore notes with concern the overall current assessment contained in the report that, although all declared nuclear material has been accounted for, after three years of intensive verification, the Agency is still not in a position to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran. The EU also notes the Agency's conclusion that full transparency extending beyond the legal requirements of the Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol is required to resolve the outstanding issues.

The EU fully agrees with the Agency's assessment that it is regrettable and a matter of concern, that the uncertainties relating to the scope and nature of Iran's nuclear programme have not been clarified despite three years of intensive Agency verification. Recalling the relevant Resolutions of the Board, the EU therefore reiterates its call on Iran to reverse its policy, to return to full suspension of all enrichment related activities, to implement the Additional Protocol and to cooperate fully with the Agency in the manner set out in the DG's report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.