

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL**

**NUCLEAR THREAT INITIATIVE – KAZAKHSTAN PROJECT  
ON ELIMINATION OF HIGH-ENRICHED URANIUM**

**Ust Kamenogorsk  
8 October 2005**

**Delivered by**

**Kenji Murakami  
Director, Safeguards Operations Division 'C'  
Department of Safeguards**

**On behalf of**

**Mohamed ElBaradei  
Director General**



**INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**

## **NUCLEAR THREAT INITIATIVE – KAZAKHSTAN PROJECT ON ELIMINATION OF HIGH-ENRICHED URANIUM**

The Nuclear Threat Initiative embodies the best features of public–private partnership: a worthy cause; crisply defined, practical objectives; and — in 4 years — a series of concrete achievements, successful steps towards making the world safer and more secure. The vision of former Senator Sam Nunn and CNN founder Ted Turner has proven its value; since its establishment in 2001, NTI has made important contributions towards securing weapon-usable nuclear material and reducing the threat of nuclear terrorism.

The IAEA and its Member States have benefited directly from NTI's assistance and partnership. Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, when the IAEA was making sweeping revisions to its nuclear security programme, NTI pledged \$1.15 million to the Agency's Nuclear Security Fund. The Fund has been used to achieve tangible nuclear security improvements: upgrades to physical protection of nuclear facilities and nuclear and radioactive material; urgently needed training in nuclear security for national officials; enhanced detection capabilities at border crossings; and improved national and international readiness for responding to terrorist acts.

NTI has consistently sought to target its contributions to address areas of high priority. A primary point of focus has been to secure (and, where possible, eliminate) material that could be diverted for weapons purposes. In "*Project Vinça*", NTI committed \$5 million in 2002 to help remove high enriched uranium fuel from a research reactor near Belgrade, for return to Russia.

The Vinça success led to similar operations in other countries; with support from Russia, the United States and NTI, seven such transfers of fresh fuel back to Russia have been made since 2002 — a total of 112 kilograms of HEU. Current plans foresee further shipments of fresh HEU from another three countries in the next 15 months. The IAEA is also continuing to work on arrangements for the repatriation of *spent* research reactor fuel of Russian origin.

With this history of activity as a backdrop, the nature of the NTI–Kazakhstan project should come as no surprise. The amount of unused nuclear fuel from the shutdown BN-350 reactor — nearly 3000 kilograms, consisting largely of HEU — made

this project a candidate for NTI's interest and involvement. In 2001, Sam Nunn and NTI president Charles Curtis approached the Kazakh Government to offer support for the safe transportation of the fuel to the Ulba Metallurgical Plant JSC (UMP), where it could be dismantled and down-blended into LEU.

Once again, these efforts are bearing fruit. By the end of this year, 2897 kilograms of HEU — enough to produce dozens of nuclear bombs — will have been down-blended to LEU and placed in safe storage. Throughout the project, the IAEA has been implementing safeguards coverage, with no difficulties experienced. It is noteworthy, in my view, that this project demonstrates the feasibility of developing complex engineering and organizational solutions for converting HEU into commercially valuable material that is not directly usable in nuclear weapons. As such, the NTI–Kazakhstan effort could well serve as a model for future projects in other countries.

As we look at the broader picture of international peace and security, it is clear that much remains to be done. Many aspects of the global security framework are in urgent need of reform. We must press forward with our strategies to protect against nuclear terrorism. We must put in place additional measures to control the spread of sensitive nuclear technology, to guard against proliferation, and to move towards nuclear disarmament. We must continue to work on both the symptoms and root causes of the challenges we face.

But it is equally clear that, on many of these fronts, meaningful progress is achieved one step at a time — through practical, concrete initiatives to fix ‘weak links’ in the nuclear security. Many countries are making urgent efforts to address these vulnerabilities, and NTI is providing a good example of how civil society can take a leadership role.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Kazakhstan, as well as the Nuclear Threat Initiative, on this important achievement.

---