

At governing body, UN atomic energy chief airs concern over DPR Korea's nuclear plan

6 March 2017 – The head of the United Nations atomic energy agency today expressed serious concern about the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as he also provided an update on the agency's verification and monitoring activities in Iran.

"It is deeply regrettable that the DPRK has shown no indication that it is willing to comply with the UN Security Council resolutions adopted in response to its two nuclear tests last year," said International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Yukiya Amano in his opening statement to a regular meeting of the agency's Board of Governors.

"I again call upon the DPRK to comply fully with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, to cooperate promptly with the Agency, and to resolve all outstanding issues, including those that have arisen during the absence of Agency inspectors from the country," he said.

According to news reports, it fired four ballistic missiles into the sea off Japan's northwest on Monday.

On Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action since January 2016, Mr. Amano said the IAEA is continuing evaluations regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in that country.



Wide view of delegates attending the 1453rd Board of Governors Meeting. IAEA, Vienna, Austria, 6 March 2017. Photo: IAEA/Dean Calma

The Board, a policymaking body, meets five times a year at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

On nuclear safety and security, Mr. Amano emphasised the importance of building on the Action Plan for Nuclear Safety that was adopted following the accident at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi that occurred when an earthquake and tsunami struck in 2011.

"We will consider ways of further strengthening our work in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety," he said, adding that the IAEA will continue to focus on regulatory effectiveness, safety culture and capacity-building.

In that regard, he stressed the importance of a peer review process under the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), drawing attention to the seventh review meeting of contracting parties to CNS that will take place in Vienna from 27 March to 7 April while encouraging all countries that have not yet done so to join the CNS.

On nuclear energy, Mr. Amano underscored the significant contribution of nuclear power to meeting the goal set under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change of holding the increase in global temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[UN-backed forum in Montreal set to agree region-wide disaster risk reduction plan](#)

6 March 2017 – More than 1,000 delegates from across the Americas will meet this week at a United Nations-backed conference in the Canadian city of Montreal to agree a Regional Action Plan designed to reduce the loss of life due to disasters, both natural and man-made.

Officially known as the Fifth Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the Americas, the three-day event which opens Tuesday 7 March, is the first major conference in the region following up on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in 2015 in the Japanese city of the same name.

Hosted by the Government of Canada in cooperation with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Regional Platform will mark the first opportunity for governments and stakeholders of the Americas to discuss and agree on a Regional Action Plan to support the implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework).

Sendai is a development framework, agreed by more than 180 countries, setting global but non-binding targets, to increase disaster preparedness, effective early warning systems and international cooperation, while at the same time reducing the impact of disasters on people, the economy, and the environment.

The platform in Montreal, which concludes on 9 March, will be the first opportunity for countries of the Americas to come together and discuss how they are going to put Sendai into practice.

“In Montreal, countries will adopt this Regional Action Plan [and] it will also provide the forum where countries will be able to discuss for the first time, how they are doing” said the head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk

Reduction in the Americas, Ricardo Mena, in an interview with *UN News*.



Chief of UNISDR, Regional Office for The Americas, Ricardo Mena. Photo: UNISDR

The 2015 Sendai Framework was the first big intergovernmental agreement underpinning the UN-led 2030 development programme, along with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed by 193 countries later that year; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on development finance; and the historic Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Mr. Mena said there was a clear link between Sendai and the other pillars of the 2030 Agenda, citing the example of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal, on ending extreme poverty. “Disasters usually bring more people into poverty; therefore you can see disasters as a driver of potential conflicts down the road and that’s why it becomes so important, so crucial, in having investments in reducing risks.”

Montreal Platform will be a ‘big tent’ gathering for diverse stakeholders

A High-Level intergovernmental meeting on implementing the Sendai Framework across the Americas took place in Paraguay last June, but Montreal will “be a bigger tent,” said Mr. Mena.

“It’s a meeting where all the stakeholders – private sector, academia, science and technology, local authorities and civil society – are going to be participating in full force,” he said.

Noting that there are already “some quite positive signs” that implementation is well underway across the region, he cited the fact that UNISDR’s Americas office is already working with 10 countries “on the alignment of national DRR strategies and plans to the Sendai Framework spirit.”

“In some cases it’s revising existing strategies and plans, and aligning them to the Sendai Framework, in other cases it’s starting from scratch,” he added.

Mr. Mena said that getting national treasuries – and increasingly private sector investors – to think long-term about disaster risk, was the main challenge.

“Whatever is put into DRR is going to save money down the road. We know of the positive impact that DRR investments have.

“There is much more funding being put for disaster response activities, than for DRR activities [...] The issue is how to integrate the DRR lens into every investment that you are about to do,” he added.

Minister in charge of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Ralph Goodale, said Canada is “looking forward to working with our partners across

all sectors of the emergency management community both domestically and among our hemispheric partners to develop an interactive and action-oriented agenda.”

Montreal’s mayor, Denis Coderre, said the city is looking forward to playing its part, and welcoming delegates from all parts of the continent. “Montreal is also one of the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities and actively integrates the principles of urban resilience in order to better prepare for the challenges of the 21st Century,” he said.

[Polluted environments kill 1.7 million children each year, UN health agency reports](#)

6 March 2017 – Unhealthy environments are responsible for one-quarter of young child deaths, according to two new reports from the United Nations health agency, which reviewed the threats from pollutants such as second-hand smoke, UV radiation, unsafe water and e-waste.

According to the latest information, polluted environments take the lives of 1.7 million children under the age of five.

“A polluted environment is a deadly one – particularly for young children,” said Margaret Chan, Director-General of the UN World Health Organization (WHO). “Their developing organs and immune systems, and smaller bodies and airways, make them especially vulnerable to dirty air and water.”

In one of the two reports, *Inheriting a Sustainable World: Atlas on Children’s Health and the Environment*, WHO announced that many of the common causes of death among children aged between one month and five years of age are preventable with safe water and clear cooking fuels. These include diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia.

The main pollutant is in the air, resulting in 570,000 deaths each year among children under five years old. Air pollution can stunt brain development and reduce lung function and trigger asthma. In the longer-term, exposure to air pollution can increase the child’s risk of contracting heart disease, a stroke or cancer.

To counter such exposure, WHO recommends reducing air pollution, improving safe water and sanitation, and protecting pregnant women and building safer environments, among other actions described in *Don’t pollute my future! The impact of the environment on children’s health*.

Investing in the removal of environmental risks to health, such as improving water quality or using cleaner fuels, will result in massive health benefits,” said Maria Neira, WHO Director, Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health.

One of the emerging environmental threats to children is electronic and electrical waste, according to the second WHO report. Appliances such as old mobile phones that are improperly recycled “expose children to toxins which can lead to reduced intelligence, attention deficit, lung damage, and cancer,” the UN agency reported.

At the current rate, the amount of such waste is expected to increase by 19 per cent between 2014 and 2018, up to 50 million metric tonnes.

The reports also point out harmful chemicals that work themselves through the food chain – such as fluoride, lead and mercury, as well as the impact that climate change and UV rays have on children's development.

AUDIO: If you smoke, burn fossil fuels like coal or drive a vehicle, chances are, you're polluting the air and harming the health of those around you, the World Health Organization (WHO) is warning.*Credit: UN News*

[UN agency concerned new US refugee plan may 'compound the anguish' of people fleeing conflict](#)

6 March 2017 – Refugees are ordinary people forced to flee war, violence and persecution in their home countries and who remain in urgent need of life-saving assistance and protection, the United Nations refugee agency underscored today in the wake of the latest Executive Order signed by the President of the United States on refugee resettlement.

“The imperative remains to provide protection for people fleeing deadly violence, and we are concerned that this decision, though temporary, may compound the anguish for those it affects,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a news release, adding that his Office (UNHCR) has long been a partner for the US in finding solutions to refugee problems, “and we look forward to continuing this partnership.”

Mr. Grandi's statement follows the signing earlier today by US President Donald Trump of an Executive order that, according to news reports, would, among other things, suspend the country's refugee programme for 120 days. It would also bar for 90 days travel to the US by citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

Today's measure follows a similar Order signed by the US President on 27 January, which barred all nationals from several majority Muslim countries – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen – from entering the US for 90 days. Under that Order, Syrian refugees were barred indefinitely.

In the wake of the new Order, the UN refugee agency reiterated its readiness to engage constructively with the US Administration to ensure all refugee programmes meet the highest standards for safety and security.

"Americans have long played a crucial role in promoting global stability while simultaneously exemplifying the highest humanitarian ideals, from support for refugee emergencies overseas, to welcoming some of the most vulnerable refugee families in the United States to rebuild their lives in safety, freedom and dignity," said UNHCR.

"This is the gold standard in refugee protection and a powerful model for all countries," it said, adding that at a time of record-high levels of forced human displacement, "this kind of humane leadership is needed more than ever."

[UN calls for support to recovery plan as Haiti loses \\$2.7 billion in Hurricane Matthew](#)

6 March 2017 – The United Nations office dedicated to disaster risk reduction today called for urgent support to improve disaster risk management in Haiti, following a damage assessment that shows the country lost \$2.7 billion, or 32 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), as a result of Hurricane Matthew six months ago.

"Hurricane Matthew revealed disturbing truths about least developed countries which lack the capacity to respond adequately to climate change and the rising intensity and frequency of weather-related disasters," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, Robert Glasser in a press release.

His call came on the eve of the 5th Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, which opens in Montreal, Canada, tomorrow.

"While the government's civil protection system prevented many deaths, it is unacceptable that over 600 people should have died in a hurricane that was so well-forecast," he added.

The magnitude of the losses shown by a thorough government-led Post-Disaster Needs Assessment would be a devastating blow to any economy. It came on top

of two years of drought affecting the food security of one million people and the 2010 earthquake which cost 120 per cent of GDP, he said.

Mr. Glasser urged strong support for the three-year recovery plan developed by the Haitian government, the UN and other partners that seeks \$2.72 billion.

He said that Haiti demonstrated how implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the global plan to reduce disaster losses, has to take into account the role that poverty plays in driving disaster risk.

In 2012, it was estimated that 58.6 per cent of the 10.7 million people live below the threshold of \$2.4 per day while 24 per cent live in extreme poverty or less than \$1.23 per day. Haiti is estimated to have lost on average 2 per cent of its GDP to weather-related disasters every year between 1975 and 2012.