Panel on
Political and Strategic Factors that Increase the Potential for
Destabilizing Threats

Conference on Destabilizing Factors and Trans-National Threats
Rome, Italy
23–24 April 2009

Khammar Mrabit
Head of the Safety and Security Coordination Section
Department of Nuclear Safety and Security

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY
Welcome and Introduction

Good afternoon Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), I am honoured to represent the Secretariat of the IAEA at this important conference on destabilizing factors and trans-national threats. My remarks this afternoon will focus on the International Atomic Energy Agency’s activities relating to nuclear security and non-proliferation within the context of the factors that drive or could drive destabilization and insecurity, and the context of today’s threat environment with regard to nuclear materials and nuclear activities.

Driving Forces of Insecurity

As you are well aware, a collective sense of insecurity around the world is real and significant, and the desire for security continues to be a major concern for many people and nations. This is because the forces that drive insecurity remain persistent and pervasive. As noted by the IAEA Director General, these drivers of insecurity can be considered in four categories. Let me briefly summarize these for you.

The **first category** is poverty and poverty-related insecurities for the billions of people who lack reliable access to food supplies, safe drinking water, adequate health care, and modern energy supplies. This is the rawest form of insecurity, and a reality for the 40 per cent of our fellow human beings who live on the edge of survival.

A **second category** is the lack of good governance, which manifests itself in corruption and in severely repressive regimes that disregard basic human rights.

A **third category** of insecurity is the sense of injustice that results from the huge divide between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. This sense of injustice is amplified by the perception that the sanctity of human life is not equally valued — that loss of life is somehow seen as more tragic in the developed world than in the developing world, and that the right to live in dignity is not universal.

The **fourth category** is the artificial polarization along religious or ethnic lines. It has become easy for people who suffer gross inequality to become convinced that their suffering is due to religious or ethnic prejudice. This conviction can in turn make them more likely to seek refuge in distorted views of religion or ethnicity to channel their rage and seek to redress their grievances.

These drivers of insecurity, as you are well aware, are intrinsically linked. Poverty provides a fertile breeding ground for terrorism, violence, extremism and civil war. And ultimately, in regions where disputes are left to worsen, this can lead to efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Today’s Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorist Threat Environment

Let me now turn my remarks towards the evolution to today’s nuclear proliferation in general and the nuclear terrorist threat in particular:

As you are aware, the *Non-Proliferation Treaty* (NPT) was developed in the 1960s. Its goal — inter alia — is a world free of nuclear weapons. That means that no more States
should acquire such weapons, but also that the nuclear weapon powers should disarm. We are still far away from that. Nevertheless, the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been successful in that it has generally prevented proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond current nuclear weapon States. We expect that, as long as States stay in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, they are monitored by the IAEA inspectors, and the likelihood is low that they would risk the international isolation they would face if they left the NPT. However, as stated by the IAEA Director General, nuclear weapons still seem to hold out the promise of power and prestige. If a State is striving for greater political influence or for security against attack, it may be tempting to develop nuclear weapons — or at least to acquire the capability to develop them — thus possibly contributing to proliferation and destabilization.

The threat of nuclear terrorism posed by non-State actors, another destabilizing factor in the modern world, has indeed caused attention to be directed to security issues, prompting a profound rethinking on the international approach to nuclear security. If we look back 30 years, it was widely recognized that nuclear material, by which I mean plutonium and uranium, had to be protected against theft. As such, States were clearly in agreement on the issue, and measures for the protection of nuclear material were adopted. In 1975, the IAEA published a set of recommendations in what became one of the IAEA’s standard reference documents for physical protection, INFCIRC/225, entitled, The Physical Protection of Nuclear Material.

After the 9/11 attacks in the USA in September 2001 and subsequent terrorist attacks in other States, it became evident that nuclear security concerns should not be limited to nuclear and fissile material. Rather, the focus should be widened to include nuclear facilities, and lower grade nuclear material, as well as radioactive material that could be dispersed in the environment by means of devices commonly referred to as ‘dirty bombs’ or ‘RDDs’ (that is, radiological dispersal devices). This new focus dramatically changed the perception of nuclear security. Now the international nuclear community is taking a much broader view of nuclear security, to include all material, fissile or radioactive, that has to be managed to ensure accountability, safety, security and, for fissile material, its peaceful use.

International Security Instruments

One of the signs that the international community is paying much more attention to nuclear security is the fact that there are new and amended international conventions, such as the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM), which was amended in 2005 to strengthen its provisions. When it enters into force, the amendment to the Convention will make it legally binding for States Parties to protect nuclear facilities and material in peaceful domestic use, and material in storage as well as in transport. It also provides for expanded cooperation between States regarding rapid measures to detect theft and to locate and recover stolen or smuggled nuclear material, to prevent or mitigate any radiological consequences of sabotage, and to prevent and combat related offences.

Another convention of similar nature is the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which entered into force in July 2007. This convention emphasises the need to criminalize acts involving the use of radioactive substances with the intent to cause death, serious bodily injury or substantial damage to property or to the environment. It also contains an article whereby all the State parties commit to make every effort to prevent such acts. In its operative articles, the convention also refers to functions of the IAEA.
When such international activities and cooperation are considered together, it is clear that a whole new approach to international security is emerging. The UN Security Council has also made important contributions to physical protection. It adopted a resolution, UNSCR 1540 (2004), which contains legally binding obligations on all States of the UN system to protect nuclear material from theft and to put in place effective border control, so that any undeclared, unauthorized or illegal movement of nuclear material or radioactive material could be intercepted at borders or at other locations.

**Holistic Approach to Nuclear Security**

Another aspect of the increased international attention to physical protection relates to the need for a holistic approach to nuclear security. As noted earlier, all material, nuclear and radioactive, should be subject to security considerations. They should also be considered in every application, including facilities for nuclear energy production, medical uses, and research and industrial purposes. Wherever such material is, it should be subject to a management system to ensure its security. Furthermore, it is necessary to underline that such a security system cannot take a ‘one size fits all’ approach, but rather a graded approach is to be implemented for security and physical protection.

A holistic approach also includes the so-called ‘second line of defence’, which means that measures for long term security at facilities should be complemented by other security measures, such as measures to detect stolen materials. It is also necessary to have response measures in case of a seizure of nuclear or radioactive material. These measures include knowing what to do with such material, and bringing it under appropriate control so that it could not be used for malicious acts. Combining prevention, detection and response is the essence of the holistic approach.

**Agency support for Nuclear Security**

The ultimate responsibility for security and nuclear safety rests with the State. But recognition of the possible far reaching consequences of accidents or malicious acts involving nuclear or radioactive material has led to a strengthening of arrangements and international cooperation to address the risks and threats. In order to cooperate in a coherent manner, it is critical that the international community has shared values for nuclear security systems, and that there are common benchmarks accepted by all concerned. The IAEA has been playing an important role, both in supporting the development of international instruments relevant to nuclear security and in helping States to meet their obligations under these instruments.

The IAEA has a wide ranging programme designed to establish and provide long term, sustained improvements in security. I will not go into details of the programme but I will highlight a few examples of our work; the IAEA produces the *Nuclear Security Series* of guidance publications that contain internationally accepted recommendations and guidelines which, with the instruments that I have just mentioned, contribute to a comprehensive framework.

The IAEA also provides peer review and advisory services for States in prevention, detection, and response, when requested. I should also mention that the IAEA also helps States, upon request, to implement security measures for major public events, such as for the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China.
The IAEA has a major programme for human resource development and institutional support, which includes educational and training programmes. The IAEA also helps States in building effective border control measures, and in improving physical protection measures for facilities, and it supports information networking, such as for the information system on illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive material (the IAEA Illicit Trafficking Database). This database facilitates the exchange of authoritative information on incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive material and, together with other Agency information sources, provides a basis for analysing threats.

Looking To the Future

The expansion of nuclear energy and the growing use of nuclear techniques will continue to bring tangible benefits. This expansion should be complemented with equally ambitious enhancements of global safety, security and safeguards regimes in order to significantly reduce the risks, threats and dangers entailed. It is an opportunity for States and the international community to establish and to meet safety, security and safeguards related requirements and obligations through national, regional and international nuclear infrastructures from the beginning and in a holistic and sustainable manner.

The main challenge is to keep in mind the safety, security and safeguards paradigm. Society benefits from nuclear energy, from the medical uses of radiation for therapy or diagnostics, or from the use of radioactive sources in industrial applications. It needs to be recognized that this must be accompanied by responsible management, including safety, security and safeguards considerations. This is a challenge, but it is also an opportunity for ensuring continued and more widespread benefits of nuclear energy, radiation and radioactive material and their many beneficial applications.

Concluding Remarks

I hope that my remarks have provided you with a sense of the variety and magnitude of the challenges faced by the international nuclear community in dealing with the political and strategic factors that increase the potential for destabilizing threats.

In conclusion, there are serious insecurities in the world today that can spread if not adequately addressed. These issues pose serious challenges to the international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear terrorism. To that end, the IAEA is committed to supporting States and the nuclear community in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technologies for human well-being. This includes, inter alia, contribution to the establishment and implementation of relevant international instruments, development of and provision for the application of international standards and guidance, support for capacity building, peer reviews and knowledge networks. For this to happen, however, the IAEA’s legal authority and technological capability need to be substantially strengthened so it can credibly verify that States are not engaged in undeclared nuclear activities and can help to ensure that nuclear energy is used with the highest standards of safety and security.

To undertake this work, the IAEA needs appropriate resources. For instance, the IAEA’s nuclear security programme is largely dependent on extrabudgetary funding. A high-level independent panel issued a report on the future role of the Agency last year which
recommended that the budget of the IAEA should be doubled by 2020, and called for an immediate cash injection of 80 million dollars to allow it to contribute to the reduction and eradication of destabilizing factors and trans-national nuclear risks, threats and dangers.