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Statement by the Delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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Mr. Chairperson,

From examinations of the impact of energy on the environment, it has become apparent that individual nations are not isolated in this respect and that the actions of one country may well result in environmental damage in a neighboring State.

Let me start by highlighting that nuclear energy, whilst it provides solutions for energy, causes potential threat to human health and environment.

Twenty five years after the disaster in Chernobyl, the Fukushima Daiichi crisis has again taught us a terrible life lesson that the world still remains vulnerable before nuclear accidents and emergencies.

Against this background, I would like specifically to highlight the environmental risks and threats stemming from operation of ageing nuclear power plants. Such environmental risks must be on top of the discussions, when talking about environmental footprint of energy-related activities in the OSCE region.

In this regard, we find this meeting as an opportunity to draw parallels with the evolving situation in the South Caucasus region.

Azerbaijan is worried with the functioning of Metsamor NPP in neighboring Armenia. Metsamor NPP is one of the mere handfuls of remaining nuclear reactors of its kind that were built without primary containment structures.

Because of its age and that the plant is situated in the middle of the most seismically active and dangerous fault, prior to restart of Metsamor unit-2 in 1995, the Armenian Government has signed an agreement with IAEA and European Union to receive necessary financial and technological support to upgrade and operate the unit-2 close to the international standards, and has agreed to close permanently the Matsemor unit-2 by the end of year 2004 (*see U.S.*

Department of Energy, Office of International Nuclear Safety and Cooperation, Status report "Ten years of safety improvements" 2003, page 51), which has not happened.

Moreover, according to the EU-Armenia European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) Action Plan in 2007 specific actions had to be taken by the Government of Armenia for the early decommissioning of the Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant, which was considered as inherently unsafe.

At this juncture, let me summarize concrete risks and threats as follows:

- Location in a highly seismically active zone.
- Hazardous fuel accumulation: The fuel consumed during exploitation of this nuclear station is accumulated in Armenia and causes big environmental risks.
- Atmospheric contamination: A study has been conducted to put together the hypothetical modeling in order to identify the spreading trajectory of the atmospheric pollutants. This revealed that the spreading areal of the radioactive particles will be Central Asia, Near East and European countries during 30 years.
- Hazardous waste uncertainties: Another environmental issue is the burial of the hazardous waste as a result of the operation of the Metsamor nuclear plant. Information on burial of tons of the radioactive and hazardous waste, generated out of the operation of this station, is not disclosed by Armenian authorities.
- Cooling problems: Metsamor is located in the mountainous area and one of the encountered problems during potential accident, would be lack of enough water in order for cooling of the active zones of the reactor.
- Araz river contamination: Another factor of Metsamor's radiation impact to the neighbouring countries is the Araz river. This river is located in close vicinity of the nuclear station and flows into the territory of Azerbaijan, which is one of the main sources of water for drinking, agriculture and industrial needs.

Despite these anxieties, Armenian Government initiated the construction of a new reactor to replace the old one by 2018. Under the Espoo Convention on "Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context" its Parties are required to conduct with the participation of neighboring states an environmental impact assessment procedure with respect to activities that are likely to cause significant transboundary impact, and should officially share the outcomes of such assessment with them. Unfortunately, so far Armenia has not provided the neighboring states with necessary information on environmental impact assessment of Metsamor NPP. Nor has it allowed Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey to participate in international assessment of the planned reactor.

We are worried over such attitude of Armenia which is aimed at preventing the access of neighboring states to the information on Metsamor NPP.

Let us not forget that nuclear danger knows no border, and security and well-being of nations of South Caucasus region as well as of future generations depends on the actions taken today at a domestic and regional scale.

Thank you.