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Statement

by

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Hon. Koichiro Gemba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,

Co-President, Hon. Fadillah bin Hj Yusof, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology & Innovation of Malaysia,

Mr. Yukiya Amano, Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency,

Honorable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honor to speak before you today, as INTERPOL's Secretary General.

Last week, hearing of a new earthquake off the coast of Japan, the minds of millions worldwide rushed back to the events of March 2011 at Fukushima's Daiichi Plant.

Personally, the images of those tragic days in turn brought even older memories back to my mind.

On what had seemed like an average night in 1979, the worst accident in U.S. commercial nuclear power history rapidly unfolded at the Three Mile Island plant, only 70 miles away from the borders of my home state, New Jersey, where my family lived.

Eventually, that accident became known as another "near-miss", which, nonetheless, left an indelible mark on many in the U.S. and around the world.

7 years later came Chernobyl. The first Level 7 nuclear event in history.

25 years later, an earthquake; a tsunami; and another level 7 nuclear event struck Japan all at the same time, simply defying one's imagination.

These events tell us that yes, we should learn from the past – but only with a view to the future.

To the crisis that hasn't happened yet....the one we never thought about, but which may be the worst ever.

Truth is, no matter how much we have learned, there is simply no way to exactly predict what the next incident will look like.

Yet our duty, our collective duty, is to do all in our power to prevent it. But, should worse come to worse, we must also do all in our power to make sure that we will be absolutely ready for it.

How to do it? First and foremost, by relying on those pillars that will always be there, no matter what the next crisis will look like or when and where it will take place.

Among those pillars are the men and women in uniform who protect your citizens every day around the world.

Their primary role in preventing nuclear incidents is to oppose those terrorists seeking to attack or penetrate nuclear facilities to harm others. That is the realm that saw INTERPOL first launch its cooperation with IAEA and its Nuclear-Radiological Terrorism Prevention activities.

But police will also always play a role in the aftermath of nuclear incidents. It will be a role in support of others, but an equally pivotal one.

When most will be trying to escape from danger, the brave men and women of law enforcement will be running towards it to rescue; to maintain order and to limit damage, because that's their job: risking their lives so that others might live.

We saw it in Fukushima, as officers from Japan's National Police Agency and Fukushima Prefecture bravely joined the efforts of staff and emergency responders to cool the spent fuel pools at the Daiichi Plant, participated in the evacuation by driving buses in nearby neighborhoods, and helped identify bodies in the areas hardest hit by the disaster.

It was in thinking about officers like them that INTERPOL was first created and it is one of the reasons why INTERPOL is today an organization assisting police from 190 countries around the clock in their work, including during major crises.

Last year, 48 hours after the Tohoku earthquake had struck Japan, INTERPOL was ready to

mobilize a multinational Incident Response Team.

Over the past 10 years, we deployed almost 70 such teams at the request of our member countries. We witnessed the challenges police will face in crises, and what they will need to overcome them.

Most importantly, they will need to be trained to be ready.

That's why over the past year alone, thanks to key partners like the IAEA, our Radiological and Nuclear terrorism prevention programme trained close to 170 officers from more than 40 countries on how to handle radiological crime scenes and assist in disaster management.

INTERPOL fully supports the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety and its reliance on emergency preparedness and capacity building as part of its key components.

And today, INTERPOL renews its pledge to assist all the countries represented here and your first responders and police, and to share across the globe those lessons learned in the field that will prepare us for the future – including the crisis we hope we'll never face.

That's the day a single individual will cross the borders of one of your countries, to detonate a nuclear or radiological device in order to spread terror and take as many innocent lives as possible.

That's the day we will know for sure whether we have learned the lessons of history, and whether we have chosen carefully what to take as example for our actions.

Once again, we need to look no further than to the tragic events of March 2011, following the accident at Fukushima's Daiichi plant.

To the courage, the resilience and the strength shown by the great people of Japan.

May that powerful example inspire us all as we work - together - to bring about a safer world.

Thank you.