

Strongly against nuclear proliferation and Japanese excellent technology to the world

-Interview with Ambassador Amano, incoming Director General of IAEA-

The *Atomic Industrial Journal* interviewed Yukiya Amano, Ambassador of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna, on July 17 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo. Ambassador Amano was recently selected as the next Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at a special meeting of its Board of Directors.

Interviewer: Kiyoshi Kono (JAIF)



—What was your position - your platform - in your campaign to become Director General?

AMANO: The IAEA is referred to internationally as the “nuclear watchdog.” Its other important mission is to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. I want it to be an organization that succeeds in both roles. Japan’s experience in Hiroshima and Nagasaki has set it strongly against nuclear proliferation. At the same time, it has developed excellent technologies for applying nuclear energy to peaceful purposes. That is what I wanted the world to understand.

—Amid the global trend to expand nuclear use, the IAEA is striving to reinforce nuclear fuel supply guarantees and non-proliferation measures. What are your views on that?

AMANO: I think that the IAEA is a suitable forum for discussing stable supplies of nuclear fuel, globally, when the nuclear fuel market fails to function normally. Many nations looking to introduce nuclear power generation, however, are concerned about being regulated and restricted by the established nuclear nations. There are many technological and legal issues to be resolved. We should not be in a rush, but should debate the questions exhaustively.

Iran is an IAEA member nation, and has accepted its Comprehensive Safeguards. It has revealed, however, that it had not declared several nuclear activities over the past two decades, costing it the trust of the international community. Iran should observe the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and its commitments to the IAEA.

With nuclear development proceeding in India, nuclear exports to that country have come to the fore. It is good that many of India’s nuclear facilities are under IAEA safeguards, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group’s consensus in recognition of that is significant. It is, however, up to each sovereign state to determine what to do specifically.

—At a time when much talk is being made about both the “nuclear renaissance” and the threat of nuclear proliferation, what does it mean for there to be a Japanese Director General?

AMANO: Japan experienced the atomic bombings and has an absolute commitment to nonproliferation. Its peaceful nuclear technologies, meanwhile, including the use of isotopes, are excellent. Trust, respect and the hopes of the world are perhaps greater than most Japanese realize.

The line of Directors General of the IAEA so far has included one from the United States, two from Europe, and one from Africa. This time, there will be the first from Asia, namely, Japan. While there is no fixed “rotation” for the Director Generalship, the current primary driving force for global growth is Asia. In the nuclear field, too, the role of Asia - especially Japan’s - is great. I see it as both fortuitous and with an advantageous geographical link.

—Japan’s contribution to the IAEA is substantial, but there seem to be few Japanese staff members in the organization.

AMANO: There are about 50 Japanese working there now, including Deputy Director General Tomihoro Taniguchi and Director Akira Omoto of the Division of Nuclear Power. About 30 of them are regular staff members, referred to as “proper.” By numbers, nationally, those from the U.S. and England are overwhelming, followed by those from France and Russia. Japan, Korea and Germany come next at about the same level. While the form of contributions varies - including human resources, money and technology - I hope that more Japanese young people, especially women, will join us.

—What are your hobbies?

AMANO: The only thing I can say with pride is “non-proliferation”! I am most enthusiastic about that. I also like swimming and skiing.