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Dear Mark,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Board of Directors of UNA-UK to express our concern at the position the UK is taking on the International Atomic Energy Agency's budget.

I understand that the UK, together with a number of other European countries, is resisting any real terms increase in the IAEA's budget despite the fact that the US, previously the back marker on this issue, now favours an 8% increase.

The case for increasing the resources at the disposal of the IAEA is surely hard to gainsay. After many years of zero real growth in its budget the IAEA is seriously under-resourced. A considerable expansion in civil nuclear power generation is already under way, and will put more demands on safeguards. Implementing the Additional Protocol, which needs to become universally applied, will have a similar effect. The imminence of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Review Conference and the arrival of the newly elected Director-General make this a moment when we should be showing our increased support for the organisation, not dragging our feet.

The UK has always been a staunch supporter of the IAEA and needs to remain so at this time when the NPT regime is under great stress. I cannot see how our present stance on the IAEA's budget can possibly be reconciled with what the Prime Minister said at Lancaster House on 17 March, when he opened the International Fuel Cycle Conference. I very much hope that the government will re-consider its position and support the moderate budget increase which the US and others favour.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick
Chair, UNA-UK