



Source: Amano, Seminar for Diplomats, 25 August 2017, Public Flickr, Photo Credit V. Álic/IAEA.

AMANO, Yukiya

Japanese diplomat and fifth Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 2009-2019

By **Yasuhito Fukui** · Version 2 September 2020

Was born 9 May 1947 in Yugawara, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan and passed away 18 July 2019 in Vienna, Austria. Family relations and vital data have not been made public. He married Yukika, a medical foreign service officer. They had no children.

Biography

Amano was born in the Kanagawa Prefecture southwest of Tokyo. His parents were stock exchange clerks, but at the time this did not provide a steady income to support the family. They also suffered from poor health conditions. Amano was educated at Eiko Gakuen, a Jesuit high school, which is well-known for its elite education. The visit of a Japanese diplomat to the school raised Amano's interest in government service. His mother died before he went to college and his father while Amano was at college, which obliged him to work in order to continue to study. He was married for a brief period of time before getting a divorce. In 1968 he entered the University of Tokyo, where he first studied natural sciences for two years. However, given the variety of professional options (among them a diplomatic career), he switched to the Faculty of Law. In 1972 Amano graduated in law and in April of that year he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent him to France to continue his studies and improve his French at the universities of Besançon (1973-1974) and Nice (1974-1975). After his return from France, Amano's first assignment as a diplomatic representative was in Laos in 1975. Later assignments brought him to other foreign posts: Belgium, France, Switzerland and the United States (US). After his return from Laos to the Ministry his first assignment in the field of disarmament was the ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, known as Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, which was opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in 1975. At the time it was unclear when Japan was to ratify the agreement and which Japanese ministry should be in charge of it: Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Trade

and Industry or Defence. Since few people understood the meaning of prohibition of biological weapons and no ministry wanted to be responsible for the convention, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to prepare the necessary legal actions for Japan's ratification of this treaty, which would not take place until 1982. Amano worked on this matter in the Ministry's Disarmament Division and was the Division's Deputy Director between 1981 and 1982. He was also assigned to the Refugee Affairs Office of the Ministry's Asian Bureau.

Between 1988 and 1993 Amano did not work for the ministry. He was first a senior research fellow and Director for Research Coordination at the Japan Institute of International Affairs in Tokyo (1988-1990), followed by the directorship of the Publications and Information Center of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Tokyo (1990). He also lectured at Yamanashi University (1991-1992). Amano benefitted from this scientific experience, returning to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993, starting in February as Director of the Science Division. In August of the same year he took on the role of Director of the Nuclear Energy Division, and one year later, in August 1994, he transitioned to become counsellor to the Japanese delegation to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland. He was engaged in the negotiations on the first resolution on nuclear disarmament submitted by Japan to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1994 (and submitted annually thereafter) and participated in the 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in New York. The treaty opened for signature in 1968, entered into force in 1970 and, in 1995, was extended indefinitely with a review every five years. Amano was also engaged in negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1996), where he helped to set up a financial mechanism. At the Conference on Disarmament he contributed to the proposal for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which did not come into existence due to US objections since 1995. Amano's effort to agree on a further programme of work in 1998 was blocked by Pakistan.

In June 1997 Amano became Japan's Consul General in Marseilles, France. Here he was married again, this time to Yukika, a nurse he had met many years before during an earlier illness. He served there until August 1999 and then returned to the Ministry in Tokyo to become Deputy Director-General for Arms Control and Scientific Affairs. In this capacity he served as chairman of the G7 Nuclear Safety Group in January 2000 and as a governmental expert at the UN Panel on Missiles (in April 2001) and at the UN Expert Group on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education (in July 2001). He contributed to two reports with concrete recommendations for action. Amano also lectured at Sophia University (2000-2001), a private university in Japan. In February 2001 he moved to the US to become a fellow at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and in August he became a visiting scholar at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California. In August 2002 he became Director-General for Arms Control and Scientific Affairs at the Ministry and was given the rank of Ambassador. In November 2003 Amano initiated ASTOP, the Asian Senior-level Talks on Non-Proliferation, as a new regional cooperation framework with annual meetings. As part of the restructuring of the Ministry in 2004 his department's field of activities was extended to cover disarmament, non-proliferation and scientific affairs.

In 2005 Amano was appointed Japan's Permanent Representative and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the International Organizations in Vienna, Austria where he also became a member of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In Vienna Amano learned ballroom dancing, which he enjoyed. He was even invited to compete in the European championship but decided to not take part as that might give the impression that he was not concentrating on the job. Between September 2005 and September 2006 he served as Chairman of the IAEA Board of Governors. When the IAEA and its Director General Mohamed ElBaradei were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 for their work for a safer and more peaceful world, Amano represented the IAEA, together with ElBaradei, at the ceremony in Oslo, Norway. In April and May 2007 he chaired the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Iran tried to procedurally block the beginning of the session, but Amano, who as a

delegate from Japan had already attended three previous Review Conferences, succeeded in negotiating agreement on the agenda.

In September 2008 the Japanese government announced that it had nominated Amano to succeed IAEA Director General ElBaradei. Amano was supported by a group of Western states, led by the US that expected a more technocratic than political executive head. A group of Southern states, among them Brazil, India and South Africa, supported South African representative Abdul Samad Minty, who wanted to focus less on non-proliferation and more on disarmament. Amano pledged to fight the proliferation of nuclear arms, to enhance nuclear safety and to provide a sound basis for nuclear energy. He also stated that, due to Japan's history with the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki just before he was born, he would do his 'utmost to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons' (*International Herald Tribune*, 2 December 2009). In March 2009, after five rounds of voting by the Board of Governors, Amano was one vote short of being elected. The election process was reopened and five candidates, including Amano and Minty, presented themselves. On 2 July it took five rounds of voting before Amano won the necessary two-thirds of votes from the 35-member states in the Board. The breakthrough vote came when one (unidentified) state changed its vote from 'no' to 'abstain', producing a slim victory. The Board then formally appointed Amano by acclamation on 3 July. The IAEA General Assembly approved Amano's appointment in September. In his acceptance speech Amano highlighted a number of key global issues such as risks of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, the rise in demand for energy coupled with concerns about increased greenhouse gas emissions, food security, water availability, human health and the continuing difficulties of the global economy. In addressing these challenges, he emphasized the contribution of the IAEA's technical cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear technology, the agency's vital role in nuclear safety and security, as well as the universalization and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. He also expressed his intentions to enhance the quality of management at the IAEA.

On 1 December 2009 Amano began his first term of four years as Director General, overseeing an organization with 2,200 professional and support staff from more than ninety countries. The global system meant to curtail the spread of nuclear arms was weakened, given the non-compliance of Iran (developing a nuclear explosive device) and North Korea (carrying out nuclear tests). In April 2010 Amano attended the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington DC. This conference was called by US President Barack Obama to prevent nuclear terrorism. The NPT Review Conference of May then made progress by agreeing a final document which included conclusions and recommendations for follow-up actions as well as a resolution that focused on the Middle East. Later that year the Board of Governors decided to establish a supply mechanism of last resort, with a physical reserve of low enriched uranium (which is located in Kazakhstan and became operational in October 2019). In March 2011 Amano directed the IAEA's response to the nuclear disaster in his home country, after an earthquake and tsunami destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, with three reactors melting down and spreading radiation that made the surroundings uninhabitable. The IAEA gave practical support by deploying liaison officers and radiation monitoring teams, followed by a fact-finding expert mission. Amano criticized the Japanese government for underestimating the accident's severity and responding too slowly. The IAEA itself was criticized for being slow in keeping the public informed about the disaster, which resulted from its dependence on voluntary compliance and control of information by its member states. Amano therefore emphasized the need to strengthen and universally apply IAEA safety standards and incorporated the lessons learned from the accident into the organization's general safety requirements and emergency preparedness (the 2011 Action Plan on Nuclear Safety). The IAEA sent several missions related to decommissioning, environmental remediation and sea monitoring and in 2015 published a report on the causes and consequences of the accident.

Amano was re-elected in 2013 for another four-year term, during which Iran's nuclear programme played a major role. Iran had ratified the NPT in 1970 and, in 1974, concluded a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, which made its nuclear programme subject to verification by

the organization. When a clandestine enrichment programme was disclosed in 2002 (and acknowledged by Iran), IAEA inspectors visited Iran. The IAEA assessed the developments and eventually determined that Iran was in non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement. In 2006 the UN Security Council demanded that Iran suspend its enrichment programme. Several Security Council resolutions, which included sanctions on Iran, followed. The IAEA under Amano reported in 2011 that Iran had carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device. This resulted in an uneasy dialogue between the IAEA and Iran to resolve the issues. In 2012 Amano called on Iran, which had threatened to withdraw from the NPT or weaken its cooperation with the IAEA, to agree to an approach based on IAEA verification practices. A change in the Iranian leadership in the summer of 2013, when moderate Hassan Rouhani was elected president, allowed a rapprochement between the US government and the Iranian government. In the margins of the UN General Assembly of September 2013 the foreign ministers of what was called the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) and Iran met in order to encourage high-level negotiations in Vienna on a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme which would allow Iran to enrich small amounts of uranium but not enough to produce a weapon. Foreign ministers John Kerry and Mohammad Javad Zarif worked with Amano to arrange inspection provisions which would provide the data to assure that Iran was following the agreement. In November Amano went to Tehran where he agreed on a Framework for Cooperation with the IAEA. In Geneva the P5+1 and Iran signed an interim agreement on the Iranian nuclear programme (the Joint Plan of Action) later that month. In January 2014 the IAEA Board of Governors endorsed the IAEA's role under the Joint Plan of Action and the IAEA issued a report stating that Iran was adhering to the terms of the agreement. The Joint Plan of Action had to be extended a few times but resulted in the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the P5+1, together with the European Union, in July 2015. In December the IAEA concluded that no credible indications of activities after 2009 promoting the development of a nuclear explosive device were found. Amano presented his final assessment report and in 2016 he announced that Iran had dismantled major parts of its nuclear programme and, in early 2019, that Iran was abiding by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. However, he also noted that the US under President Donald Trump announced its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in May 2018. Despite this, Amano tried to convince Iran to stay within the lines of the plan.

In 2016 Amano amended the IAEA's original motto of 'Atoms for Peace' to 'Atoms for Peace and Development' in order to align the organization more closely with other UN agencies on the seventeen goals for sustainable development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. On the occasion of the IAEA's sixtieth anniversary in 2017 he introduced a special logo with the new motto and highlighted the IAEA's role in making nuclear science and technology available for development purposes, followed by a high-level conference on its technical cooperation programme in May. Amano favoured nuclear energy as a power source and stepped up the organization's support to states that wanted to introduce nuclear power into their energy production. In the summer of 2017 Amano was re-elected for a third term. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was on the agenda as it had carried out six nuclear tests between 2006 and 2017. North Korea was an IAEA member state since 1974, but announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 1993 and its withdrawal from the organization in 1994 after the IAEA Board of Governors' announcement that it did not comply with the IAEA safeguards. A special arrangement ended in 2009 when IAEA inspectors were required to leave the country. As a result, the IAEA could only monitor North Korea's nuclear activities through satellite imagery. In 2018 and 2019 Amano was prepared to undertake verification and monitoring activities if the diplomatic meetings to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un succeeded. He established a team in order to prepare for the resumption of IAEA inspections in North Korea. Because of an unspecified illness, Amano planned to step down as Director General before the end of his term, but then passed away in July 2019. Assistant Director General Cornel Feruta from Rumania became Acting Director General and the Board of Governors appointed Rafael Mariano Grossi from Argentina as the new Director General on 30 October. Approved by a special

session of the General Conference on 2 December, Grossi took office on 3 December. The IAEA held a memorial ceremony for Amano in Vienna in August, while a farewell ceremony was held with the attendance of Japan's prime minister and high-ranking foreign ministry dignitaries in Tokyo. Amano had launched the modernization of the IAEA laboratories in 2014 with the construction of new buildings and upgrades to its infrastructure and equipment. The new Flexible Modular Laboratory building in Seibersdorf, Austria was named after Amano and inaugurated in November 2019.

Amano devoted most of his professional life to issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation. He was regarded as a more technocratic and reserved executive head than his predecessor ElBaradei, who was outspoken and clashed regularly with US and other officials over Iran and additional political issues. Amano, in turn, was accused of having a pro-Western bias and being too close to the US. He was in full command of technical issues, understood difficult political relations and acted in a reserved and discreet way, careful not to make headlines if not necessary. He preferred to work discretely, was seen as an impartial chairman and a good listener who took the time to hear viewpoints from all sides before making a decision. He also enjoyed his personal life as a connoisseur of good wine and sporting activities such as horse riding, yachting and skiing.

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