



**Statement by Ambassador Barbara Žvokelj, Head of Delegation and Resident Representative to the IAEA, at the Sixty-third Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference, Vienna, 17 September 2019**

*Madame President,*

The recent passing of the IAEA Director General, Mr. Yukiya Amano deeply saddened my country. The world has lost a leader in peaceful uses of nuclear energy, disarmament and non-proliferation. In this connection, we would like to recall our good cooperation with the Agency and Mr. Amano, including his official visit to Slovenia in October 2015. He is also remembered for his active participation at the Bled Strategic Forum in 2017, where he actively contributed to promoting visibility of the work of the IAEA both in Slovenia and internationally.

*Madame President,*

In addition to what has been said on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make several remarks in my national capacity. Let me first congratulate you on your election as the President of the 63rd Session of the IAEA General Conference. Making you now the fifth woman at the helm of the IAEA General Conference fills me with certain optimism that the efforts focusing on strengthening gender equality within the Agency are starting to show the expected results. However, the important challenges still remain. I would like to reassure that Slovenia remains a strong partner of the IAEA Secretariat in its efforts of increasing the proportion of women on its staff.

*Madame President,*

In the view of efforts toward achieving lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, we call on the DPRK to engage constructively in a meaningful dialogue with all relevant parties aimed at achieving a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. The DPRK should also ratify the CTBT and return to the system of IAEA safeguards inspections. Slovenia welcomes continued readiness of the Agency to play essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme.

We are all aware of such responsibilities, which were assigned to the Agency in case of the Iran's nuclear programme. I would like to reassure my country's continued support to the JCPoA, as well as to the IAEA for its continued professional and impartial work in verifying and monitoring the implementation of the nuclear deal in Iran. However, the JCPoA faces considerable challenges following the withdrawal by the United States and the re-imposition of sanctions, which we deeply regret. We express our deep concern that, as confirmed by the IAEA, Iran recently had exceeded the JCPOA stockpile limit of enriched uranium and was enriching uranium above the levels allowed by the JCPoA. We also consider Iran's recent expansion of its centrifuge research and development activities particularly worrisome. We urge Iran to reverse all these steps and return to the full compliance with the nuclear deal.

Turning to other issues, I would like to underline how important it is that the Technical Cooperation Programme remains open to all Member States and that the IAEA maintains a diverse range of TC projects, including those related to nuclear safety and technology. Slovenia supports implementation of the programme through every year's workshops and trainings of IAEA fellows as well as engagement of its experts in different Agency's activities aimed at providing support to Member States in harnessing nuclear power and safe and secure application of nuclear techniques.

*Madame President,*

Regarding the activities at the national level, I would like to highlight that after the adoption of new Ionizing Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act in December 2017, this year we successfully brought into force additional two governmental decrees, which were the last two missing legislative documents to fully align the Slovenian radiation and nuclear safety legislation with the EU legal system. This was a demanding endeavor, since it included the coordination among different authorities to ensure transposition of the EU requirements.

Nuclear energy is an important component of the global supply of clean energy and it is to be seriously considered in combating climate change, in spite of its drawbacks. Who cannot see ice melting in the polar regions, disappearing of glaciers at an unprecedented rate, increased average temperatures worldwide, huge forest fires and thawing of the permafrost. Variable renewable technologies cannot be efficient without the stable baseload power supply and here the nuclear energy comes into the equation.

As far as the nuclear safety is concerned, the Slovenian commitment is clearly visible in the implementation of the on-going post-Fukushima upgrade program to be completed by the end of 2019, which includes modifications, such as alternative design of the Krško NPP spent fuel pool cooling, operations support centre reconstruction, installation of the ventilation and habitability system of the new emergency control room and installation of an additional heat removal pump. This year Slovenia also made additional concrete steps on its way towards the realization of two important projects, namely the Krško NPP Spent Fuel Dry Storage and the low and intermediate level waste repository.

Before concluding, I would like to briefly turn to the issue of the emergency preparedness and response. I am pleased to report that at the beginning of this year the Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration organized our first national exercise on cyber security at nuclear facilities. The exercise showed the improved communication flow at national and international level, the harmonization of the response arrangements and increased cyber-attack awareness.

However, there is one issue I would like to point out in conclusion - this year's celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Jožef Stefan Institute, our largest research establishment in Slovenia. It is important to say that since 1966 the Institute operates the first and only research reactor in Slovenia. Its main focus is on training and research in the area of reactor physics and nuclear engineering in collaboration with foreign research institutions. We are also pleased that it takes part in the IAEA promoted ICERR initiative.

*Madame President,*

On this positive note, I would like to conclude by assuring you of our full support in bringing the current session of the General Conference to a successful conclusion.

*Thank you.*