

IAEA 64th General Conference

CANADA

National Statement (Full version)

Mister President,

It is my honour and privilege to address the 64th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

We are meeting at a significant moment. Indeed, this year marks the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) – a Treaty that anchors Canada’s commitment to non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The IAEA continues to be a critical contributor to ensuring the norms that underpin the NPT are upheld, and we are fully committed to supporting the IAEA in that regard.

We also meet in an unprecedented time. As the world wrestles with a global pandemic, we have been reminded of the critical importance of nuclear technology. Throughout the pandemic, nuclear energy has enabled critical infrastructure across our nations, powering our communities and producing necessary radioisotopes for the sterilization of medical equipment. In Canada, the nuclear sector has been indispensable to our COVID response, providing crucial donations of Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) and retooling manufacturing to meet pandemic equipment needs. With these impressive and important contributions, we have been reminded that the nuclear sector is a strategic asset, providing a whole range of benefits.

International forums such as the IAEA have played a pivotal role in the pandemic response, enabling collaborative efforts and fostering innovative solutions for global challenges. Canada recognizes and applauds the Agency’s pivotal role in supporting the pandemic response, including by assisting Member States in using real time reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) technology. In support, Canada has provided \$ 5 million dollars for vital equipment to accelerate Member States’ COVID-19 testing capabilities.

Now, as the world takes its first steps toward a post-COVID recovery, Canada is putting climate change, clean energy and sustainable growth at the heart of our plans for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

As a proven and reliable non-emitting source of power, nuclear energy is central to this. We know there is no credible path to that goal without nuclear energy. To this end, Canada recognizes the importance of the full range of nuclear energy technologies available to us. This includes existing large-scale nuclear power plants, as well as the growing role of nuclear innovation such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). That is why Canadians are investing \$26 billion to extend the life of the nuclear energy fleet in Canada, and why we will be releasing our Small Modular Reactor Action Plan later this year to make sure we deliver on the promise of this game-changing technology. This next wave of nuclear innovation could also enable exciting new applications to complement other sources of clean energy, including hydrogen and nuclear-renewable integration.

Mister President

We recognize that the decision to use nuclear technology comes with important obligations regarding nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation.

Today, no less than in 1970 when the NPT entered into force, it remains paramount for the Agency and Member States to continue ensuring the full and robust implementation of nuclear safeguards which is essential to building confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities. Continued efforts to address past and ongoing proliferation concerns, namely in Iran, Syria and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are also central to preserving international peace and security.

Similarly, sustaining nuclear safety and security will be essential to maintaining confidence in the nuclear sector as we move forward with global recovery efforts. In this regard, Canada is pleased that President Rumina Velshi of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) is chairing the Committee on Safety Standards (CSS). Under her leadership, the CSS will share and analyze pandemic responses to identify and assess potential implications for the IAEA's safety standards.

We also welcome the Agency's continued efforts to help Member States fulfill their nuclear security responsibilities, without which the continued advancement and sharing of nuclear technology would not be possible. Canada encourages the IAEA to further explore the impact of pandemics on nuclear security so that malicious actors cannot exploit security gaps. We congratulate the Director General for hosting a successful International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS) in 2020, and we will continue building on its momentum as we prepare for the 2021 Review Conference of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM/A).

Finally, Canada remains a strong supporter of the Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme and firmly believe that it is a tangible way to advance a key pillar of the NPT.

We will face new and significant challenges ahead, but we will continue to ensure that the Agency can deliver on its mandate. We look forward to important budgetary discussions for the 2022-2023 biennium. Working together will be critical as we carefully assess priorities, implementation challenges and financial constraints

In closing, I wish to underline Canada's unrelenting support for the Agency's central role in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Supporting the Agency is as essential as ever, with nuclear technology's expanding role not only in meeting increasing global energy demands, but moreover in addressing increasingly complex global challenges including climate change.

Thank you.