



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

65th General Conference
Vienna, 21 September 2021

**Statement delivered by H. E. Benedetto Della Vedova,
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Mister President,

allow me to congratulate you on your election and let me express my pleasure in attending in-person this General Conference despite the difficulties and challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I will add some comments in my national capacity.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to commend once again Director General Grossi and his staff for their work over the past year, aimed at ensuring that the Agency would remain operational and relevant throughout the pandemic. The crisis is not over yet, but at the same time it has provided a confirmation that Member States can fully rely on the IAEA also in extraordinary circumstances. The Director General can rest assured that Italy will continue supporting the whole range of the Agency's activities both financially and politically.

Last June, Italy welcomed the visit of Director General. We believe the fruitful exchanges that have taken place have contributed to strengthen the already close ties between my country and the Agency.

Mister President,

by “preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices” as Article III.1 of the NPT states, the **IAEA's system of safeguards** - multilateral, impartial, qualified and effective as it is

- remains one of the core components of the NPT and a fundamental insurance for our security.

Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements together with Additional Protocols represent the current verification standard. Their universalization must be pursued without delay, as a means conducive to mutual trust and as a necessary step forward towards a purely peaceful use of nuclear energy and applications. The effectiveness of the safeguards system can be further strengthened through a consistent and universal application of State Level Approaches, whose development Italy continues to support.

We commend the IAEA for its constant efforts in performing its verification mandate under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with utmost diligence, competence and impartiality. The Agency's system of safeguards is crucial to ensure the peaceful character of nuclear activities and - as such - it is an indispensable means to preserving and fostering global security. In this context, we call upon Iran to cooperate with the IAEA in good faith, consistently and without infringements, and fulfil completely and unconditionally its safeguards related commitments.

At the same time, we remain deeply concerned by the severe difficulties that the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA)** on the Iranian nuclear programme is still experiencing. We urge Iran to return to fully implement its obligations under the JCPoA without delay and to recede from its activities related to uranium enrichment, stockpiling of nuclear material, together with the further development, at a faster pace, of technical capabilities. For Italy, the JCPoA remains a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a successful achievement of multilateral diplomacy endorsed by the UN through SCR 2231. Its full implementation is crucial for regional and international security. While acknowledging the issues connected to the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, we look forward to their possible, renewed, full engagement. To this end, we fully support the prompt resumption of the negotiations in Vienna and we call on all participants in the talks to spare no efforts in addressing and resolving the current issues through dialogue as soon as possible.

The repeated ballistic missile launches, including the most recent ones, by the DPRK undermine regional and international peace and security and are a matter of grave concern. We urge the **DPRK** to refrain from further provocations and to take concrete steps towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, in which the IAEA needs to play a key role. We therefore call on Pyongyang to engage in credible negotiations in this respect and to comply with relevant UNSC Resolutions, to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to sign and ratify the CTBT and to resume its collaboration with the IAEA. In the meantime, the international sanctions regime needs to remain in place and be effectively implemented, sustaining the negotiating process towards this goal.

Mister President,

we call on all countries that have or intend to develop a nuclear power program to adhere to the relevant international instruments in the field of nuclear safety.

Italy is indeed a party to all main international conventions in the field of **nuclear safety** and it actively supports the IAEA in its continuous efforts to develop standards on all aspects of nuclear safety. We are fully committed also to the implementation of the Code of Conduct on the safety and security of radioactive sources and its supplementary guidance. Moreover, as a Party to the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and of the Convention on Assistance in the case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, Italy participates in the relevant initiatives promoted and coordinated by the IAEA in cooperation with the National Competent Authorities, in particular those aimed at identifying and implementing specific arrangements for the harmonization of the emergency responses and protective actions of countries affected by a transboundary nuclear accident.

For the safety of its nuclear installations, Italy is continuing to implement its national policy for the decommissioning and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, in close cooperation with the IAEA.

As demonstration of the commitment of Italy in the field of safe management of radioactive waste, in January 2021, the National Chart for potential eligible areas for Low and Intermediate level radioactive waste National Repository was published and the public consultation started. In September, the last phase of the public consultation has started with the National Seminar aimed to have a direct in depth dialogue with the public and local administrations to identify suitable areas for the National Repository.

Moreover, Italy is involved in several research projects in new nuclear technologies related to small modular reactors and industry is ready to supply components. Italy fully aware of challenges posed from this kind of new reactors, from the safeguards point of view, welcomes close cooperation with the IAEA.

Even in 2021, the collaboration between IAEA and Sogin, the Italian state owned company responsible for the decommissioning of nuclear installation in Italy and designated “Collaborating Centre” of the Agency in 2019, has embraced a number of topics ranging from the decommissioning and waste management to knowledge management and will culminate in hosting in Italy, at the site of the NPP under decommissioning of Caorso, the Agency’s event on “Advancing Human Resource Development and Competence Building for Decommissioning”. This year, Italy has also supported, with a number of Sogin experts, the IAEA in carrying out ARTEMIS peer reviews in Europe and Asia. We have every confidence that such fruitful collaboration will continue successfully in the coming years.

Mister President,

we remain fully committed to the achievement of a better international **nuclear security** environment. Ensuring the highest levels of nuclear security is a shared interest of the international community and represents a further contribution to the development of nuclear technologies and applications for peaceful purposes. We strongly support the central role of the IAEA in the global nuclear security framework and we encourage all States to fulfil their nuclear security responsibilities.

Italy has ratified the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT). We actively participate in the activities of the Nuclear Security Contact Group (NSCG), in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and in other relevant international and European initiatives.

As a further demonstration of our commitment to promote a nuclear security culture and capacity building worldwide, Italy continues to fund the **International School on Nuclear Security**, jointly run by the IAEA and the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste. The financial support of the Italian Government amounts to EUR 360,000 over the last five years. The School is highly valued by developing and emerging countries, for its contribution to the development of a cadre of professionals in the national framework for nuclear safety and security and represents a model for capacity building in nuclear security worldwide. We remain committed to support young students and researchers from emerging countries to promote nuclear security culture, providing expertise, knowledge transfer, training and helping to establish national capability.

Mister President,

Italy highly values the **technical assistance and cooperation** programs implemented by the Agency, and will renew in 2022 its full contribution to the Technical Cooperation Fund, amounting to almost 3 million Euros. A specific support in this respect has been provided by making available to the joint IAEA/FAO division an Associate Immunology Officer for a period of two years.

With the improvement of public health conditions, Italy has started to hosting again this year foreign researchers in its laboratories, universities and medical centers in the framework of fellowships financed under the Agency's Technical Cooperation Programme, while a two-year Master of Advanced Studies in Medical Physics jointly run by the ICTP and the University of Trieste continues to enable young graduates to become clinical medical physicists in their home countries.

Also in the field of **nuclear applications**, Italy is making a significant contribution to international research and development activities. We are proud of promoting the advancement of nuclear medicine through various initiatives, such as, recently, a project for the production of radiopharmaceutical technetium for diagnostic purposes carried out by ENEA (the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development) at its TRIGA reactor in Rome, and a program of studies on Boron Neutron Capture Therapy (BNCT) and on copper isotope production for theranostics application at the LENA TRIGA Reactor of the University of Pavia. On this, ENEA is currently committed to building a technology infrastructure for the production of technetium through the neutron irradiation of Molybdenum target (Moly Project), in the research reactor TRIGA RC-1 at ENEA- Casaccia R&D center in Rome, with the aim of creating a center of excellence in the production of radioisotopes in the most suitable chemical-physical form for the experimentation of new radiopharmaceuticals, and establishing collaborations with relevant international institutes and research centers. Moreover, ENEA, in collaboration with the Lazio Region and the National Institute for Health, is designing and building an innovative compact linear accelerator for proton therapy (TOP-IMPLART project), which will be the experimental prototype for treatment of superficial and semi-deep tumors. ENEA has also been co-financing, in collaboration with the Emilia Romagna Region, two projects on radiopharmaceutical production (SORGENTINA) and neutron therapy (LINCER) aiming to establish an industrial district for testing innovative medical application in its centres of Bologna and Brasimone. ENEA ensures the management of all the stages of radioactive waste cycle produced in the medical activities, including transport, characterization, storage, treatment and conditioning. ENEA is also committed in the development and testing of novel methods and techniques for CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) applications, especially for the RN (Radiological-Nuclear) domains, and actively contributes to the harmonization of response practices.

The National Institute for Nuclear Physics (INFN) is also focusing on state-of-the-art nuclear applications, such as radiotherapy with ion beams and accelerator-based alternatives to Uranium-based production of radioisotopes of medical interest. In the field of medical applications, INFN leads a project within the NEST initiative of the OECD/NEA. The Institute also continues its research programs on innovative nuclear systems and on hybrid systems for the incineration of nuclear waste. Concerning waste management, it pursues new technologies to make both decommissioning activities and surveillance of repositories safer, more efficient and cost-effective. Concerning safeguards, it pursues new technologies for the safety and security of radioactive waste and spent fuel, both during transport and storage and for the surveillance of ports.

Also in the field of environmental, agricultural and animal-health nuclear applications, Italy has been providing a significant contribution to international research and development activities. The Centro Agricoltura Ambiente “G. Nicoli” in Bologna has been for years an IAEA Collaborating Centre in the development and

implementation of a Sterile Insect Technique package for Aedes Mosquitoes suppression. Moreover, a dedicated laboratory for isotopic and radiometric analysis has been set up by ENEA, to address food safety and security, to trace the geographical origin and to perform isotopic hydrogeology studies on water resources, emerging pollution and climate change. The use of nuclear techniques such as electron beam irradiation have been furthermore exploited, involving Italian companies for triggering their innovation in technological processes and addressing the removal of toxic products of manmade activities, from fresh and sea waters.

At the ENEA Calliope irradiation facility, materials characterization and biological researches are carried out on conservation and preservation of Cultural Heritage archives and artifacts, in the framework of IAEA Coordinated Research Programme, agriculture, environmental fields, AgroSpace, nuclear applications, Space and High Energy Physics experiments.

My country is also actively engaged in advancing research on fusion and innovative fission nuclear systems, leveraging on the competences that are maintained also thanks to knowledge management initiatives, including those in collaboration with the Agency, and taking profit of the research reactors that are operated in the Country, notably the TAPIRO fast spectrum zero-power facility in ENEA Casaccia, well inserted in collaborative research projects at international level, as well as within the scope of the Agency's technical working group on research reactors. Among the initiatives building on those assets, it is worth mentioning the support to the realization of the ALFRED Lead-cooled Fast Reactor demonstrator in Romania, on which ENEA and ANSALDO NUCLEARE play a relevant role, and the contribution to the International Fusion Materials Irradiation Facility project through the INFN's specific competence in accelerator technology. Furthermore, the construction of one of the main projects in the Controlled Thermonuclear Fusion activity of this decade, the Divertor Tokamak Test facility (DTT), aimed at assessing the reactor heat-exhaust system, one of the most important missions on the path towards fusion electricity is underway in ENEA, at Frascati Research Centre.

Italy strongly believes that any project involving nuclear energy, as well as any technology or application making use of radioactive materials, should provide and integrate elements of safeguards, safety, security, emergency preparedness and response. Only such synergies can grant a long-lasting sustainable approach, as well as the actual well-being and protection of both the population and the environment.

In this vein, we encourage the Agency to continue all its activities related to peaceful uses of nuclear science and technologies, especially in the fields of human health, climate change and sustainable development.

Mister President,

rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout this week. We are ready to work in a constructive way with all delegations for a successful Conference.

Thank you.