

S T A T E M E N T
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Head of the Bulgarian delegation to the IAEA Ministerial
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Dear Madam President,
Dear Director General,
Distinguished delegates,

It is my great pleasure and honour to be here among you today. On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria I would like to congratulate the International Atomic Energy Agency and everyone involved in organizing this special event. The conference comes at the right moment in order to provide an open platform for exchanging on how to identify and promote forward-looking approaches for nuclear development in the longer run. This is even more crucial in the current geopolitical situation which affected seriously the EU energy systems, particularly those that are dependent simultaneously on Russia's natural gas, oil and nuclear fuel.

Needless to say that nuclear power has a key role to play in the EU energy system. Precisely for Bulgaria the nuclear power has an average share of 33%-37% of the annual gross electricity generation thus making this source of energy a major factor in the country's energy balance. This is valid not only in terms of ensuring energy security (electricity generation 24/7) but also in

contributing to the ambitious climate objectives (55% GHG reduction by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050). Those benefits are even more visible in the current surge of electricity prices. At national level, nuclear power enables mitigating the price pressure on households and providing proper financial compensation to affected businesses. Also, in the context of the EU' increased energy and climate ambition, Bulgaria will continue to rely on nuclear generation in the long run under the conditions of high technological efficiency, low CO2 emissions, competitive prices and maintaining a high level of nuclear safety and radiation protection.

Bulgarian government strongly believes that nuclear power along with renewables has to be part of the solution for the majority of the current challenges (this is quite well recognized also in the latest EU's Commission's REPowerEU Plan). We continue keeping pro-active nuclear approach. Based on the 45-year proven safety record of the operation of WWER reactors, we will maintain our points for preservation and increase of the nuclear energy share in the country by extension of the operational lifetime of units 5 and 6 of Kozloduy NPP to the maximum possible extend. We are now also thinking on how to expand the existing nuclear programme by working on various options for having a new nuclear build. The analyses we are doing currently consider all the economic, legal, and environmental constraints and also the geopolitical situation.

We follow with particular attention and explore options of introducing new nuclear technologies, such as SMRs. However, at

present we think that SMRs can serve as a complementary capacity. We don't think that they replace the existing KNPP.

Bulgaria is fully committed to the international and EU principles of safe and responsible waste management. We are convinced that following those principles and implementing a transparent and open approach is the right way forward to increase public acceptance and support for nuclear power.

Following the commitments already taken, we are now advancing with the fresh nuclear fuel diversification programme. The aim is to reduce dependence of Bulgaria on one single supplier of nuclear materials and nuclear fuel cycle services. The diversification process is supposed to be finalized by 2024 after the WWER alternative fuel would have to be entirely licensed by the Bulgarian nuclear regulator. Ensuring the safety and security of the operation of the nuclear facilities and guarantying of security of power supply are the national policy in the development of nuclear energy in my country.

Finally allow me to refer to one of the key issues of strategic importance to the nuclear sector, namely the maintaining of sustainable human resources. This is a common challenge for the whole nuclear field in Bulgaria. There is no doubt that the well-trained and qualified personnel must be a national priority and that all affected stakeholders such as operators, regulator, TSOs, educational and research institutions should work in a coordinated manner. That's why, as a starting point, Bulgarian government approved the National strategy on development of human resources in the nuclear field for the next 10 years. The

leading role for monitoring the implementation of the strategy rests with the national nuclear regulator together with the Ministry of Energy.

Let me conclude on a positive note – we are looking forward for enhancing the international cooperation and sharing experience in the nuclear field.

Thank you, Madame President.