

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA

International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century

Mr. Antti Tooming

Vice-Minister of Environment

Washington D.C., 27 October 2022

Mister President, ladies and gentlemen,

Please let me first express my gratitude to the Government of the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency for organizing this Ministerial Conference.

The Conference takes place in a complex international security environment. Estonia condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's war against Ukraine. Russia must accept the responsibility for its war crimes and compensate for the damage it has caused. The nuclear safety and security situation in Ukraine is a deep concern for us. Russia's aggressive and provocative rhetoric about nuclear weapons is completely unacceptable. Russia's actions, directly threatening the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, and the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in particular, must stop immediately. We call upon Russia to withdraw immediately its military and other personnel from the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant.

We thank the Director General and the Agency for closely monitoring the situation and keeping the international community informed.

Mister President,

The Government of Estonia is committed to fight against global climate change. Estonia, which has long relied on locally produced and highly polluting oil shale as its primary source of fuel for electricity, has committed to work towards climate neutrality by 2050. Estonian Government has decided to phase out from oil shale electricity production by 2035, but in order to ensure that electricity is available in all weathers and all seasons, it is important to also look further from solar and wind power. Given our goals in reducing CO₂ emissions and achieving climate neutrality, we must consider all options for adequate and sustainable energy production in the future.

In spring 2021, Estonian Government established a Nuclear Energy Working Group to analyze the potential of using Small Modular Reactors in Estonia beyond 2030. Today, Estonia is a country without nuclear power or research reactors and our competences on nuclear technology

are very limited. In order to make an informed and knowledge-based decision in principle on nuclear power, Estonia will gather relevant and accessible information.

We can benefit from international experience, international network participation, and support from other countries and international organisations. Estonia is working in close cooperation with the Agency, relevant stakeholders and international partners. We have asked the Agency to conduct Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review (INIR) mission in Estonia in the second half of 2023. After the mission, the Working Group submits its final report to the Government.

In January, Estonia joined the U.S. Department of State's Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of Small Modular Reactor Technology (FIRST) programme and our specialists have already received training in nuclear security, safety, and nonproliferation matters.

Estonia already benefits from the diversity of nuclear science and technology in medicine, industry and education. Estonia values highly the cooperation and support that the Agency has provided through its expert missions and Technical Cooperation Programme. On September 26, Estonia signed the new Country Programme Framework agreement with the Agency. Our priority areas in cooperating with the Agency are ensuring long-term management of radioactive waste by establishing a disposal facility in Estonia by 2040, as well as nuclear medicine and cancer treatment. We also highlighted the importance of the Agency's assistance in improving our knowledge on safe use of nuclear power.

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that Estonia recognizes the Agency's central role in strengthening the international nuclear safety and security framework through promoting the implementation of relevant international legal instruments, enhancing international cooperation and assisting states in nuclear capacity building. Today, ensuring nuclear safety, security, and safeguards are a concern for the whole international community more than ever and we call upon Member States to support the Agency in these efforts.

Thank you, Mister President.