Statement of the Republic of Lithuania, at the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century
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Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

More than a decade ago, the Lithuanian energy sector has undergone a fundamental change. With the closure of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in 2009, which was a prerequisite for becoming an EU Member State, we switched from the position of a net exporter to a net importer of electricity.

Ignalina NPP decommissioning – probably the largest project ever in the Lithuanian energy sector. It is a long-term, exceptionally expensive, unprecedented-scale pioneering decommissioning project – the world's first such project involving RBMK reactors. We reached a significant milestone in Ignalina NPP decommissioning – finally both units of Ignalina NPP are successfully defueled. This is one of the biggest achievements in the decommissioning process so far and marks the end of the so-called post operation stage and beginning of "classic" decommissioning. We see opportunities to cooperate with other countries on decommissioning projects and management of radioactive waste and spent fuel, sharing Ignalina NPP experience and expertise.

Experience of Lithuania on Ignalina NPP shows the importance of the need prior to embarking on new nuclear power programmes to carefully evaluate all implications, including technical, financial and human aspects not only of the construction but also of decommissioning and management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel. We must avoid imposing undue burdens on future generations by applying safe, practicable and environmentally acceptable solutions for the long term safe and responsible decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel.

Since closure of the Ignalina NPP we have consistently been strengthening our energy security by increasing interconnectivity with countries in the region, diversifying our energy mix, import routes and sources, and promoting local

energy production based on renewables. As a result, today with the existing energy infrastructure in the region we are ready to ensure sufficient energy supplies in a stable and reliable manner. We are also among the top EU Member States having the most ambitious renewable energy goals and showing significant results in this regard.

The current geopolitical situation reinforces the importance of diversifying energy mix to ensure safer and more stable access to energy. Seeking to solve these issues, Lithuania will continue to speed up the transition to renewable energy. However, we must be realistic and think ahead about additional energy generation technologies once a potential of renewable energy is realized and nuclear power could be one of it.

Therefore, when we envision nuclear power as part of a country's future energy mix, we need to rethink whose nuclear technologies will be deployed. Deployed technology could become a tool for a technology provider to make an influence.

So, once we envision that nuclear energy should play a role in a country's future energy mix, we need to choose reliable partners who are ready to ensure safety in accordance with the highest international standards and take full responsibility for it. Partners who do not use energy as a mean of blackmail.

Today, Ukraine is an example to follow and a lesson we must learn about partners. Russia has deliberately chosen to involve civil nuclear installations in Ukraine into military actions – this is a brutal violation of international law and it brings us as close as ever to another nuclear disaster in Europe. The Russian state-owned enterprise "Rosatom" is actively involved in the occupation of the Zaporizhzhya NPP. All seven indispensable nuclear safety and security pillars that the IAEA Director General outlined at the beginning of the armed conflict have been and still are violated at the Zaporizhzhya NPP by the Russian military forces and "Rosatom". The question arises, after these gross violations of nuclear safety and security requirements, can Russia and it's "Rosatom" be trusted.

Business as usual is not possible on any level of interaction with Russia and Belarus, be it political or technical. Russia and Belarus have to be isolated from the community of law abiding countries. We must work towards minimizing their influence and prevent them from influencing decision making in such important fields as nuclear safety and security.

It is important to start working on cutting European reliance on Russian nuclear technologies and nuclear fuel. Ukraine can serve as an example to us in this case. In March 2022 Ukraine announced that it will no longer buy nuclear fuel from Russia. There is a lot of potential for enhanced transatlantic cooperation in nuclear power field, we just need to start exploiting it much more widely.

Thank you.