

Statement of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
At the 67th Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference
To be delivered by H.E. Manizha Bakhtari, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the IAEA
Vienna, 25-29 September 2023

President,
Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me join previous speakers in congratulating you, Excellency, on your election as the President of the 67th Session of the IAEA General Conference and I assure you of our full support and cooperation.

On this occasion, I also extend my warm congratulations to the IAEA Director General Grossi on his reappointment to a second term. His leadership has proven instrumental in guiding the IAEA through complex and evolving international dynamics. I look forward to continued cooperation with the IAEA under his capable leadership and to contributing to the Agency's efforts in ensuring the safe, secure, and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Dear President,

Just last month, we marked two years since the forced takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban. This unfortunate turn of events has plunged our nation into a dire and multifaceted crisis, one that ranks among the most severe humanitarian, human rights, political, and socio-economic challenges the world has witnessed.

Before the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan was on a promising trajectory, one that held the promise of strengthened cooperation with the IAEA. We had established a strong framework for collaboration, covering important areas like human health, agriculture, human resources development in nuclear physics, and the establishment of a national regulatory authority. However, due to recent events, these hopes have unfortunately been lost. The absence of functioning governmental services has left our country struggling with deep uncertainty.

The Taliban's consistent inability and unwillingness to fulfill their promises has prompted the international community and, notably, UN human rights experts on August 14, 2023, to declare that "the notion of a 'reformed' Taliban has been proven mistaken." This undeniably calls for renewed and revised international approach to Afghanistan for the good of the people.

Dear President,

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has, regrettably, deteriorated further, with women and girls continuing to be denied fundamental rights such as access to education, employment, justice, and the freedom to move. Recent reports from various human rights activist organizations, notably including the Human Rights Watch, have already concluded that many of the abuses against women and girls amount to crimes against humanity of persecution based on gender. During the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council on September 11th, Mr. Richard Bennett, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, reiterated the statement made by his working group colleagues and himself three months ago: "the

systemic widespread institutionalized discrimination that seeks to exclude women from all facets of life necessitates an examination of the evolving phenomenon of gender apartheid."In light of these deeply distressing findings, I seize this moment to call on the international community to acknowledge the treatment of women and girls by the Taliban as a form of gender apartheid.

I also strongly advocate for increased inclusion of the women of Afghanistan in the IAEA's Marie Curie Fellowship Programme. I call upon all Member States to generously contribute to this program by funding international fellowships specifically for the women and girls of Afghanistan. It is crucial that we extend our support to the women of Afghanistan at this critical juncture, as we cannot afford to lose a new generation of women leaders in the field of nuclear science and technology.

Dear President,

The absence of the rule of law in Afghanistan has given rise to a growing threat of international terrorism and the proliferation of narcotics. The current security landscape in our country is deeply concerning, marked by the expanding presence of international terrorist organizations operating throughout our nation and a disturbingly close relationship between the Taliban and such groups. Consequently, we are deeply alarmed by the potential for these groups to engage in the illicit transport of nuclear materials through Afghanistan.

In light of this, we believe that such illegal activities will make the current situation more complex and may put the lives of thousands of people in danger. Thus, we sincerely request IAEA Member States to pay careful attention to this matter – one that directly impacts international security. The consequences of inaction are not confined to Afghanistan alone; they extend far beyond our borders, affecting global stability and peace.

Dear President,

Afghanistan remains steadfast in its dedication to the principles and goals of the IAEA. In these trying times, we call upon the international community and all Member States to stand in solidarity with Afghanistan. Together, we can work towards the restoration of stability, the protection of human rights, and the revival of our cooperative endeavors with the IAEA.

Thank you.