

**Statement by AUSTRIA**

at the 67<sup>th</sup> IAEA General Conference, 25-29 September 2023

Delivered by H.E. Alexander Schallenberg

Federal Minister for European and International Affairs

Madam President,

Dear Director-General, dear Rafael,

Ladies and gentlemen!

As proud host country to the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is a pleasure to welcome all of you to Vienna at this year's General Conference!

I extend a particularly warm welcome to the delegations of Cabo Verde and of Gambia, who have joined the Agency since our last meeting. I would also like to congratulate you, dear Rafael, personally on having taken your oath of office at the General Conference earlier this morning! Thank you for everything you are doing to keep us all safer in these troubling times.

Dear Colleagues,

We meet at a time when war is still raging in Europe. The last 19 months, since Russia brutally invaded its sovereign neighbour Ukraine we have witnessed a chain of irresponsible and unacceptable acts: blatant violations the UN Charter, the use of nuclear threats and blackmail and the stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus – a day's drive from here.

Russia has also shown a high degree of disregard towards the central pillars of the Agency and its work on nuclear safety by endangering the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

I sincerely thank the Agency and you, Rafael, for all your efforts in Ukraine. You have proven your worth again and again over the past months! And we are all acutely aware of your staff's risks and personal sacrifices to provide us with crucial information and some sense of security. We stand fully behind you and the five basic principles you have elaborated for Ukraine.

And in order to assist your important work in Ukraine, we have been contributing a further 1 Mio. Euro.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I deeply regret that despite intense diplomatic efforts, there has been no return to full implementation of the JCPOA. Iran is continuing its nuclear program at an alarming rate. We call on Tehran to fully cooperate with the IAEA, including on outstanding safeguards issues.

But it is not just the state of the JCPOA that is troubling. The entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime is under enormous pressure. We are caught between a rock and a hard place: an alarming standstill on the one hand and backtracking of commitments on the other. The last NPT Preparatory Committee this summer ended in another failure. It is now 13 years that the NPT States Parties have not been able to agree on an outcome document! I do not need to spell out the definition of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. This comes in addition to other alarming developments such as the suspension of the New START Treaty by Russia, dangerous escalations by North Korea, threatening our partners Korea and Japan, and a worrying re-emphasis on nuclear deterrence among some states.

All of this proves that nuclear risks are currently higher than ever!

We need to break this vicious circle! And the best way to do this is to put our collective support behind the TPNW, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I encourage all of you to participate at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of States Parties this November in New York.

Colleagues,

Austria's firm rejection of the use of nuclear power is well known. We simply do not consider it a sustainable source of energy. We cannot only factor in the reduction of emissions, but also and long-term environmental and health impacts of nuclear accidents and the unsolved question of the treatment of nuclear waste.

Our position is clear: as long as states choose to use this technology, they need to uphold the highest standards of safety and security. There can be no cutting corners or exploiting loopholes.

It is exactly because of that, that we fully support the Agency's work and its activities in the wider field of nuclear science and technology such as healthcare, the fight against climate change or food security.

Ladies and gentlemen,

at a time when the multilateral system is cracking under the strain of geopolitical tensions, lack of trust and obstructionism, let us make the most of this general conference. Let us show that we can deliver. And that the spirit of Vienna still prevails.

Thank you.