

S T A T E M E N T

by Mr. Tsanko Bachiyski

Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria

Head of the delegation to the 67th General Conference of the IAEA

Vienna, September 25 – 29, 2023

Dear Madame President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 67th Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. You have our full support and cooperation in the fulfillment of your important and responsible tasks during the session deliberations.

Distinguished delegates,

The Bulgarian delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the IAEA for the preparation of the 2022 Annual Report. Please also allow me to express our ardent support to Director General Grossi for his decisive leadership and to all IAEA staff for their courage and determination in accomplishing their tasks in these turbulent times, including during IAEA Support and Assistance Missions to Ukraine. I use the opportunity, Director General to congratulate you for your re-election and to express my sincere wishes for a successful second term in office.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned about the severe threats to the nuclear safety, security and safeguards caused by Russia's illegal, unjustified, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion has impeded the IAEA from fully and safely conducting safeguards verification activities in Ukraine pursuant to Ukraine's safeguards obligations and significantly increased the risk of a nuclear accident, with potentially severe consequences for Ukraine and its neighbouring countries, as well as wider global

reverberations. Bulgaria strongly condemns this dangerous and irresponsible behaviour. We support the role of the IAEA and call for the full implementation of the fundamental Seven Pillars and the five principles to avoid a nuclear accident at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) as outlined by the Director General, in order to ensure nuclear safety, security and implementation of the safeguards system in Ukraine. Bulgaria recalls the IAEA General Conference consensus decision of 2009 stating that “any armed attack on and threat against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of the principles of the UN Charter, international law and the Statute of the Agency”. We thus urge Russia to stop its illegal war, abide by its international commitments and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its military forces from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. This is the only sustainable solution to overcome the present nuclear safety and security threat in Ukraine.

Dear Madame President,

The Republic of Bulgaria is strongly committed to the efforts to further strengthen and advance the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

We consider the safeguards system of the IAEA as a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and guaranty for the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Efforts must continue to further enhance its effectiveness and efficiency in particular through the universalization of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol as the present verification standard.

In this vein, we call upon Iran to urgently and effectively fulfil its legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Subsidiary Arrangements (General Part), to resume the implementation of the Additional Protocol, and to engage with the Agency constructively and in a spirit of cooperation. Tehran must also clarify without delay

all outstanding safeguards issues. We underline that the Board of Governors of IAEA adopted three resolutions to this end in 2022 and urge Iran to return to its political commitments in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, and to resume implementation of all JCPOA-related monitoring and verification measures.

Regarding DPRK we are deeply concerned about the continuation of its nuclear program and welcome the IAEA's commitment to monitor the situation. We call on Pyongyang to comply with its international obligations by immediately abandoning all its nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missile programmes and existing nuclear programmes, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. Bulgaria urges the DPRK to return to full compliance with all its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations as a non-nuclear weapon state, sign and ratify the CTBT and stop all ballistic missile systems testing.

I would also like to underline once again our full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as agreed by the NPT States Parties.

We support IAEA's real-time monitoring of Japan's release of the treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean in order to confirm that the process is in full conformity with international safety standards. We also commend Japan for its cooperative approach and transparent efforts with the IAEA. Bulgaria highly appreciates the regular briefings and reports issued by IAEA on this topic, which further foster transparency and provide important information to the international community.

Dear Madame President,

Bulgaria attaches great importance to nuclear power and its applications also in the context of achieving CO₂ neutral economy. Nuclear power in Bulgaria continues to be a

major factor in the country's energy balance, under conditions of high technology, production efficiency, competitive prices and maintaining high level of nuclear safety, security and radiation protection.

Bulgaria considers nuclear safety and security of the nuclear facilities a major factor for developing nuclear energy. In 2022 Units 5 and 6 of the Kozloduy NPP were operated in full compliance with the international safety standards. The plant continues its activities to ensure safe long term operation of the units as demonstrated within the IAEA Follow up SALTO mission held in 2023.

The National report of Bulgaria at the 8th and 9th Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on nuclear safety was approved with the acknowledgement of Bulgaria's strong commitment to implement its obligations under the convention. We note with satisfaction that this review attracted the highest number of participating countries (81 from 91 Contracting Parties) in the history of the convention and commend the president of the convention Ms. Drabova from Czechia and vice-presidents from Australia and Republic of Korea for their skillful leadership. It is worth noting that the Summary Report of the Review Meeting underlined several major common issues like capacity building of the regulatory bodies, need of international cooperation to address the challenges of new technologies like SMRs, managing extraordinary circumstances, such as Covid-19 pandemic, extreme natural disasters, and the implications of military actions in countries operating nuclear facilities as in the case of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We call on all Contracting Parties to further engage in international cooperation in order to address these issues.

We commend IAEA for its proactive role in these areas through various projects and initiatives including the SMRs Nuclear Regulators Forum and the launch of the Agency-wide platform on SMRs. We participate in the Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization

Initiative and trust on IAEA Secretariat to steer the process in order to achieve tangible results in near future.

We consider knowledge management and capacity building as key element of the safe and secure operation of nuclear facilities and support IAEA initiatives promoting sustainability of nuclear education and training in all areas of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Based on the adopted by the Bulgarian government in 2022 National Strategy on Human Resource Development in the Nuclear Sector 2022 – 2032 the first 3-years action plan for the implementation of the Strategy came into force.

Distinguished delegates,

Bulgaria strongly supports the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme as the key mechanism for transferring technology, building capacities and improving nuclear safety and security with the aim of addressing a wide variety of socio-economic human development needs of Member States. In this respect, we trust that the Programme shall render support to all Member States upon their request, according to their needs, and based on non-discriminatory principles.

Within the Technical Cooperation Programme for 2022-2023, Bulgaria successfully implements three national projects in the field of radiation protection, knowledge management and agriculture and for the 2024-2025 cycle. In the framework of this cycle our country participates in over 30 regional and interregional projects from the Programme. Regarding the financing of the Technical cooperation activities I would like to declare that my country pays its annual contribution to the TC fund fully and on time. Bulgaria also continues to support with financial contributions the ZODIAC initiative.

Dear Madame President,

Distinguished delegates,

In conclusion, I wish to assure you that as in the past Bulgaria will be a constructive partner in all activities of the IAEA and will contribute effectively to the achievement of the IAEA's main objectives: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, enhancement of nuclear safety and security, and widening the scope of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

Thank you, Madame President.