

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA

67th Annual Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference

Mr. Kristen Michal

Minister of Climate

Vienna, 25 September 2023

Distinguished President,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the General Conference. You have our full support and cooperation. Estonia fully aligns itself with the EU statement delivered by Spain and would like to highlight some key points in our national capacity.

Estonia condemns in the strongest possible terms Russia's war against Ukraine. We call on Russia to stop violating international law, including the UN Charter and the Statute of the IAEA, and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We also condemn the continued voluntary involvement of Belarus in this aggression against Ukraine.

Estonia remains deeply concerned that Russia is deliberately compromising the seven pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict, as well as recognizing the importance and implementation of the five principles for protecting the Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Regular rotation of the Agency's experts and their unrestricted and timely access to all locations at the ZNPP must be ensured. The continued presence of the IAEA at the ZNPP, as well as at other nuclear facilities in Ukraine, is of crucial importance. We commend the Agency's and Ukrainian personnel, for their professional work under very difficult circumstances and thank them for closely monitoring the situation and keeping the international community informed. Assistance to Ukraine in ensuring nuclear safety and security, as well as in maintaining IAEA safeguards on all nuclear materials and activities, remains crucial.

Distinguished President,

The Estonian Government is committed to addressing global climate change and achieving climate neutrality. Therefore, we must explore all viable options for sustainable energy production in the future.

To this end, the Estonian Government has established a Nuclear Energy Working Group, which is tasked with assessing the potential of implementing Small Modular Reactors (SMR) in Estonia post-2030. In order to ensure a well-informed and transparent decision-making process, Estonia is closely collaborating with the Agency, relevant stakeholders, and international partners. An INIR mission is scheduled to take place in Estonia at the end of October this year. Estonia is the first country in the world to host this mission exclusively for SMRs. Following the mission, the Working Group will present its final report to the Government by the end of the year, facilitating a knowledge-driven decision on the initiation of a nuclear program in Estonia.

Estonia already reaps the benefits of nuclear science and technology in various sectors such as medicine, industry, and education. We highly appreciate the cooperation and support provided by the Agency through its expert missions and Technical Cooperation Programme. Our main areas of priority in collaboration with the Agency include ensuring the long-term management of radioactive waste by establishing a disposal facility in Estonia by 2040, advancing nuclear medicine and cancer treatment, and seeking the Agency's assistance in enhancing our knowledge of the safe use of nuclear power.

We welcome and support the Agency's initiatives ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope and look forward to the implementation of these Programmes for the benefit of the Member States.

Distinguished President, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express our gratitude for the work carried out by the Director General and the Secretariat and urge all countries to provide their support to the Agency, including meeting their financial obligations.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Russia's actions continue to pose a threat to nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and jeopardize the security of all nations and the future of nuclear energy. Russia must immediately and fully withdraw its military equipment and personnel, from the ZNPP, allowing the Ukrainian authorities to resume their sovereign responsibilities without external pressure or interference. It is essential to acknowledge that the ZNPP rightfully belongs to Ukraine.

I would like to once again encourage the international community to hold Russia accountable as well as offer support for the IAEA's comprehensive program of technical assistance to Ukraine, both at the international and national levels.

Thank you, Distinguished President.