



**IAEA General Conference: September 2023  
New Zealand National Statement**

Thank you Madam President,

The International Atomic Energy Agency continues to make a substantial and valuable contribution to global peace and security by ensuring that nuclear science and technology is harnessed safely, securely, peacefully, and in support of international development. It plays a pivotal role within the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and in upholding obligations enshrined within the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It is a testament to the Agency's good work that demand from Member States for the Agency's services, advice, and support has never been higher. This year, for example, we have welcomed Cabo Verde and The Gambia as new members of the Agency.

Nonetheless, we gather this year in trying times. As all of the national statements thus far have demonstrated, the IAEA is faced with a range of contentious challenges and is under pressure like never before. It is therefore critical that Member States do everything they can to support the Agency and avoid any actions that complicate its work. Unfortunately not everyone is pulling in this direction.

Most notably, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and nuclear threats have taxed the Agency's resources like never before. New Zealand commends the Agency's continued efforts to support nuclear safety, security, and safeguards in Ukraine amidst Russia's war of aggression there. Recognising the tremendous pressure Russia's war has placed on the Agency's staff and resources, New Zealand's Prime Minister, Chris Hipkins, announced a further extra-budgetary contribution of \$500,000 in July to support this work. It reflects our recognition of the extraordinary risks associated with military activities involving nuclear facilities and the great value we attach to the Secretariat's work in helping to decrease the risk of a nuclear accident.

New Zealand backs the Agency's presence in Ukraine, including the invaluable ISAMZ mission at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. We also endorse the DG's 'five principles to avoid a nuclear accident' and we fully back the seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear

safety and security during an armed conflict. The only way for the nuclear risk in Ukraine to be resolved is for Russia to end this war and the threat of a nuclear disaster that it has created.

Madam President,

The Agency continues to grapple with the threat of nuclear proliferation. Member States should ensure that the IAEA is supported to effectively verify and monitor nuclear programmes around the globe and confirm that they are peaceful. The Additional Protocol gives the Agency the right tools for the job and we urge Member States yet to put one in place to do so in order to ensure the global safeguards regime is truly modern and fit-for-purpose. It is also important that relevant states amend or rescind their Small Quantities Protocol, particularly where nuclear facilities are planned.

New Zealand also recognises the Agency's broader work to ensure effective application of safeguards, noting in particular the interest by Member States in the safeguards arrangements being developed for naval nuclear propulsion initiatives. New Zealand has full confidence in the Agency's independent and impartial work on all safeguards matters, including with respect to naval nuclear propulsion and we look forward to the DG's further updates on this work in due course.

While the vast majority of Member States work constructively with the Agency on safeguards matters, unfortunately some continue to disregard our shared interest in protecting the nuclear safeguards system and ensuring non-proliferation. Iran's latest actions in effectively removing about one third of the Agency's most experienced inspectors designated for Iran are deplorable. As Member States have consistently made clear, Iran should be taking steps to properly engage with the Agency on its safeguards obligations, not escalating the crisis around its nuclear programme.

Other long-standing nuclear proliferation challenges persist. The DPRK's nuclear programme remains a constant threat. Its increased ballistic missile testing, failed satellite launch, heightened nuclear rhetoric, and indications it remains intent on conducting a further nuclear test all serve to escalate tensions. The DPRK must return to diplomacy and it is important that all Member States continue to press the DPRK in this direction, including by adhering fully to international sanctions. Syria's long-standing noncompliance with its safeguards obligations is also deeply regrettable and must be addressed to ensure the integrity of the international safeguards system.

Madam President,

New Zealand recognises the Agency's valuable work to support the safe, secure, and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. These efforts have a meaningful impact on the overall attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. While New Zealand welcomes the benefits of nuclear technology in a range of contexts, we have not chosen to pursue nuclear power generation ourselves and we continue to have concerns about its sustainability and

risks. Where nuclear power is used, it is critical that it is governed by the highest possible safety and security standards. This applies equally to innovative reactor designs (such as small and medium-sized modular reactors and transportable nuclear power plants).

As a coastal state, and near to shipment routes of radioactive material, we have long advocated for its safe and secure transport. We strongly support coastal and other interested states receiving advance notification of such shipments and value ongoing dialogue and cooperation between coastal and shipping states in implementing the voluntary best practice guidelines concerning communication protocols. Similarly, we welcome efforts to improve the international liability regime and will continue our collaboration with others to ensure the concerns of non-nuclear coastal states are taken adequately into account.

New Zealand has been pleased to make two extra-budgetary contributions specifically to support the important work of the IAEA's Taskforce on the discharge of ALPS-treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. We have appreciated the Agency's extensive, professional, and impartial efforts and its commitment to a permanent monitoring presence at the site for the duration of the release of the water. New Zealand recognises that the release is a significant issue of interest to the Pacific, particularly as a consequence of our region's traumatic nuclear legacy. We have accordingly appreciated the sustained efforts of both Japan and the Agency to ensure transparent and open communication with the region and we welcome their continued commitment to dialogue and information-sharing.

Finally Madame President, I note that the activity at this General Conference provides a visible demonstration of the value Member States place on the Agency's work. So in closing New Zealand repeats our call on all Member States to lend the Agency their full support and cooperation as it undertakes this important work.

Thank you Madam President.