



United Kingdom
Mission to the UN
Vienna

IAEA General Conference, September 2023

General Debate

UK National Statement

Madame President,

Congratulations on your appointment as President of this Conference.

And thank you to the Director General and Secretariat for all your work over the past year to ensure the Agency's continued success.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland remains resolutely committed to new nuclear.

As the most reliable and clean sources of energy in the world, nuclear will have a major role to play in our transition to a net zero economy by 2050.

And we have ambitious plans to produce a quarter of all our electricity – up to 24 GW - from nuclear power by that time.

This is why we joined the World Nuclear Association and the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation's Net Zero Nuclear campaign as the inaugural government partner, alongside the IAEA's Atoms4NetZero.

And this is why we also launched Great British Nuclear (GBN), an arms-length organisation designed to oversee our entire nuclear programme, in July.

Great British Nuclear will provide the expert support and financial backing necessary to accelerate the growth of new nuclear projects, while placing the United Kingdom at the forefront of a global race to develop cutting-edge technologies.

We also recognise the necessity of advancements in decommissioning. Which is why we are moving forward with plans for a geological disposal facility and considering ways in which we can speed up decommissioning and manage radioactive waste, including new disposal routes.

And we are committed to an innovation beyond fission - including advancing fusion technologies, as demonstrated by hosting the 29th IAEA Fusion Energy Conference this October, and the plan by the United Kingdom to build a prototype fusion power plant by 2040.

As well as energy, we are also exploring the use of nuclear in other innovative sectors such as nuclear medicine and space exploration.

Madame President,

Turning to the enhanced trilateral security partnership between the UK, Australia and the United States.

We are working closely with our US and Australian partners to ensure our nuclear-powered submarine programme sets a strong precedent for safeguards and verification in naval nuclear propulsion.

We are in regular contact with the IAEA, as the Director-General reported at the June Board of Governors, and we will continue to be open and transparent.

Indeed, we are committed to effective nuclear security to uphold the nuclear non-proliferation regime and preserve public confidence in the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

That is why the United Kingdom remains one of the largest contributors to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund and continues to support the universalisation of key nuclear security conventions.

For example, we welcome the success of the first Review Conference of the Amended Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (ACPPNM) in 2022 and call on all State Parties to ratify and implement these important Conventions as soon as possible.

The United Kingdom looks forward to the next International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS) in 2024. This is an important opportunity for all States to reaffirm our collective commitment to strengthen global nuclear security.

The Agency can count on our full support for strengthening the nuclear safeguards system, because we recognise that an effective and robust system is crucial for the peaceful use of nuclear technology and energy.

As such, we call on all countries that have not yet done so to agree and ratify Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, revised Small Quantities Protocols and Additional Protocols. The UK also welcomes the recent commitment by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to rescind its Small Quantities Protocol.

Madame President,

The United Kingdom's deep concerns about the implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards due to Russia's unprecedented and illegal control of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remain unabated.

We are clear that Russia's military presence is putting the plant at risk of nuclear accident, and we call for the Russian Federation's full withdrawal from the plant and the town of Enerhodar, and a return of the plant to the competent Ukrainian authorities. Anything less is unacceptable.

Meanwhile, we commend the tireless and important work done by the IAEA staff in Ukraine under increasingly difficult conditions.

We also recently pledged to supply vital fuel for Ukraine's other nuclear power plants, with a £192 million loan guarantee to help power Ukraine over the winter and end its reliance on Russian supplies.

Madame President,

Unfortunately, serious challenges remain to the safeguards regime on which we all depend.

We remain deeply concerned by the Agency's ongoing investigations into possible undeclared nuclear material and activity in Iran; particularly the treatment of IAEA inspectors, the outstanding discrepancy between the amount of natural uranium from Jaber Ibn Hayan Laboratory declared by Iran and the amount verified by the Agency, and the continued lack of technically credible information that would resolve the outstanding issues at Varamin and Turqzabad.

Iran has failed to fulfil its legal NPT obligations and provide technically credible explanations to the Agency's outstanding safeguards questions for nearly five years.

Iran's decision to remove experienced IAEA inspectors and deny visas to Agency officials further reflect a lack of full co-operation with the Agency. Separately, Iran continues to escalate its nuclear programme to unprecedented levels with no credible civilian justification.

Nonetheless, the UK remains committed to finding a diplomatic solution to this increasingly severe threat to international peace and security.

Finally, let me emphasise, Madame President, the UK will continue to give the Secretariat, and the Director General, our wholehearted support.

Thank you very much.