

## **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 68<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the IAEA**

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Mister President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria let me start by congratulating you on your election as President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency and assure you of our full support.

I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the preparation of the 2023 Annual Report and to express our ardent support to Director General Grossi and to all IAEA staff in their work for the achievement of our shared goals.

Mister President,

Distinguished Delegates,

The Bulgarian delegation fully subscribes itself to the official EU statement available online. I should like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

As we convene today, Russia continues its unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine, in gross violation of the international law, the principles of the UN Charter and the IAEA Statute. Bulgaria is deeply concerned over the nuclear safety and security risks resulting from Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the illegal seizure of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). We are grateful for the IAEA's crucial and unique role with its presence in all Ukraine's nuclear sites to help alleviating risks. The IAEA's seven pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security in an armed conflict and the five principles must be respected.

We urge Russia to stop its illegal war, abide by its international commitments and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its armed forces, military equipment and other personnel from the ZNPP and the entire territory of Ukraine and to return the sovereign control of the plant to Ukraine as its legitimate owner. This is the only rightful and sustainable solution to end the present nuclear safety and security risks.

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.

It is in this vein that we call upon Iran to fulfil urgently and effectively its legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and the Subsidiary Arrangements (General Part), and to resume the implementation of the Additional Protocol. We underline that the IAEA Board of Governors adopted three resolutions in 2022 as well as the latest one from June 2024, and urge Iran to clarify without delay all outstanding safeguards issues and immediately return to meaningful cooperation with the IAEA, including with regards to the implementation of all JCPOA-related monitoring and verification measures.

Likewise, the DPRK must 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, and to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay.

Mister President,

Nuclear power in Bulgaria continues to be a major factor in our 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 attaches great importance to nuclear power and its applications also in the context of achieving CO<sub>2</sub> neutral economy. In this respect we congratulate IAEA for organizing the first ever Nuclear Energy Summit, hosted by Belgium in March 2024, that builds on the historic inclusion of nuclear energy in the Global Stocktake agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai in December 2023.

Bulgaria considers nuclear safety and security of the nuclear facilities a major factor for developing nuclear energy. In 2023 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 and plans OSART Mission at the end of 2024.

The National report of Bulgaria at the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on nuclear safety (CNS) 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) and are looking forward to the 10<sup>th</sup> review meeting. We also support the efforts for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the review process under the CNS and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Noting that the Joint Convention is the legal instrument carving our joint commitment for safe, sustainable and responsible use of atomic energy we call on all IAEA MS to join the Convention and on Contracting Parties to actively participate in the 8<sup>th</sup> Review meeting in March 2025.

We believe that safe and secure deployment of atomic energy for the benefit of the societies is not possible without strong regulatory infrastructure. Accordingly, Bulgaria already 3 decades regularly invites IAEA peer reviews and is now preparing for the next IRRS Mission in November 2024.

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.

The use of atomic energy in many areas of socio-economic development contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We welcome all IAEA activities in line with its 'Atoms for Peace and Development' mandate and strongly support the needs-based, result-driven and non-discriminatory IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme. Initiatives like ZODIAC, NUTEC and "Rays of Hope" are exemplary of IAEA's engagement in the global efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Bulgaria continues to support with financial contributions the ZODIAC Initiatives.

In 2024-2025 TCP, Bulgaria successfully implements two national projects in the field of human health and agriculture and participates in over 30 regional and interregional projects. Further, in the margins of the General Conference we concluded the Country Program Framework, which outlines the areas of cooperation with TCProgram in the next 5 years.

In conclusion, let me assure you that Bulgaria will continue to be a constructive partner in all IAEA activities 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 technical cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

Thank you.