

IAEA 68th General Conference**National Statement – CANADA**

Delivered by Jeff Labonté, Associate Deputy Minister of Natural Resources

President,

Congratulations on your election as President of the General Conference. Canada is fully committed to working collaboratively with you to ensure a successful conference. We would also like to welcome the Cook Islands and Somalia as the Agency's newest Member States.

The contributions of the International Atomic Energy Agency to our collective peace, security, and prosperity have never been more vital. We face shared challenges: addressing climate change; advancing energy security; attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals; and combatting concerted efforts by several actors to undermine non-proliferation obligations and nuclear safety and security norms. These challenges require us to strengthen the multilateral system and its role in advancing global solutions.

Canada continues to unequivocally support the Agency's work across each of its major programmes. We commend the Agency's impartial, technical and fact-based efforts in fulfilling its mandate. We urge Member States to avoid calling into question the Agency's credibility and technical authority, including through disinformation. The Agency's contributions to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, supporting nuclear safety and security, and implementing a robust system of safeguards benefit us all. This work cannot be carried out without adequate resources - Member States must pay their assessed contributions to the Agency on time and in full.

President,

At COP28, 25 countries including Canada committed to tripling nuclear energy capacity by 2050, recognizing the role that nuclear will play in decarbonization. Several Canadian jurisdictions are exploring investments in large and small generating capacity, given its potential to enhance access to low emission, secure, baseload energy. And, as a global leader in uranium extraction, Canada remains committed to supporting diversified and reliable uranium supply chains for domestic and international deployments.

On the safe deployment of SMRs, Canada is leading the way with the regulatory review of a construction licence application for a grid scale SMR. We strongly believe that international collaboration enables efficient regulatory reviews and can help move forward demonstration of these technologies. But this requires leadership from national governments on legal frameworks and policies that fully leverage the potential of nuclear technology. In line with this, Canada is pleased to have joined and provided funding to the US-led Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of SMR Technology – FIRST – Program to build capacity in

over 31 states to explore SMR technology in conformity with the highest standards for nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation.

Canada continues to demonstrate its commitment to nuclear excellence, recently hosting an IAEA IRRS follow-up mission which highlighted our comprehensive and robust regulatory framework for nuclear and radiation safety. It also demonstrated our ability to continuously upgrade the framework to address new challenges and technologies.

We are also proud to play a leading role in the IAEA Regulatory Cooperation Forum, supporting Member States embarking or expanding on a nuclear power program to establish a competent and effective regulatory organization.

Of course, the responsible deployment of nuclear technologies requires addressing not only safety, security and non-proliferation, but also comprehensive, scientifically-based waste and decommissioning plans. Canada believes that environmental protection, health, safety, and security must always be at the heart of the deployment of nuclear technologies and is committed to ensuring that safe solutions are in place for managing radioactive waste for generations to come. This requires an ongoing dialogue and meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples, local communities, and civil society.

In this sense, Canada was recently elected as President of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. We look forward to a successful 8th Review Meeting of the Joint Convention and are committed to ensuring an unbiased and apolitical process that supports a safe and sustainable future.

President,

The Agency's efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in the nuclear sector and to mainstream gender considerations in the delivery of its programming are more important than ever. Canada remains unwavering in our support of these efforts and, to this end, continues to support the Marie Sklodowska Fellowship program and the IAEA's Lise Meitner Programme. Canada is pleased to announce an additional \$2 million through its Weapons Threat Reduction Program to support these two initiatives that make tangible contributions towards a more inclusive nuclear field.

Canada wishes to underscore that nuclear security remains a core activity of the IAEA as it is foundational to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We remain a core supporter of the Agency's nuclear security activities, including through contributions to the Nuclear Security Fund. While we were disappointed by the lack of a consensus declaration, Canada welcomes the successful organization of the 2024 International Conference on Nuclear Security and the Co-Presidents Joint Statement.

We welcome the Agency's continued efforts to help Member States fulfill their nuclear safety and security responsibilities. Canada is contributing to the Agency's work through several

projects including the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Regulatory Infrastructure Development Projects. We also recently helped spearhead an improvement initiative for the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

President,

The peaceful use of nuclear technologies relies on adherence to international non-proliferation obligations. It is paramount that all Member States ensure robust safeguards implementation, including the application of the Additional Protocol. We call on all States, who have not already done so, to amend or rescind their Small Quantities Protocol based on the original text. We also reiterate our full support for the Agency's efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards by implementing State Level Safeguards approaches.

Canada remains seriously concerned by Iran's continued nuclear escalations, including deployment of advanced centrifuges and accumulation of uranium enriched to 60% U-235, which have no justifiable civilian objective. In line with resolutions of the IAEA Board, we call on Iran to work constructively with the Agency to address outstanding safeguards questions and to fully implement its legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement. Canada is pleased to announce an additional \$2M extrabudgetary contribution to the Agency's verification and monitoring activities in Iran.

The DPRK's ongoing nuclear activities contradict numerous UN Security Council Resolutions and pose direct challenges to regional and global security. The GC must continue to send a consensus message on the importance of the DPRK fulfilling its non-proliferation and safeguards obligations. Canada continues to fully support the Agency's DPRK team's efforts to provide IAEA Member States with essential technical assessments regarding developments in the DPRK's nuclear program.

President,

Canada is proud to have provided \$4M to support the IAEA's efforts to uphold nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, including through the Agency's ongoing presence at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP).

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and continued occupation of Ukraine's ZNPP continues to put the entire international community at risk. We deeply regret that Russia has not heeded the numerous calls of the IAEA Board as well as the General Conference to withdraw its military and other unauthorized personnel from the ZNPP and to return the plant to the competent Ukrainian authority.

In closing, Canada reiterates our readiness to ensure the success of this General Conference. We face unprecedented times and increasingly complex challenges. In this context, the IAEA remains a critically important tool in our collective response. You can count on Canada's

commitment to playing a positive role in advancing the Agency's core mandate of ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Thank you.