

STATEMENT BY ESTONIA

68th Annual Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference

Ms. Yoko Alender

Minister of Climate

Vienna, 16 September 2024

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 (*as published and attached in Annex 1*) and would like to highlight several key points in our national capacity.

The Republic of Estonia condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's reckless and illegal activities that endanger nuclear safety, particularly the ongoing attacks near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Russia's unlawful occupation of the plant for over two years has rendered it unable to produce electricity and subjected it to increasingly perilous nuclear safety and security conditions. Estonia denounces these deliberate assaults, which violate international law and nuclear safety principles. We commend Director General Grossi and the Agency for their courageous efforts and call for the immediate and unconditional return of the Zaporizhzhia plant to Ukraine's control. Estonia demands the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian nuclear facilities and reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and right to self-defense. We will stand with Ukraine for as long as necessary to ensure justice and accountability for these grave violations.

The deteriorating security environment poses a significant challenge to multilateral cooperation and regional stability. Estonia recognizes the Agency's central role in reinforcing the global nuclear security framework. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Estonia advocates for the universal and effective implementation of the NPT and stresses the importance

of the Agency's safeguards system in mitigating nuclear threats.

Distinguished President,

Estonia supports the use and development of innovative nuclear technologies to help Member States achieve energy security and leverage nuclear science and technologies for socio-economic, medical, health, and environmental benefits. It is essential that the highest standards of safety and security are upheld.

We are grateful for the Agency's support and guidance during the preparations by the Nuclear Energy Working Group. The Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review Mission conducted by the Agency's experts in October 2023 found Estonia well on its way to advancing its nuclear energy program, having carefully assessed the necessary infrastructure requirements.

On June 12, the Estonian Parliament took a significant step by adopting a decision to initiate preparations for introducing nuclear energy in Estonia by establishing the legal framework.

We greatly appreciate the cooperation and support provided by the Agency through its expert missions and Technical Cooperation Programme and much appreciate further cooperation with the Agency's in building our expertise in potential use of nuclear power.

Distinguished President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to express our gratitude for the invaluable work carried out by the Director General and the Secretariat. I urge all countries to continue supporting the Agency in its critical mission.

Thank you, Distinguished President.

Annex 1

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

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President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

We congratulate you, President, on your election and assure you of our full support and cooperation.

The EU attaches great importance to the technical and independent mandate of the IAEA which is captured in the motto “Atoms for Peace and Development”.

We are meeting at a time of multiple crises and serious challenges. We can only overcome them together, by upholding and protecting the rules-based international order, with the UN at its core, and by respecting our obligations and commitments.

It is now more than two and a half years since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the illegal seizure of Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). These are not only flagrant violations of the UN Charter and international law, but also violate the very principles of the IAEA Statute. The EU continues to condemn Russia’s war of aggression in the strongest possible terms.

During these two and a half years, the nuclear safety and security situation at the ZNPP has steadily deteriorated. As the IAEA continues to report, there are serious concerns about off-site

power supply, cooling water, staffing, maintenance and physical protection. The presence of anti-personnel mines in a buffer zone between the facility's internal and external fences is still observed. We are deeply concerned that the Director General's seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict continue to be compromised, either partially or fully, as a result of Russia's war of aggression, and that the IAEA is not able to fully assess whether the five principles established by the Director General are being observed at all times. The seven pillars and the five principles must be respected.

The situation is further aggravated by Russia's deliberate, reckless attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. These attacks are increasing the threat to the safety and security of the ZNPP, and of all Ukraine's nuclear power plants.

We are grateful to the IAEA and its Director General for providing crucial assistance and independent information in these unprecedented circumstances. We commend the courageous work of the IAEA staff and support the IAEA's continued presence on the ground.

Under international law, Ukraine has the right to self-defence and territorial integrity. Russia must fully abide by the order of the International Court of Justice of March 2022 and immediately and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

The EU welcomes the outcome of the Summit on Peace for Ukraine in June this year, also calling for full sovereign control of all Ukrainian Nuclear Power Plants by Ukrainian authorities. We ask all countries to continue supporting a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

It is a key security priority for the EU to ensure that Iran will never acquire a nuclear weapon. The EU remains committed to a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. In this context, we call on all countries to support the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231. We regret that Iran has not taken the necessary steps to return to its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, to which the EU remains committed. Iran's unabated nuclear advances have made a return to the JCPOA increasingly challenging. The risk of a nuclear proliferation crisis in the region is increasing as a result of Iran's escalating nuclear trajectory.

The EU supports the Agency's efforts to obtain progress from Iran on resolving safeguards issues and improving cooperation. It is highly concerning that there has been no progress towards implementing the March 2023 Joint Statement in the past 15 months. It remains essential and urgent that Iran clarifies all outstanding safeguards issues. The June 2024 resolution clearly sets out the steps to be taken should Iran fail to provide the necessary cooperation with the Agency. We call upon the new Iranian government to work with the Agency swiftly and substantially, towards full compliance with its obligations under the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement.

The EU remains gravely concerned about the DPRK's continued development of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions. The DPRK must return to compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, bring into force the Additional Protocol. We urge the DPRK to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without further delay or preconditions. The DPRK cannot and will never have the status of a nuclear weapon State in accordance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The EU also urges the DPRK to engage in meaningful dialogue with all relevant parties to build a basis for sustainable peace and security and to take steps aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. This includes the Agency's return to the DPRK. We are seriously concerned by the expanding military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, which undermines the global non-proliferation regime and represents a flagrant violation of multiple UNSC resolutions.

We take note of Syria's renewed and long over-due engagement with the Agency and welcome the launch of a process since March 2024 of clarification of the outstanding safeguards issues. We expect Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA until its non-compliance has been resolved.

President,

The EU remains a strong supporter of the IAEA's work across its full range of responsibilities, in implementing nuclear safeguards, and strengthening the international nuclear safety and security frameworks.

Crucially, the EU reiterates its firm support for the full, complete, and effective implementation of the NPT across its three pillars and continues to call for its universalisation.

The EU strongly supports the strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system. Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, together with the Additional Protocol, represent the current verification standard under Article III of the NPT. We call for their universalisation without delay. The EU also urges all States, which have not yet done so, to amend or rescind their original standard Small Quantities Protocol and apply the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement in full.

We attach utmost importance to nuclear safety and its continuous improvement, and call on all States to work in close partnership with the IAEA on this matter. The EU has built up an advanced, legally-binding and enforceable nuclear safety legal framework applicable in all EURATOM Member States. The adequate implementation of this framework is a priority and the review services provided by the IAEA to EU Member States make a valuable contribution in this area. The EU will also continue to provide significant support to the IAEA's crucial work in other countries to support nuclear safety. We stress that the highest standards for nuclear safety that can be reasonably achieved, should be implemented and continuously improved.

Given the development of new technologies, such as Small Modular Reactors (SMR), it is particularly important to ensure the highest level of nuclear safety, in accordance with IAEA safety standards. The European Industrial Alliance on SMRs, established by the European Commission in February 2024, may contribute to this goal and advance nuclear safety for SMRs. We take note of the International Conference on SMRs and their Applications in October 2024, organised by the IAEA.

On nuclear security, we welcome the fourth ICONS Conference held in Vienna in May and would like to commend Australia and Kazakhstan for their leadership. The EU will continue to provide significant support for nuclear security activities of the IAEA.

We encourage all IAEA Member States to promote a strong nuclear safety and security culture. We strongly support the international nuclear safety and security conventions and their implementation and universalisation. We appreciate the Agency's continued commitment to maintaining fully applicable and up-to-date Safety Standards and Security Guidance.

President,

The EU and its Member States reaffirm their longstanding commitment to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme. We support the Agency's activities in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology to implement the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Agreement. While it is the sovereign choice of all States to decide on their energy mix and corresponding technologies, we must all work collectively to achieve the 2030 climate target and climate neutrality by 2050. Nuclear technologies can help fight global warming, mitigate its consequences and monitor its impact. Some EU Member States actively contributed to such discussions at the Nuclear Energy Summit that took place in Brussels in March 2024.

The EU and its Member States welcome the IAEA activities that help improve human health, agriculture, food security and water management; combat climate change and its effects; and preserve cultural heritage. We look forward to this year's Scientific Forum on "Atoms4Food" and to the November Ministerial Conference, and will play an active role.

We appreciate the IAEA's strong commitment to gender equality. We encourage the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve gender parity and mainstream a gender perspective in programmes and projects. The EU is proud to be the largest donor to the IAEA's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, supporting an inclusive workforce of both men and women who contribute to and drive global scientific and technological innovation.

In conclusion, let me express our appreciation for the work of Director General Grossi and all staff at the IAEA. Your mission is more essential than ever. You can count on our full support.

Thank you, President.