

National Statement by Finland September 18, 2024 at the 68th IAEA General Conference

Director General Mr. Petri Hakkarainen, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Mr. President,

It is a great pleasure and an honour to be here with you today. I will give some remarks in my national capacity. Finland also aligns itself with the official statement of the European Union which has been published online.

I would like to start by underlining the importance of defending, promoting and further strengthening the rules-based international order, including the global architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. This is even more essential now when the global security situation keeps deteriorating. Russia continues its illegal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and war is raging in Gaza.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty has served the international community well for over five decades and it must be upheld. Its relevance must be secured. The IAEA plays a crucial role in implementing the NPT and nuclear safeguards. Finland has always voiced its full support to the Agency and does so today as well. I commend Director General Grossi and the staff of the IAEA for their independent and professional work.

Nuclear safety and security in Ukraine raises concern amid the Russian aggression. We give our full support to the Agency's work to maintain nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. Finland continues to support it financially. The situation is especially critical at Europe's largest nuclear power facility in Zaporizhzhia, which has been attacked and illegally seized by the Russian Federation. This is unacceptable. Finland demands Russia to immediately withdraw all its military and other unauthorized personnel from the Ukrainian nuclear facilities, cease military action and immediately and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine.

Finland condemns Russia's deliberate attacks on Ukraine's energy and other civilian infrastructure. The disruption of the electricity grid caused by these attacks threatens the safety of all nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

Finland, together with Canada has prepared also this year a resolution on Nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. The resolution expresses strong support for the IAEA's and DG Grossi's efforts. This includes the continued Agency presence at Ukrainian nuclear facilities as well as the IAEA's comprehensive technical assistance to Ukraine. We ask the IAEA member states to support this resolution.

Another source of concern is Iran's lack of cooperation with the IAEA. The Agency has not been able to assure that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. Finland urges Iran to work with the IAEA towards full compliance with its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement obligations and to resolve the outstanding safeguards issues. Regrettably, also the continued nuclear weapons programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains a threat to regional and international peace and security.

We emphasize the importance and essential responsibility of the IAEA in nuclear security. We thank Australia and Kazakhstan for their successful co-chairing of the ICONS Nuclear Security Ministerial Conference in May this year and welcome the co-chairs' summary of the meeting, which should be the guiding document in the years to come. Finland continues to provide financial and in-kind support to the IAEA Nuclear Security activities.

Now turning to nuclear energy: Climate change is a global challenge and nuclear energy is one of the solutions in combatting it. Finland is committed to meeting emission reduction targets and reaching carbon neutrality followed by carbon negativity. Our government is promoting nuclear power including SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) as part of the energy mix. We are renewing the Nuclear Energy Act and other relevant regulations to take into account SMRs and other new developments like heat production. The share of CO₂-free electricity generation in Finland is currently over 90 %, roughly half of this produced by nuclear power and the rest with renewables.

Addressing the challenge of spent nuclear fuel is crucial to maintaining public acceptance for nuclear power. Finland will be the world's first country to start its

deep geological disposal. It has now reached an important milestone – the start of the Trial Run Test of the final disposal facility ONKALO. The purpose is to verify the feasibility of the encapsulation and disposal processes before the start of the actual operation, foreseen for next year.

Together with the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), Finland is implementing an ambitious five-year project to strengthen safeguards implementation in Africa. This project, titled Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa, is co-financed by the EU and Finland. During the first 18 months over 25 African States have already benefitted from the trainings provided by AFCONE and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland (STUK).

As regards nuclear applications, Finland and Ghana will co-chair the IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Co-operation Programme on 26 to 28 November 2024 here in Vienna. The conference will demonstrate the benefits and versatility of nuclear technology. We are aiming at a high level of representation from the IAEA Member States.

It is important for us to promote gender equality in nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Therefore we commend the Agency's strong commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming efforts.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by saying that Finland's three-year term in the Board of Governors is coming to an end after this General Conference. Finland's objective in the IAEA has been, and continues to be also after our term in the Board, to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and to promote safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy and technologies. We continue to strongly support the IAEA's independent expert role in safeguards verification and the promotion of nuclear safety and security worldwide.

I thank you, Mr. President