STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA DELIVERED BY HON. OPHELIA MENSAH HAYFORD, MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AT THE 68TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) GENERAL CONFERENCE HELD IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, FROM 16TH TO 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2024

Mr. President,
Director-General of IAEA,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I join earlier speakers to warmly congratulate you and members of the Bureau for this session on your election, and to commend you for the professional conduct of this meeting so far. My delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

Mr. President,

2. I would like to convey the Government of Ghana's appreciation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and our development partners for their cooperation with Ghana on many levels in the areas of agriculture, health, nuclear energy, industry, environment, radiation and nuclear safety, nuclear security, and human resources development. We look forward to sustaining and strengthening these partnerships.

Mr. President,

3. Implementation of Ghana's Nuclear Power Programme is progressing steadily. Following the completion of the Request for Further Information process last year, and after several discussions with prospective vendors, Ghana signed two Corporation Framework Agreements for a Small Modular Reactor (SMR) and a conventional large reactor this year. Successful negotiations with the two vendors will lead to the country potentially executing two projects concurrently.

4. In relation to this, we wish to highlight the IAEA's support through various Technical Cooperation (TC) Programmes. The TC programmes continually enhance the competences of personnel of the nuclear regulator, owner/operator and the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC) thereby strengthening the Ghana Nuclear Power Programme Organization (GNPPO).

5. In addition, Ghana renewed its bilateral technical cooperation with the United States of America and Japan last year, resulting in agreements and commitments geared towards building the capacity of Ghana's nuclear industry players. These engagements will culminate in the establishment of a Regional Clean Energy Training Centre, a Small Modular Reactor Simulator for Ghana and a Regional Welding Certification Programme for the nuclear industry.

6. Furthermore, Ghana's nuclear programme has also been boosted with academic opportunities received from other advanced nuclear countries like South Korea, China, and Russia.

Mr. President,

7. A nuclear programme requires strong commitment to radiation and nuclear safety, and its continuous improvement, the country has taken steps to improve its regulatory control programme to ensure the protection of humans and the environment from potential hazards. In this regard, Ghana is working towards upgrading and expanding its Secondary Standards Dosimetry Laboratory and enhancing its personal monitoring service as well as the establishment of an Internal Dosimetry Laboratory to complement the radiation safety infrastructure.

8. Additionally, capacity building activities in radioactive waste management are ongoing for staff of stakeholder organisations on the Borehole Disposal concept and in preparation for nuclear power.

9. The Nuclear Regulatory Authority continues to strengthen its robust regime relying on our national experience as well as experiences and expertise from our international partners like the IAEA, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission (USNRC), the European Commission through the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC), Regulatory Cooperation Forum (RCF) and Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies of Africa to develop the capacity of NRA staff and its management systems.

10. Furthermore, through collaboration of several state institutions, the radon gas monitoring programme initiated for workplaces is being extended to homes and schools to ensure public safety. Awareness programmes have also been rolled out to educate the public on the health effects of radon. The development of a national radon map for the country is also under discussion as part of the national radon monitoring programme.

Mr. President,

11. Under the auspices of the Agency, Ghana received experts from the National Electrostatics Corporation of USA in April 2024 to assist the Accelerator team with the optimization of the Ghana Pelletron Accelerator to increase the ion beam transmission. With this improvement in performance, the accelerator facility is ready for more research by universities and research institutions.

12. The implementation of the NUTEC Plastics initiative in Ghana is progressing, with some Ghanaians completing training in July 2024 in Tunisia on marine microplastic monitoring. Ghana is scheduled to receive an Attenuated Total Reflectance-Fourier-Transformed Infra-Red (ATR-FTIR) system to enhance marine microplastic monitoring. It is envisaged that this equipment will enable Ghana to contribute to the subject of marine plastic pollution.

13. Again, the National Isotope Hydrology Laboratory continues to benefit from training opportunities under the RAF7021 Project of the IAEA. A student supported by the IAEA to pursue her master's degree at the UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft, Netherlands, successfully defended her thesis and is expected back to join the laboratory.

Mr. President,

14. To improve cancer care in Ghana, the National Cancer Control Plan is earmarked to be reviewed to align it with the revised Non-Communicable Diseases Policy and Strategy of Ghana, 2022-2030. We would be grateful for IAEA's assistance to conduct an imPACT mission to review the Cancer Control Plan.

15. The National Health Insurance Scheme has also recently been expanded to include breast, cervical and childhood cancers. This will increase access to cancer care, especially for the underprivileged in society.

16. To enhance training of radiation medicine professionals locally, we have commenced a Global Medical Physics Training and Development Programme. This is a collaboration between academic and clinical institutions in Ghana and the University of Pennsylvania, USA. It entails training, collaborative research and opportunities for knowledge sharing.

17. Through collaboration with the IAEA, Ghana is also working to establish two new postgraduate programmes at the School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences, in

MPhil Radiobiology and MPhil Applied Human Nutrition and Nuclear Techniques to train students from Ghana and the sub-region.

Mr. President,

18. Ghana appreciates the Agency's efforts to assist Member States in transitioning from radioactive sources to machine sources for radiation processing. We are thankful for the opportunity to engage at the Regional Meeting of High-Level Representatives on the adoption of electron beam and x-ray technologies for sustainable socio-economic advancement in Africa. Following this meeting, Ghana is actively pursuing the replacement of the Gamma Irradiation Facility at the GAEC with an Electron Beam Facility. We welcome the continued support from the Agency and other donor countries in this endeavour.

19. In line with this initiative, a feasibility study for establishing a commercial Electron Beam Facility is also ongoing.

20. Ghana is enthusiastic about the Atoms4Food Initiative by the IAEA and FAO. We view this initiative as transformative for agriculture and food systems in Africa. Additionally, we are pleased with the leadership at TC-Africa, which is integrating various thematic areas of nuclear applications in food and agriculture, promoting sustainable food and nutrition security as well as food safety across the continent. We are confident this approach will empower Ghana and other Member States to enhance our agricultural and food systems.

Mr. President,

21. Ghana looks forward to co-chairing with Finland the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and Technical Cooperation Programme in November 2024 and strongly encourages Member States to actively participate in the conference at the Ministerial level and to involve their development institutions in their preparation and participation in the conference.

22. In concluding, I would like to assure you of Ghana’s continued support for the IAEA in the discharge of its statutory duties. I would also like to request the Agency’s continued support for Ghana towards the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology for sustainable development for the benefit of humanity.

I thank you, Mr. President.