

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador HAM Sang Wook,
President of the 68th IAEA General Conference
16 September 2024, Vienna**

Excellencies,
Director-General Grossi,
Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Far East Group for their encouragement and support in nominating me for the office of President of the General Conference. Let me also sincerely thank Member States for the confidence you have shown by electing me to serve as your President. I assume this responsibility with a heavy heart, having witnessed the disruption of the Vienna Spirit. Nevertheless, I remain convinced that consensus is the only path forward to achieve our common goals. I sincerely hope that by the conclusion of this august General Conference, we will have accomplished our work through cooperation and shared commitment.

I am grateful to the former President, the Ambassador of Thailand, H.E. Vilawan Mangklatanukul, for demonstrating exemplary leadership during last year's General Conference, and I look forward to working with all of you for a fruitful outcome. Furthermore, I would like to commend Director General Grossi, now serving his second term with remarkable success, for his tireless efforts, leadership, and commitment to the nuclear agenda. My sincere appreciation also goes to the Secretariat for their consistent and invaluable support, both for this meeting and for the broader mission of Atoms for Peace and Development.

It is with great honor and a profound sense of duty that I stand before you today as the President of this esteemed General Conference, determined to

do my part to further the IAEA's unique contributions to peace, development, and prosperity throughout the world.

The significance of the Agency's work is exemplified by Korea's exceptional journey in the field of nuclear energy. Since joining the Agency as a founding member in 1956, we have strived to advance nuclear energy and technology for both national reconstruction and economic development, with the invaluable support of the Agency and international community. Today, the Republic of Korea ranks fifth globally in nuclear power generation with 26 reactors in operation. And we are now one of six countries equipped with the capability to export nuclear reactors and technology. This is matched by our unwavering commitment to nonproliferation and the safe and secure use of nuclear technology.

The Republic of Korea's evolution from a recipient of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation program to a donor country underscores the dramatic change in the global nuclear landscape. Having benefited from international cooperation, we are now in a position to give back and share our knowledge and resources worldwide. As such, Korea's story is not solely our own; it is a shared achievement of the international nuclear community, the IAEA, and all Member States.

As we convene here today, the role of nuclear energy has never been more critical. The world faces unprecedented challenges—climate change, increasing electricity demand driven by technological advancements like AI, and concerns over energy security. Nuclear power is an essential part of the solution. It offers a reliable, zero-carbon source of energy for meeting our collective climate goals and ensuring a stable energy supply for future generations.

Furthermore, technological developments are expanding the scope and impact of nuclear applications throughout the world: from providing critical cancer treatment and giving hope to those in need, to protecting our environment and ecosystems by monitoring and reducing pollution, defending humans and animals against emerging diseases, and enhancing food security and agricultural productivity to ensure a sustainable future.

As we embrace the potential of nuclear technology as a pathway to prosperity, however, we must also recognize the paramount importance of maintaining the highest standards of safeguards, safety, and security. These are not merely technical requirements; they are the foundation of the trust and confidence that underpin the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. They ensure that nuclear technology remains a force for good, contributing to the well-being of all humankind.

This General Conference convenes at a pivotal moment. We have before us an agenda full of significant issues that underline the urgency of addressing non-proliferation concerns, fostering the conditions for the adoption of next-generation SMRs, and ensuring robust nuclear safety and security in response to the global expansion of nuclear technology. The decisions we make and the actions we take in the days ahead will have far-reaching implications. It is therefore imperative that we approach our discussions with the Vienna Spirit of compromise and cooperation. Only through collective action and a shared commitment to our common goals can we address the complex challenges that lie before us.

Thus, let us seize this opportunity to reaffirm our dedication to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, to strengthen our collaborative efforts, and to advance our shared vision of a safer, more prosperous world.

Thank you.

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