



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

**68th General Conference
Vienna, 17 September 2024**

**Statement delivered by H.E. Giorgio Silli,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy**

Mr President,

At the outset, let me express my pleasure in attending the General Conference and allow me to congratulate you on your election.

Before starting my speech, I would like to express Italy's full solidarity with Austria and the other countries in the region so affected by the recent weather events.

Italy aligns itself with the official EU statement available online. I will add some remarks in my national capacity.

First of all, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to commend Director General Grossi and his staff for their work over the past year. Italy strongly appreciates the crucial role that the Agency is playing in these increasingly difficult circumstances.

I also join those who have preceded me in welcoming the Cook Islands and the Federal Republic of Somalia as new members to the IAEA family.

Mr President,

The illegal, unjustifiable and unprovoked Russian war of aggression against Ukraine not only continues to cause huge civilian casualties, but it also threatens a nuclear accident at the European borders. DG Grossi's recent visit to Zaporizhzhia

(ZNPP) has showed that the overall nuclear safety and security situation at the ZNPP remains precarious and fragile. We stress that the IAEA Director General's "*seven indispensable pillars*" and the "*five concrete principles*" must be observed in full respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Therefore, we reiterate our demand that the Russian Federation withdraw its military and enable the only legitimate Ukrainian authorities to gain control of the site.

Italy commends the ongoing efforts undertaken by the IAEA in all Ukrainian nuclear sites and DG Grossi's constant commitment to address these challenges. Italy has promptly offered financial support to the Agency for the extraordinary needs arising from these crucial undertakings and we are ready to confirm our support this year.

Mr President,

Italy has long been a staunch supporter of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme and still believes that a restored JCPoA must remain a top priority for the international community. For this reason, Italy supports and commends the Agency for continuing to perform its monitoring and verification activities. However, Iran's lack of cooperation with the IAEA and its continued enrichment of uranium remain a matter of deep concern for the Agency and the whole international Community. We urge once again Iran to implement its obligations under the JCPoA without delay and to fully cooperate with IAEA to allow it to freely carry out its verification and monitoring activities.

The DPRK's ballistic missile and nuclear weapons programmes are in blatant violation of relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. It is necessary for the DPRK to fully comply with its international obligations and refrain from conducting further nuclear tests: such reckless actions will not gain to the DPRK the status of a nuclear weapon State or any special status whatsoever. We call on Pyongyang to accept offers of dialogue from all interested parties to achieve denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. We commend the Agency for its readiness to return on-site for performing its essential verification role, as soon as conditions will allow. We are also increasingly concerned by the enhanced military cooperation and unlawful arms transfers between the DPRK and Russia.

The IAEA's system of safeguards remains crucial for the non-proliferation architecture and for our security. In this regard, the Comprehensive Safeguards

Agreements, together with the Additional Protocols represent the current verification standard and we believe their universalization should be pursued without delay.

Mr President,

Nuclear safety and security are among the priorities of the G7 Italian Presidency, and we are committed, together with partners, to promoting the full implementation by all States of the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, in line with IAEA standards and guidance.

Italy is party to all main international conventions in the field of nuclear safety, actively supporting the IAEA in this matter and calling on all States that have or intend to develop a nuclear power program to adhere to the relevant international instruments and cooperate with the Agency.

We remain fully committed to achieving an improved international nuclear security environment, sustaining the central role of the IAEA in this framework and encouraging all Member States to fulfil their respective responsibilities.

Mr President,

Italy highly values the technical assistance and cooperation programmes implemented by the Agency and will renew in 2025 its full contribution of more than 3 million euro to the Technical Cooperation Fund. We reiterate our support for the IAEA's flagship initiatives (among which Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics, Atoms4Food and ZODIAC), as key contributions for advancing the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). Italy, in particular, stresses the importance of internationally coordinated actions to build more resilient, sustainable and inclusive agricultural and food systems, in full coordination with the IAEA's key role. We are particularly glad that this forward-looking effort is developed in joint cooperation with the FAO and represents a central theme of the ongoing General Conference.

In the same vein, Italy reiterates the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in the STEM sector, advocating all policies and instruments to reach this goal. We concretely welcome the launch of the new edition of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship Programme in July, as well as the Lise Meitner initiative aimed to level the playing field.

We are engaged to advancing research on fusion and innovative fission systems. Italy is co-hosting together with the IAEA the Inaugural Ministerial meeting of the *World Fusion Energy Group* on 6 November in Rome. The meeting will give us the opportunity to support research and innovation in the energy sector.

Furthermore, several major Italian institutions and companies are at the forefront in researching on nuclear fusion. ENEA leads the Italian group of the European Fusion Programme, coordinating the activities carried out by twenty parties, including universities, research institutes and industries, in the EUROfusion consortium.

To conclude, Mr President, rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation throughout this week. We are ready to work in a constructive way for a successful Conference.

Thank you.