



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

New Zealand National Statement

Mr President,

Congratulations on your election and may you be assured of New Zealand's full cooperation at this Conference. Allow me to extend a warm welcome to the newest members of the IAEA, the Cook Islands and Somalia. The Cook Islands is the latest Pacific Island Country to join the IAEA in recent years, demonstrating growing interest in the IAEA's work in our region. New Zealand supports the IAEA's expanding engagement in the Pacific and we hope this uptick in engagement continues.

Each year, the General Conference presents Member States with an opportunity to reflect on, and agree, the IAEA's priorities to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and safely and securely realise the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology. It is testament to the Agency's work that demand from Member States for the Agency's services, advice, and support remains high and, indeed, continues to grow.

We therefore deeply regret, Mr President, that Russia's war of aggression and illegal invasion of Ukraine has caused such extraordinary risks to nuclear safety and security that the Agency is forced to divert significant amounts of its attention and resources to address the situation. Russia's war of aggression, and its seizure and occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) significantly raises the risk of a nuclear accident or incident. New Zealand is deeply concerned that the Director General's five concrete principles are not being adhered to, and the seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security have been repeatedly compromised. We again call on Russia to cease occupying ZNPP, as has been called for in repeated Board and GC resolutions, and to withdraw fully from Ukraine's sovereign territory, in compliance with UN resolutions.

Mr President,

New Zealand remains deeply troubled by ongoing threats to nuclear non-proliferation. Iran's enrichment activities have long posed a mounting nuclear proliferation risk and have no credible civilian purpose. As a strong advocate of the global non-proliferation regime, New Zealand regrets Iran's continued failure to address outstanding safeguards issues and comply with its legal obligations under its Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement (CSA). Iran's unwillingness to resolve these issues means the Agency is unable to provide Member States the necessary assurances that Iran's expanding nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. This disregards our shared interest in protecting and strengthening the international safeguards system and is a destabilising factor in its region's security situation.

At a time of increased tension and instability in the region, Iran also not implementing JCPOA nuclear-related commitments has resulted in a loss in continuity of knowledge by the IAEA about Iran's nuclear activities. This will complicate any future nuclear agreement.

Mr President

We have already seen the damage that a nuclear breakout can cause. The DPRK's nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery constitute a clear and grave threat to regional and international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. We again urge the DPRK to refrain from further escalatory actions and return to diplomacy. It is critical that all Member States continue to press the DPRK to take steps in this direction, including by adhering fully to international sanctions related to DPRK. In this respect, New Zealand is gravely concerned by the transfer of ballistic missiles from the DPRK to Russia. These transfers violate UN Security Council resolutions and must cease.

Mr President,

The challenge that such situations pose to the international safeguards system and the work of IAEA must not weaken our collective commitment to non-proliferation. In this regard, it is clear that the CSA and the Additional Protocol are the current verification standard. New Zealand calls for universal adherence to the Additional Protocol and we

furthermore urge relevant States to amend or rescind their Small Quantities Protocol and sign and ratify the Additional Protocol as a matter of priority.

In addition, we and many other states have signed onto other obligations to complement and supplement the non-proliferation regime. In New Zealand's case, these include the Treaty of Rarotonga, which established our region's nuclear weapon-free zone, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We encourage others to do the same.

Mr President,

While New Zealand has chosen not to use nuclear power, we recognise the role nuclear technology can have for attaining the SDGs, including in our own Pacific region. Nevertheless, we continue to have concerns about the sustainability and risks of the use of nuclear power. It is New Zealand's firm conviction that all Member States developing and using nuclear power must apply the highest standards of safety, security and safeguards through all stages of the fuel cycle – including transport and waste management. This applies equally to innovative reactor designs such as small and medium-sized modular reactors and transportable nuclear power plants.

New Zealand is a coastal state near to shipment routes of radioactive material. As such, we strongly support coastal and other interested states receiving advance notification of such shipments and value ongoing dialogue and cooperation between coastal and shipping states in implementing the voluntary best practice guidelines concerning communication protocols.

Mr President,

We appreciate the Agency's commitment to a permanent monitoring presence at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station for the duration of the ALPS-treated water release. We welcome the Agency's role in providing the international community authoritative reassurance that the release complies with relevant international safety standards. In this respect, New Zealand notes that the release is a significant issue of interest to the Pacific, particularly as a consequence of our region's traumatic nuclear legacy. We therefore appreciate Japan's, and the Agency's, sustained efforts to ensure transparent and open communication with the region and we welcome their continued commitment to dialogue and information-sharing.

Allow me to close by reaffirming our support for the work of the Director General and Agency staff and the critical role the IAEA plays in the multilateral system. New Zealand repeats our call on all Member States to lend the Agency their full support and cooperation as it undertakes this important work.

Thank you.

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