

Speech
by Mr. Alexey Likhachev,
head of the Russian delegation,
Rosatom's Director General

at the 68th session of the IAEA General Conference
(Vienna, September 16, 2024)

Dear Mr. Chairman, please accept congratulations to you and all officers of the Conference on your election!

Mr. Director General, congratulations on the start of the Conference!

Your Excellences!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

A significant event took place 70 years ago - the first nuclear power plant on the planet was commissioned in the city of Obninsk, USSR. As Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, noted in his address on the occasion of this memorable date, "the commissioning of the Obninsk NPP gave a start to the creation of nuclear power in our country and far beyond its borders".

The IAEA, the main international organization in this field, has contributed a lot to the development of atoms for peace. The Agency remains within its professional and technical mandate in the current challenging environment. And that is the key to its high standing on the planet.

We are proud of the fact that the Soviet Union was at the origin of the IAEA. All these years, our principled position has remained unchanged: we have been supporting, and we will continue to support the Agency's activities, with both expert and financial resources.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

The past year has become a meaningful one for the global nuclear industry. The trends that have been developing for a number of decades have reached the stage of real practical implementation.

I have in mind, first of all, the two topics associated with the future of nuclear power in the horizon of the twenty-first century. These are nuclear fuel cycle closure and small modular reactors. Both of these areas are being successfully implemented in the Russian Federation.

As part of the flagship project "PRORYV", we are constructing a Generation IV power cluster in Russia with the 300 MW BREST Fast Reactor with the on-site closed nuclear fuel cycle. I emphasize that this is a comprehensive solution that will allow the multiple use of spent nuclear fuel. Such an approach removes all the problems related to managing spent nuclear fuel, increases the environmental friendliness of nuclear energy, expands significantly its resource base and enhances economic attractiveness.

We started testing of equipment to fabricate innovative nuclear fuel for the BREST Reactor last March. Mr. Rafael Grossi, IAEA Director General, participated in the ceremony.

The BN-800 Fast Neutron Reactor in operation at the Beloyarsk NPP began after-burning of minor actinides for the first time. We obtained a favorable conclusion of the state environmental expert review for the BN-1200 Unit under construction.

Foreign partners are increasingly interested in collaboration to create the Generation IV nuclear power. Last year we signed a comprehensive programme of long-term cooperation in the field of fast reactors and nuclear fuel cycle closure with our Chinese friends. Our Indian friends visited the site of the PRORYV project last May.

Now, a few words about small modular reactors.

The world's first export contract for a small nuclear power plant is concluded last May. It will consist of 6 units. We start creating infrastructure for the future NPP. We keep supporting our Uzbek colleagues in developing their regulatory system.

We are working on similar arrangements with a number of other countries.

In Russia, in addition to the world's only Floating Nuclear Power Plant Akademik Lomonosov, we are building four more powerful Floating Nuclear Power Units. We continue to work on the development of the Russia's first ground-based small NPP with RITM-200N reactors.

We note the IAEA's systematic work on small modular reactors and are preparing for the Agency's first Conference on this topic to be held this October.

Dear colleagues!

We continue to fulfill all the obligations under our international agreements. In spite of unprecedented illegal sanctions, none of our construction projects has stopped.

Just a few words about the past year's results.

The Belarus NPP was put into commercial operation. We are constructing nuclear power plants in Türkiye, Egypt, Bangladesh, Hungary, Iran as planned: nuclear fuel was delivered to the Rooppur NPP, and first concrete was poured at the El Dabaa NPP Unit 4. We continue to provide assistance in the construction of Chinese and Indian NPPs; we consistently supply long cycle manufacture equipment.

A research reactor vessel was delivered and installed at Bolivia's Centre for Nuclear Technology, Research and Development.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Let's take a look at the results of work in the Russian nuclear industry.

First criticality will be achieved at Unit 1 of the Kursk NPP-2 by the end of the year. First concrete at Unit 3 of the Leningrad NPP-2 was poured. Engineering surveys have been completed at the Smolensk NPP-2 and we are about to start construction works.

We continue developing Russia's unique nuclear-powered fleet; we have started constructing a new icebreaker called Leningrad.

We are building Europe's largest radiopharmaceutical plant in Obninsk.

Human resources training for the global nuclear industry was brought to a fundamentally new level. We have established "Obninsk Tech", a global centre for international nuclear education. Its infrastructure will make it possible to bring together up to 10,000 people at a time at various events participating in scientific, educational, or youth activities.

Dear colleagues!

A few words about the Russian Zaporozhskaya NPP (ZNPP).

First.

Nuclear safety and security of the ZNPP is our absolute priority. We ensure sustainable heat, water, and power supply to the plant. We carry out all equipment maintenance operations. The plant's staff are experienced, professional. To sum it up, we are ready to restart the Zaporozhskaya NPP as soon as the military situation allows.

I would also like to note that we place great emphasis on the development of social infrastructure of Energodar, the town of nuclear workers.

Second.

We highly appreciate the IAEA's contribution to the safety of the ZNPP. We provide living and working conditions for the Agency's Mission at the plant. The next regular rotation of IAEA experts – as it has already been mentioned – took place about a fortnight ago. It was headed by Mr. Rafael Grossi, Director General. He had the opportunity to personally assess the situation at the plant for the fifth time.

Third.

The Kiev regime resumed attacks on the Zaporozhskaya NPP, which has not been the case since November 2022. Last April, the Ukrainian armed forces launched a series of strikes at site facilities, including the Power Units. Last August, one of the cooling towers was seriously damaged after a Ukrainian drone explosion. Consequences of the strikes were confirmed the by IAEA experts.

This list is not exhaustive.

Moreover, the geography of provocations is expanding. In August this year, the Kursk NPP got under an intensive attack by the Ukrainian armed forces. Ukrainian authorities have made no secret of their intentions to seize it by force.

Let's call it just the way it is. Such reckless behavior by the Kiev regime poses a threat not only to individual Russian nuclear facilities, but also to the development of the entire global nuclear industry. It requires an adequate response, including from international organizations.

Together with the Russian military, we have been doing and we will continue to do our best to ensure safety and security of Russian NPPs.

Dear Mr. Chairman!

Dear Mr. Director General!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Next year will mark the 80th anniversary of the Russian nuclear industry. Over the past decades, our country has made a great progress. The world's first NPP was commissioned. The first Nuclear Icebreaker and Floating NPP were commissioned. The world's first commercial Fast Reactor has been constructed. The world's first magnetic plasma confinement device – tokamak – has been developed.

But there's even more for us to do.

The world needs nuclear power to achieve zero CO₂ emissions. This a quote from the IAEA's landmark statement on the margins of last year's UN Climate Change Conference. This is the global consensus that the Director General spoke about from this rostrum. And we couldn't agree more with these words. We are sure that we will be able to achieve this ambitious goal only by joining forces in a professional and depoliticized manner.