

STATEMENT

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Latchesar Kostov

Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria

61th General Conference of the IAEA

Vienna, September 18 – 22, 2017

Madam President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria and on my behalf I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 61th Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I avail myself of this opportunity to assure you of the full support and cooperation of Bulgarian delegation in the fulfillment of your important and responsible task during the session deliberations. I am convinced that, under your guidance, we will be able to reach a desirable conclusion through our work this week and the Conference will contribute to the achievement of the IAEA's main objectives: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, enhancement of nuclear safety, and peaceful application of atomic energy.

It is my pleasure to welcome Grenada as a new Member State of the IAEA.

Allow me also to congratulate Mr. Amano for his reelection as Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Bulgarian delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Estonia on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries.

Madam President,

Distinguished delegates,

Bulgaria is committed to the efforts of the international community for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and our policy aims to strengthening the global security and stability. We consider the IAEA Safeguards mechanism as a key instrument for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Bulgaria calls for the universalization of the NPT and the IAEA Additional Protocol and we believe the Agency Safeguards activities play an indispensable role in the implementation of the NPT.

Bulgaria reaffirms its full support to the establishment of a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East. We encourage all States in the region to renew their efforts for convening a Conference with the participation of all stakeholders. We regret the decision of the Arab States to include the item "Israeli Nuclear Capabilities" in the IAEA General Conference Agenda. Bulgaria firmly believes that only through the spirit of trust and cooperation we can reach the desired consensus and make progress towards implementing the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

Madam President,

Bulgaria categorically condemns the repeated nuclear tests and missile launches by the DPRK, which lead to further escalation of the tensions in the region and undermine world peace and security. We call on the DPRK to return to full compliance with all its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations and to provide the Agency with prompt access to individuals, documentation, equipment and facilities and to abandon all its existing nuclear and ballistic missile activities, including its uranium enrichment program, in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Madam President,

Distinguished delegates,

We would like to congratulate the Director General and the Secretariat for the preparation of the 2016 Annual Report. We appreciate the fact, stated in the Report, that the Agency continues to present technical information about the role that nuclear power, as a low carbon energy source, can play in meeting the climate–energy challenge and in contributing to sustainable development.

With respect to nuclear safety, we would like to encourage the Agency to continue its review of the safety standards by incorporating the lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi accident. This is the way the conclusions from the Report of the Director General on this issue will be reflected completely in the Agency's documents and will contribute to enhance safety level worldwide.

Regarding non-electrical applications of nuclear power, it is important to be mentioned that IAEA was able to provide Member States in the European region with emergency assistance in response to the outbreak of lumpy skin disease in 2016. My country was affected by this disease past year and the prompt response of the Agency prevented possible unfavorable development of the issue.

Madam President,

In this year, the Bulgarian Nuclear Regulator - the Nuclear Regulatory Agency celebrated its 60th anniversary. The Celebration Forum, held under the title 60 Years Nuclear Regulatory Agency - 60 years Commitment to Safety, was attended by members of the Bulgarian Parliament, high Governmental officials, representatives from the IAEA, Joint Institute for Nuclear Research Dubna, foreign regulators, representatives from the nuclear sector in Bulgaria and from other countries. We are proud that, for 60 years, Bulgaria has been working successfully in all directions of the peaceful use of atomic energy. Experts from NRA participate in Advisory Groups of the

IAEA, different technical committees of the Agency, in the work of WENRA, HERCA, ENSREG, Forum of WWER Regulators, etc. NRA is respected and sought-after partner both by other countries' regulatory bodies and leading expert organizations.

Regarding the nuclear energy activities in my country, during the last year, I would like to mention some of the most important for the future development of this sector.

In November this year, the license for operation of Unit 5 of Kozloduy NPP is expiring. Four years ago the Program for Long Term Operation was developed by the NPP, and last year the results of implementation of this program together with the application for license renewal were submitted to the NRA. The process of review and assessment of the documentation is in the final phase now and is expected to be completed at the end of October this year. According to the Bulgarian nuclear act the term of the new license is up to ten years.

Another important task is the construction of the National Disposal Facility for Low- and Intermediate Level Radioactive Waste. This is set out in the updated National Strategy for Management of Spent Nuclear Fuel and Radioactive Waste by 2030. After issuance of the permission by the Bulgarian Nuclear Regulatory Agency, a symbolic groundbreaking of the future National Disposal Facility was performed at the Site Radiana, near the Kozloduy NPP. The project is funded through a Grant Agreement by Kozloduy International Decommissioning Support Fund, administered by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The value of project's first phase is over 71 million Euros and is planned to be completed in 2021.

In close cooperation with the IAEA and in fulfilment of its commitments to the Agency, my country hosted this year several events in different areas of nuclear energy applications. Under the Technical Cooperation Program, the following regional

workshops were conducted in Bulgaria: Education and Training Review Service, including self-assessment; Strengthening Inspection Capabilities of Regulatory Authorities; Strengthening Capabilities for Radionuclide Measurement in the Environment; Strengthening Radiation Protection of Patients and Medical Exposure Control. These events were attended by a large number of Bulgarian and foreign trainees which contributes to successful dissemination of the knowledge available to the IAEA.

Nuclear Regulatory Agency, together with Kozloduy NPP, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Environment took part in the International Exercise for Responding to a Nuclear Accident ConvEx-3, which was organized by the IAEA this year.

According to the Arrangement signed on the last General Conference between the IAEA and the Bulgarian Nuclear Regulatory Agency, in June this year, we hosted the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting on European and Central Asian Nuclear Safety Network.

Another important IAEA's event, on which my country was a counterpart, was a Country-Level Evaluation and Audit Project, which the Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted in March this year in Bulgaria. We provided full support to the Agency's team in order to assure transparency and openness in our collaborative activities.

Madam President

In 2013 and 2016, in Bulgaria were conducted Full Scope IRRS and Follow Up IRRS missions of the IAEA. Taking in account the results from these missions and wishing to expand the use of services of the IAEA, Bulgaria invited Integrated Review Service for Radiation Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and

Remediation Programs – ARTEMIS mission, which is scheduled for the first half of 2018.

Madam President,

At the end of 2017 the current cycle of the Technical cooperation program will be finalized. In accordance with its Country Framework Program's priorities, Bulgaria participated in this cycle with national projects in the field of nuclear medicine, agriculture and nuclear applications. Together with the Agency's experts we are working to fulfill the relevant Working Plans and to achieve the expected outcomes. Bulgaria actively participates in the European regional projects as well. Large number of Bulgarian specialists and scientists from operating organizations, the regulatory body, technical support organizations and different institutes attended seminars, training courses, technical meetings, conferences and scientific forums organized by the IAEA.

Our understanding continues to be that the Agency's Technical Cooperation Program is a major tool for supporting the efforts of Member States to address the priority issues in human health, food and agriculture, water and environment, industry etc. The Program also helps Member States to identify and meet future energy needs, and to improve the nuclear safety and security worldwide.

Madam President,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Bulgaria will continue to support the IAEA activities in promoting the international cooperation in the field of the peaceful use of atomic energy and for the application of the Safeguards. Saying this I am also expressing our confidence in the work of the Secretariat and its Director General.

Thank you, Madam President.