

*Statement by
H.E. Mr. Keith Azzopardi
Ambassador & Permanent Representative
of Malta
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Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you Mr. President, on your election as President of the 59th Session of the IAEA General Conference and to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation to successfully accomplish the important work before us.

I would also like to warmly welcome the applications for membership of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and Turkmenistan.

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. The following statement is made in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

Malta remains strongly committed to the NPT and fully supports all actions aimed at ensuring the fulfillment of its objectives, being; the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, the promotion of co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in the furthering of general and complete disarmament.

Indeed, the NPT represents the only binding commitment in a multilateral Treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Unfortunately, the disarmament pillar of the NPT has not produced significant results. Legitimacy of the Treaty needs to be safeguarded by

ensuring a balanced and gradual approach in the implementation of its three mutually reinforcing pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We are also a vocal supporter towards the Treaty's universalisation and in this regard, Malta calls upon non-State Parties to reconsider their position and accede to the Treaty without any delay.

This year's General Conference is a symbolic one as it takes place just a few months following the NPT Review Conference. It is with certain disappointment that we recognize the lack of agreement on a final document at the said Review Conference that could in particular have furthered negotiations towards the setting up of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Malta, being strategically situated in the centre of the Mediterranean continues to follow closely the events unfolding in the Southern Mediterranean and believes that the furthering of non-proliferation and disarmament efforts in this region would be of importance not only to the region itself, but to the whole international community. We take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Jaakko Laajava for his relentless efforts in his role as Facilitator in seeking to promote progress in negotiations during the past years. We deeply regret that the Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, planned for 2012, has not yet been convened. We strongly believe that despite the lack of tangible progress, the goals of the 1995 Resolution remain valid to date. We therefore call upon States to engage in constructive dialogue and to work in good faith towards achieving tangible progress in this regard.

Mr. President,

The IAEA has a difficult and challenging task in ensuring that nuclear power is only used for peaceful purposes. In undertaking its role of international nuclear inspectorate, the IAEA provides the international community – through effective multilateralism and its safeguards system - with the necessary peace of mind by confirming that States are honouring their international obligations. In this respect, Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol are indispensable tools in the IAEA's verification work and Malta calls upon States that have not yet done so to sign and put into force these verification tools which act as confidence-building measures to the international community.

The notion of nuclear safety and security, which is another central area in the IAEA's work, should not be limited to land systems but should also be extended to transport networks, in particular maritime transport. Malta, as an island state and a leading Maritime Flag State, has a particular interest in ensuring that adequate communication and the highest safety standards are followed whilst at sea. The effect of an accident at sea would be devastating and possibly permanent, with a high risk of contamination of the ecological and natural sea environment.

Mr. President,

Malta welcomes the historic agreement reached on 14 July between the E3/EU+3 and Iran on a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We express particular appreciation to the coordinating role played by the EU High Representative in the negotiations leading to this agreement. We welcome the planned implementation of an Additional Protocol as foreseen in the JCPOA which together with the full and timely implementation of the Roadmap, will bring about the necessary clarifications concerning Iran's nuclear programme, in conformity with NPT principles. Malta fully supports the IAEA's central role in verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA. We further welcome the constructive approach shown by Iran and believe that Iran's cooperation with the Agency and clarification of Iran's outstanding issues, including Possible Military Dimensions, will lead to an improvement of regional and global relations with Iran and will in turn contribute to a more stable and secure region in the Middle East.

Mr. President,

Malta remains deeply concerned with the situation in Syria and its failure to remedy its non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement. The situation has become further alarming with the presence of terrorist networks operating in the country. The unpredictable nature of the ongoing conflict complicates further the IAEA's verification capabilities. Malta calls on Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA in connection with all unresolved issues and to bring into force an Additional Protocol without delay.

Furthermore, the continued serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) must be condemned. Malta condemned the nuclear test of February 2013 which was yet another provocative action aimed at raising regional tensions. Malta calls upon the DPRK to comply fully, unconditionally and without delay to the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and IAEA General Conference Resolutions.

Mr. President,

The international community is increasingly facing new security challenges and in this respect States have an obligation to ensure that weapons grade nuclear material does not fall into the hands of terrorists. The securing of vulnerable nuclear material and its non-proliferation is of the utmost importance for the maintenance of global peace, safety and security.

In all our discussions this week and in fulfilling our commitments derived from the NPT, we must and cannot forget the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Malta fully supports this initiative championed by Austria which reached a climax at the Vienna Conference last year. The support given by so many States is an important sign that many of us here share this concern. The short and long term consequences of the use of nuclear weapons are far higher and more serious than we could ever envisage. The humanitarian dimension should thus remain a central component in our non-proliferation and disarmament discussions as we move closer to a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

The work of the Agency under the framework of the Technical Cooperation Programme is valuable and important. Malta's participation in this programme, both at a national and regional level, has been a most positive one. In the past years, Malta has implemented national projects in the fields of radiotherapy for medical purposes and cultural heritage and has participated in various regional training programmes. This year Malta hosted an IRRS mission. Following which, a number of recommendations were made which will assist in developing Malta's

radiation regulatory framework infrastructure. A plan of action is currently being discussed. We would like to thank the Agency for all the assistance and technical support and look forward to participate in other programmes in the future.

Mr. President,

To conclude, allow me to reiterate Malta's continuing support for the activities of the Agency and the central work it is carrying out in a multitude of fora. I augur to all delegations a most successful Conference based on cooperation in pursuit of our common goals.

Thank you.