



## European Union

### Statement on the occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors Vienna, 14-18 September 2020

#### Agenda item 5: Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety

Madame Chair,

1. I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. [The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey<sup>§</sup>, the Republic of North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland<sup>+</sup>, Serbia\*, Albania\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Liechtenstein<sup>+</sup>, Norway<sup>+</sup>, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and San Marino.]
2. *The EU thanks the Director General for the report on “Nuclear and Radiation Safety” as contained in document GOV/2020/35-GC(64)/7.*
3. Maintaining nuclear safety and security high on the agenda of the IAEA remains a priority for the European Union and its Member States. We attach great importance to the continuous improvement and enhancement of standards of nuclear safety, not only within the territory of the EU but also across neighbouring regions and worldwide. The increase in new nuclear power programmes and use of radiation technologies requires continued efforts, active engagement and international collaboration in order to reflect on and effectively address present and future challenges and opportunities that go hand in hand with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Complacency must always be avoided
4. The EU's unwavering commitment to nuclear safety is also demonstrated by its financial contributions allocating € 325 million over the period 2014-2020 in support of third countries to establish, improve and promote high levels of nuclear safety, radiation protection and safeguards. One of the many examples is our continued work with neighbouring countries in conducting the 'stress tests', aimed to identifying necessary safety upgrades, share best practice and enhance constructive dialogue. We encourage the participating countries, especially those introducing new nuclear power programmes, to fully implement all recommended actions and findings in a timely manner. We also support and commend the efforts of the IAEA to help build capacity as one of the key elements for safe, responsible and sustainable use of nuclear technologies and urges all IAEA Member States to make use of the Agency Safety Standards and become Contracting Parties to all relevant international nuclear safety conventions. In doing so, we

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<sup>§</sup> Candidate Country

\* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

<sup>+</sup> Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

also encourage all IAEA Member States to develop, maintain and improve their nuclear and radiation safety infrastructure and related scientific research and technical capabilities, including knowledge building. We renew our request to the Secretariat to provide more information on the Consolidated Plan for Nuclear and Radiation Safety (CPS).

Madame Chair,

5. The Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management are key international instruments in strengthening and expanding international nuclear safety cooperation. They provide a legally binding framework for global overview and a mutual assessment of safety work in Member States. We welcome that the Agency continued to encourage Member States to become Contracting Parties and appreciate that their number continued to grow since their last review cycles. We look forward to the in-depth discussion during the upcoming Review Meetings both scheduled to take place next year and call upon all Contracting Parties to report on their obligations and actively participate in the whole review process. We encourage all CNS Contracting parties, especially embarking countries, to address their nuclear safety issues independently of the postponement of the 8<sup>th</sup> CNS Review Meeting.
6. Following the first Topical Peer Review on Ageing Management of Nuclear Power Plants and Research Reactors, the report and the respective action plans on the implementation of the challenges and country specific findings have been prepared and published. We invite the IAEA to continue to make use of the outcomes of this review, when developing and revising the safety standards and review mission guidelines, as appropriate.
7. The EU/Euratom and its Member States recognise the importance and benefits of self-assessment and the Agency's advisory and peer review services and call on all countries to make full use of these instruments. Over the course of the past year, the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) or their follow-ups were conducted in Latvia, Croatia and Malta. Germany and Latvia hosted the IAEA Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation (ARTEMIS) mission. In this regard, we acknowledge the efforts done within the Peer Review and Advisory Services Committee (PRASC) and encourage the Secretariat to continue improving the coordination and integration of its peer review missions, including the combined and back-to-back IRRS-ARTEMIS missions, using the experience feedback analysis and lessons learned to minimize duplications and improve coordination activities. Separately, a Pre-Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) mission was hosted in France and Slovakia and OSART follow-up missions were conducted in France, Finland and Spain. A pre-Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation (SALTO) mission took place in Romania.

Madame Chair,

8. Experience of EU Member States shows the importance of, prior to starting new nuclear power or radiation technology programmes, the need to carefully evaluate all implications, including the technical, financial, and human aspects not only of the construction and operation, but also the need for early arrangements for decommissioning and management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel. This means that the IAEA's safety standards and security guidance are implemented in a timely, targeted and proportionate manner. We also urge all IAEA Member States to demonstrate their commitment and take appropriate steps to avoid imposing undue burdens on future generations by seeking and applying safe, practicable and environmentally acceptable solutions for the safe and responsible decommissioning of nuclear facilities and the management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel, including its long-term aspects. We request the Agency to continue to advance discussions on deep geological disposal and related safety aspects and we encourage Member States to develop

decommissioning strategies and plans as well as work on final disposal solutions and implement these solutions in a timely and coherent manner.

9. The EU welcomes the intensified efforts made by the IAEA to tackle ageing management and long-term operation (LTO). We recognize there is still room for improvement as demonstrated by practical experience focusing primarily on physical ageing while not systematically considering other elements such as human resource policies and knowledge transfer between generations. We therefore call upon the Agency to continue addressing these issues and provide assistance to Member States in this regard.
10. Moreover, the EU welcomes the IAEA's efforts to further advance the transport safety and security of radioactive materials, while fostering a stronger global regulatory framework and facilitating transports among Member States.
11. We welcome the IAEA's efforts to further focus on the interface between nuclear safety and security, particularly around the development of a robust safety and security culture. We take note with appreciation the many activities held in 2020 to allow for further exchange between Member States on this topic and specific approaches.
12. Our focus on safety also stretches into discussions related to research reactors, nuclear fuel cycle facilities and new nuclear technologies, such as Small and Medium Sized or Modular Reactors (SMRs), including transportable NPP's (TNPPs). We take note of the establishment of a Coordination Group on SMRs as well as the regional workshop on Design Safety Assessment and Site Evaluation of SMRs to foster the exchange of information on approaches, challenges and experience regarding the safety assessment of such reactors. We encourage the Secretariat to continue addressing safety and security aspects of SMRs throughout their life cycle when developing safety standards as well as on how the Agency's safety standards can help address relevant safety challenges and issues identified.
13. The on-going pandemic has made it even more clear that building effective emergency preparedness and response (EPR) capabilities should be a priority for every Member State. In this regard, we commend the Agency's Incident and Emergency Centre (IEC) for remaining fully operational throughout the pandemic thus far and thereby providing an important safety function in case of a nuclear and/or radiological emergency during these difficult times.
14. For the last three years, the EU and its Member States remain concerned by radiological releases in the atmosphere and call on all IAEA Member States to provide for and exchange information through bilateral channels as well as the IAEA Incident and Emergency Centre or through other existing relevant networks. Such a proactive approach would allow satisfying the concerns of the international community and improve the scientific assessment and understanding of this type of events.
15. It is also essential that the protective measures during the early phase of a nuclear accident and radiological emergencies of transboundary radiological significance are consistent and coordinated between the countries that might be affected. We therefore support regional efforts and work on improved cross-border approaches to coordinate protective measures in case of nuclear and radiological emergencies with transboundary and transnational consequences.
16. In the light of recently reported cases involving orphan sources we encourage Member States who do not have formalized strategies for gaining or regaining control over orphan sources to make use of the Agency's services and seek assistance, where appropriate.

We request the Agency to continue to promote existing publications dealing with this topic and further address this issue.

17. The EU strongly believes that developing safe, technically and economically feasible alternatives to the use of High Activity Radioactive Sources is key to reducing the safety and security risk of certain nuclear applications. We appreciate that there are cost considerations for Member States when choosing which path to pursue, but are confident this balance will shift as technology develops.
18. Finally, the EU commends efforts made by the IAEA to increase workforce diversity, inclusion and gender parity, including in nuclear safety. We can all acknowledge that diverse teams are more creative, which is key to harnessing the next level of innovation in the nuclear safety sector.
19. With these comments, the EU takes note of the Director General's report on "Nuclear and Radiation Safety" as contained in GOV/2020/35-GC(64)/7

Thank you, Madame Chair.