



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors

Vienna, 09 – 13 March 2020

Agenda item 3: 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[§], North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland[†], Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Liechtenstein[†], Norway[†], Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and San Marino.]
2. The EU thanks the Director General for the “Nuclear Safety Review 2020” as contained in document GOV/2020/2. We welcome the quality of reporting on key nuclear safety issues and trends, including the list of the Agency's priorities for 2020 and the summary of Safety Standards related activities during 2019.

Madame Chair,

3. The implementation of high levels of nuclear safety and security in all countries pursuing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is of paramount importance for the European Union and its Member States, not only within our territory, but also across neighbouring regions and on global level. With 447 nuclear power reactors in operation, half of them operational for more than 30 years, 28 Member States considering or planning new nuclear programme, and numerous facilities using radiation and nuclear technologies, complacency must be avoided. It is therefore in the collective interest of the international community to continuously work on maintaining and improving nuclear safety and nuclear security.
4. International collaboration provides clear benefits to nuclear safety and nuclear security by enabling opportunities to share experiences and best practices. Interactions among our technical, diplomatic and policy experts contribute significantly to a continuous strengthening of global nuclear safety framework. It is therefore crucial that we challenge each other, maintain effective communication and exchange information on most recent technological, research and innovative approaches and consider their safety implications.
5. The EU's long-term commitment to nuclear safety is clearly demonstrated by its financial contributions. Through the EU Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) we

[§] Candidate Country

* Candidate Countries 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.

[†] Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

have allocated € 325 million over the period of past 7 years in support of third countries to establish, improve and promote high level of nuclear safety, radiation protection and the application of efficient and effective safeguards. This is an example of how seriously we take nuclear safety matters – putting words into practical actions and effecting positive and tangible change.

6. Since 2011, the EU has provided its expertise via comprehensive risk and safety assessments in a number of countries in our vicinity such as Armenia, Belarus and Ukraine. These so-called stress-tests aim to identify necessary upgrades building a more robust and sustainable nuclear safety framework worldwide, sharing good practice and opening a constructive dialogue. We call upon these countries to implement the findings and recommendations of these assessments in full and timely manner. We reiterate our support to them in this effort.

Madame Chair,

7. 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 review of safety related measures and work taken in civil NPPs and spent fuel and radioactive waste management safety respectively. We therefore welcome that the number of Contracting Parties to both conventions continued to grow since their last review cycles.
8. The EU stands ready to actively participate in the upcoming 8th Review meeting of the CNS Contracting Parties to be held from March 23 to April 3 and encourages all IAEA Member States to do so. We look forward to the in-depth discussion of technical and safety issues of mutual interest and also welcome the inclusion of two topical sessions on ageing management and safety culture. The implementation of CNS objectives, including the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety principles, continues to remain a priority for the EU.

Madame Chair,

9. The EU and its Member States recognise the value of self-assessment, peer review and targeted training to ensure continuous improvement of nuclear safety, in particular in the area of regulatory and legislative infrastructure. In 2019 the IRRS missions or their follow-ups were conducted in Croatia, Latvia, Estonia and Germany. The OSART missions or their follow-ups were hosted by Spain, Slovakia, Finland, France and Romania. Furthermore, the ARTEMIS missions were conducted in Latvia, Germany and Estonia. Spain was the first country to host a combined IRRS and ARTEMIS mission which provided valuable lessons for their further improvement. We understand that this type of mission presented some organisational challenges, therefore we welcome that the IAEA has carried out a preliminary analysis of experience feedback gained and identified ways to increase the efficiency of implementation of such combined missions. We encourage the Agency to also use this analysis to improve the IRRS-ARTEMIS missions conducted back to back.
10. The report from the Topical Peer Review on Ageing Management of Nuclear Power Plants and Research Reactors under the Euratom Nuclear Safety Directive and its findings was made public in November 2018. Its completion practically demonstrates the EU's approach to continuous improvement in nuclear safety, including the development of follow up action plans. We invite the IAEA to make use of the outcomes of the EU topical peer review when developing and revising IAEA safety standards and safety review mission guidelines, as appropriate.

11. Building effective emergency preparedness and response (EPR) capabilities should be a priority for every IAEA Member State. We reiterate our commitment to the international community to uphold the principles of transparency and responsibility to citizens when dealing with incident and emergency scenarios. The channels used to share notifications and monitoring data between EU Member States and the IAEA are a valuable part of our EPR arrangements. We encourage all countries to use this interface both in the event of an incident or emergency as well as in a business as usual context. In the interest of transparency, we encourage timely and transparent reporting, including through IAEA communication channels, on all relevant follow up activities undertaken. We consider it crucial that information on all relevant incidents and emergencies, including those that have an actual, potential or perceived radiological significance for more than one State, is shared directly and through the IAEA, and communicated with a view to satisfying concerns, especially those from public.

Madame Chair,

12. Experience of EU Member States shows the importance of the need prior to embarking on nuclear power or radiation technology programme, to carefully evaluate all implications, including technical, financial and human aspects not only of the construction, but also of decommissioning and management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel. We commend the efforts of the IAEA to help build capacities and urge all Member States, especially embarking countries, to make full use of the Agency Safety Standards and request peer review missions and advisory services in a scope and areas relevant to their programmes, in particular in the areas not previously reviewed; and to implement robust follow up arrangements in a timely manner. We also encourage Member States that have not yet done so to demonstrate a strong political commitment to nuclear safety by becoming active Contracting Parties to all relevant international nuclear safety and security conventions.
13. We reiterate our call for Member States to take appropriate steps to avoid imposing undue burden on future generations and stress the need to seek and apply safe long-term management solutions for radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel. We further encourage Member States to develop decommissioning strategies and plans as well as to work on final disposal solutions, taking into account safety implications, and implement these solutions in a timely and coherent manner. In this regard we fully support the INSAG Chair call for action by policy makers in Member States to deal permanently with the accumulation of spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste.
14. The EU notes several important decommissioning milestones have been reached across its Member States. The EURATOM Nuclear Safety Directive calls for all EU Member States to ensure that the right skills are in place in all the phases of a nuclear installation, including decommissioning. The EU is also providing its support and expertise to the comprehensive decommissioning assistance activities taking place in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. We stand ready to share our experience and lessons learned.
15. The EU welcomes the efforts made by the IAEA to tackle ageing management and long-term operation (LTO). However, we recognize there is still room for improvement as practical experience has demonstrated that ageing management safety reviews often focus primarily on physical aging management and may not systematically consider other elements such as human resource policies and knowledge transfer between generations. We therefore call upon the Agency to continue to put appropriate emphasis on these issues through providing assistance to Member States in implementing and improving ageing management programmes and safe LTO of facilities, facilitating exchange of operating experience and publication of relevant safety reports and documents on this topic.

Madame Chair,

16. We welcome the IAEA's efforts to further scope the coordination process to address safety and security interface in all facilities and activities, and welcome continued work in this area, particularly around the development of a robust safety and security culture. We also welcome the finalization of the two TECDOCs on interfaces and the preparation of the joint INSAG and AdSeC publication on this topic.
17. Our focus on safety also stretches into discussions related to new nuclear technologies, such as Small and Medium Sized or Modular Reactors (SMRs) and floating nuclear power plants and the increased interest expressed by Member States on this topic, especially licensing and safety matters. We encourage the efforts of the IAEA to continue supporting the Small Modular Reactors' forum to identify and enhance understanding of key regulatory challenges that may emerge in the future SMR regulatory and licencing discussions, especially as few concepts are near the deployment. As regards Transportable Nuclear Power Plants, we call upon the Agency, in particular the Departments of Nuclear Safety and Nuclear Energy to work together, and with relevant international partners, to address relevant issues, including any gaps in the safety framework for such reactors.
18. We note the recent announcement made by the Secretariat informing about the establishment of the Consolidated Plan for Nuclear and Radiation Safety (CPS). We hope this initiative will not duplicate existing activities covered by other Agency's mechanisms or introduce additional burden on Member States, but rather focus on maximizing the impact of the IAEA safety support and assistance. We request the Secretariat to provide more information on this initiative.
19. Lastly, the EU commends efforts made by EU Member States and the IAEA to increase gender equality, workforce diversity and inclusion. We can all acknowledge that diverse teams create greater diversity of thought through embracing different views, opinions and ideas.
20. With these comments, the EU takes note of the report on "*Nuclear Safety Review 2020*" as contained in GOV/2020/2.

Thank you, Madame Chair.