



**Statement by Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari, Permanent Representative of the
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the IAEA**

International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS): Shaping the Future

20-24 May 2024, Vienna, Austria

**Dear Co-Presidents,
Ministers, Excellencies,
Director General,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

I begin today by expressing our heartfelt condolences to the people of Iran for the tragic loss of the President, Foreign Minister, and several other officials in the recent helicopter crash. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the victims and the Government and the people of Iran during this difficult time.

I would like to express my appreciation to His Excellency Tim Watts, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia and His Excellency Kairat Umarov, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan on your election as the Co-Presidents of this Conference.

I wish to also thank Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and the Agency for convening this important Conference and for the continued contribution to strengthening nuclear security capacity among Member States, including through providing continued technical assistance services as well as publishing important guidance documents in this important area.

We welcome the Statement by the Co-Presidents of the International Conference on Nuclear Security 2024: Shaping the future. This Statement highlights the commitment to nuclear security efforts. It demonstrates determination to tackle nuclear security challenges and strengthens international cooperation framework.

Co-Presidents,

The collapse of Afghanistan's democratic institutions has disrupted international cooperation efforts that are vital for maintaining nuclear security. In Afghanistan, the

previously established legal and regulatory framework, which was essential for a comprehensive national nuclear security regime, has been dismantled since August 2021. This framework was crucial for the protection and management of nuclear and other radioactive materials. The breakdown of these structures poses significant risks, as it leaves nuclear materials vulnerable to theft, misuse, and potential proliferation.

The erosion of governance and the rise of extremist factions, insurgent groups and international terrorist groups have created an environment ideal for the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology to malicious actors. This scenario poses an unprecedented threat not only to Afghanistan but also to international security. The instability in Afghanistan serves as a breeding ground for terrorism, and the potential for nuclear materials to be acquired by these groups cannot be overstated.

The international community must not turn a blind eye to these developments. Instead, we must reinforce our commitment to international and regional security mechanisms to mitigate the risks posed by the current situation in Afghanistan.

Co-Presidents,

Moreover, the current situation of the women and girls of Afghanistan is a humanitarian crisis that demands our immediate attention. The systematic oppression and exclusion of women from public and social life not only violate fundamental human rights but also undermine the progress made in the field of education and professional development, including in science and technology. We must advocate for the empowerment of the women and girls of Afghanistan, ensuring their active participation in all sectors and discussions, including in nuclear security. The IAEA can play a pivotal role in this regard by supporting educational and training programs that specifically target the women of Afghanistan, fostering a new generation of female leaders in nuclear science and security.

In conclusion, the recent developments in Afghanistan have introduced new dimensions of risk to nuclear security that require our urgent and coordinated response. We must leverage the expertise and resources of the IAEA and its Member States in ensuring that nuclear security remains robust in the face of evolving global threats.

Thank you.