



Australian National Statement

Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme

Ambassador Ian Biggs, Resident Representative of Australia to the IAEA

26-28 November 2024

Co-Presidents, Ministers and Distinguished Delegates,

Congratulations to you, Co-Presidents, for leading this conference, and thanks to your delegations in Vienna for their efforts on the Ministerial Declaration. I extend Australia's thanks to the IAEA Secretariat for this important conference.

Co-Presidents,

Australia is a committed supporter of the IAEA's nuclear applications and technical cooperation activities.

The world is at a critical juncture, with our shared challenges growing. The multilateral system underpins global peace, stability and prosperity. In this context, the IAEA's commitment to practical initiatives that deliver tangible benefits is particularly welcome.

Australia commends the Director General for his flagship initiatives - Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics, Atoms4Food, GloWAL and ReNuAL. They are delivering real results, including in our region, Asia and the Pacific.

Our commitment to support regional scientific capacity and capabilities in partnership with the IAEA, particularly in the Pacific, is unwavering.

This is why Australia contributed 9.5 million dollars in support of the IAEA's nuclear applications and technical cooperation work in 2024, bringing Australia's total extrabudgetary contributions to over 22 million dollars since the last Conference in 2018.

Australia always pays its voluntary contribution to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Fund in full and on time to ensure the Agency can continue its crucial work.

Australia supports regional training programs and workshops, including through the activities of the IAEA's Subregional Approach to the Pacific Islands.

Australia shares its capabilities and expertise through its participation in IAEA initiatives, and we contribute to some 30 Coordinated Research Projects.

We work actively to strengthen regional capacity and scientific networks through the *Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific*, which we chaired last year.

Co-Presidents,

In Australia, nuclear science and technology is used to drive outcomes in nuclear medicine and cancer care, health, food and environmental research, and to benefit and grow our industries. Australia has chosen not to use nuclear energy for electricity generation. Our abundance of renewable energy resources makes nuclear power, including nuclear power through small modular reactors, too expensive for our decarbonisation efforts.

Nevertheless, we recognise the broader benefits that applied research in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology can deliver. We will continue to address global challenges through the work of our own leading nuclear science and technology experts and our world-class nuclear science infrastructure.

With over 70 years of experience, Australia continues to drive innovation in nuclear science and technology through our national infrastructure and research capability, operated under the stewardship of Australia's Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation – ANSTO – alongside our world class scientists and engineers.

Since the 2018 Conference, we have made significant advances in nuclear science and technology.

We produce molybdenum-99, the world's most commonly used radioisotope, in our advanced manufacturing facility, soon to be complemented by our Synroc waste treatment facility.

We plan to build a new nuclear medicine manufacturing facility, strengthening Australia's role in the secure, safe and sustainable supply of nuclear medicines.

For patients who have deep-seated tumours, we have seen promising results for patient survival and quality of life through our pioneering Neutron Capture Enhanced Particle Therapy.

We are extending the lives of advanced prostate cancer patients who have exhausted all other treatment options through the production of lutetium-177, an advanced theragnostic radioisotope.

We are combatting food fraud and enhancing food safety and security through cutting-edge provenance technology; and advancing water sustainability and climate resilience by using nuclear and isotopic techniques to contribute to a survey of groundwater resources and screen for microplastics in Antarctic sediments.

Our application of nuclear science, through non-destructive techniques, plays an important role in helping us to understand Australia's rich First Nations heritage, such as aquaculture and art, and take measures to preserve and protect First Nations cultural heritage appropriately, with consent and participation at the heart of our approach.

These are only a few examples of our domestic expertise.

Co-Presidents,

As co-founders of the Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear, and a committed supporter of the IAEA's Marie Sklodowska Curie and Lise Meitner Fellowship Programs, Australia commends the Agency's efforts to advance gender equality. Increased women's participation and leadership helps mitigate labour force shortages and leads to better technical outcomes and greater innovation and resilience.

Gender equality, inclusion, equity and diversity are critical to ensuring the IAEA reflects the diverse communities it serves. Australia urges the IAEA and all Member States to proactively advance gender equality and women's participation and leadership in the nuclear industry.

Finally Co-Presidents,

Australia takes its responsibility in sharing the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology extremely seriously, including in fulfilment of the third pillar of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. As technologies emerge and are adopted more broadly, it will remain imperative to ensure the highest possible standards of nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Australia's commitment to the work of the Agency in advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology throughout the world.

Thank you.