

Statement of the Czech Republic
Delivered by Ms. Dana Drábová
President of the State Office for Nuclear Safety
To the 2016 IAEA General Conference
Of the International Atomic Energy Agency

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Thank you, Mr. President.

My delegation congratulates you on your election as President of this Conference. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Czech delegation. I would also like to add the congratulations of the Czech Republic to Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Islamic Republic of Gambia as new members of the IAEA.

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by Slovakia. In addition, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President,

Let me begin by addressing the global issue of nuclear security. At the end of this year the IAEA is organising the second International Conference on Nuclear Security here in Vienna. The 2016 conference is expected to attract an even greater level of interest than the previous conference in 2013. It should provide a global forum in which the progress made in strengthening nuclear security worldwide can be reviewed and future developments discussed. The list of objectives of the Conference is wide, let us hope that they will be successfully fulfilled and that the IAEA will reaffirm its central role in strengthening the nuclear security framework globally and in leading the coordination

of international activities in this field. In this respect, the central role of the Agency within the safeguards system may serve as a good example. Nuclear security issues should not be limited to nuclear materials and facilities, which are now covered by international legal instruments, we must keep in mind that radioactive sources used e.g. in hospitals or industry need to be protected against misuse too. Let me remind you that the Czech Republic actively participated in the Nuclear Security Summits, the process based on the comprehensive nuclear policy presented by Barack Obama in Prague in 2009. This policy identifies the risk of nuclear terrorism as the most immediate and extreme threat to global security, and calls for a worldwide effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear materials. Although the fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit took place this spring, it is important to keep the momentum and continue in pursuing the said objectives. A terrorist attack with an improvised nuclear device would create havoc around the world, no matter where the attack occurs. As the impact of an attack would be global, the solutions must be global too. All nations have therefore a common interest in establishing the highest levels of security and protection over nuclear materials, facilities and radioactive sources.

On a side note, many languages, including my own, have a linguistic problem in distinguishing between “safety” and “security”. It may symbolise the close

link between the terms, reminding us that safety cannot be guaranteed without security.

The said interface is one of the important issues concerning safety and security standards adopted under IAEA's auspices. In this context, let me mention that I have the privilege to have been reappointed as Chair of the Commission on Safety Standards of the IAEA. During my previous tenure the Commission had, among others, the uneasy task of examining Safety Standards in terms of the potential implications in the light of the Fukushima Daiichi accident. The achievements of the Commission are listed in its Report for the fifth term. Let me just remind you that that the Commission endorsed 31 new safety standards (including revisions) for publication. The revision comprises also the amending of the five Safety Requirements reflecting the Fukushima Daiichi accident. However, it should be stressed again that the basis for the review and revision of the IAEA safety standards should not be limited to the lessons of the Fukushima Daiichi accident. We must include other operating experience from elsewhere as well as information gained from advances in research and development. And we must constantly keep in mind that attention needs to be primarily paid to the implementation of IAEA safety standards in Member States.

Coming to the issue of non-proliferation, I would like to mention that I held talks with the Vice President of Iran and the Head of Iranian Atomic Energy

Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, during his visit to the Czech Republic in May of this year. His visit took place following the JCPOA agreement which, as we all hope, will bring more security to the region and improve relations between Iran and the international community. We encouraged Iran to continue the implementation of JCPOA. Among other things, we discussed cooperation in the area of civil use of nuclear energy and nuclear safety, activities which could also further contribute to enhancing the transparency of the Iranian nuclear program and to strengthening mutual trust. We deem it important to support the JCPOA process. It is my pleasure to recall that the Czech Republic supported JCPOA with a voluntary financial contribution.

But JCPOA was not the only area where we contributed voluntarily. We supported with the same amount the TC Programme through the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative, continuing our assistance to Armenia in upgrading its national nuclear regulatory infrastructure. Let me also recall that our experts regularly participate in the IAEA missions. In this regard, it is noteworthy to mention that my deputy was in charge of one of the Modules of IRRS Mission in Japan at the beginning of this year.

Mr. President,

Let me turn now to a few significant topics in the nuclear area from our national point of view. Currently the Czech Republic has six nuclear reactors generating about one-third of its electricity production. As outlined in the State Energy

Policy, our plan is to gradually decrease in a substantial manner the share of coal in electricity generation and substitute it with energy savings and low-carbon energy sources (renewables and nuclear) in a sustainable and cost-efficient manner. The share of nuclear energy in the domestic energy mix is expected to gradually reach about 50% in the next 20 years. Nuclear reactors will thus replace primarily outdated coal-fired power plants. Nowadays many European countries, including the Czech Republic, face the economic challenges of nuclear power electricity production. There is uncertainty as to what the financing model for the new build should look like. Unfortunately, energy prices in the European Union are distorted. It is therefore difficult to build any new electricity production plant except subsidised ones - namely renewable energy sources. The regulatory function that markets normally perform is hence very limited. To reinforce their energy security and to support clear, stable and predictable revenue for investors in low-carbon electricity generation, some Governments have already stepped in and provide guarantees to investors in new build by making up the potential difference between the agreed investment plus production costs and the market price. Whichever path is finally chosen, governments, at least in our region, will have to make difficult decisions on how to address electricity production. Approaching it comprehensively as a public good and introducing appropriate regulation seems to be the only viable option.

Last year we experienced an important event from our national regulatory perspective, namely deficiencies found in X-ray welding tests of the secondary circuits at Dukovany NPP. Although the deficiencies comprised systems of relatively negligible safety significance it was decided to temporarily shut down the units until the situation was remedied despite the huge economic loss. The case illustrates that even the best rated NPPs with excellent reputations can succumb to complacency and, for example, underestimate the importance of monitoring their subcontractors. The event might be, rather hastily, reflected as encouragement for the regulator to reinforce the exercise of its supervisory powers. However, since it is impossible to physically check everything and everyone, the main lesson to be learnt for the operator as well as the regulator, to avoid such cases, is that nuclear power plant safety issues must under all circumstances receive the attention and respect warranted by their significance. In other words: safety culture must be continuously improved. Only then can we create an environment in which complacency is effectively prevented.

Last but not least, it is my pleasure to inform you about the completion of the update of our legislation comprehensively covering the nuclear area. After several years of intensive work a new Atomic Act, which will be accompanied by a set of revised implementing regulations, went successfully through

all stages of the legislative process and will enter into force at the beginning of the next year.

Mr. President, that concludes my remarks and I wish you and the Conference every success.