



Statement by

H.E. Mr. Keith Azzopardi

Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Malta

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Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by taking this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of this 60th Session of the IAEA General Conference. I would like to assure you of the full cooperation and steadfast support of my delegation to successfully accomplish the important work before us. I would also like to express our appreciation to the outgoing President, the distinguished Governor of Italy, Ambassador Filippo Formica, for his work over the past year.

I also take the opportunity to thank the IAEA Director General and the Secretariat for their diligent and professional work, while congratulating the Agency on its 60th anniversary. The Agency's resolute commitment to play its part in helping the international community achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is a clear testament to the fact that, even after sixty years, its relevance as well as its preeminent role in the nuclear field remain undisputed.

In this connection, I wholeheartedly welcome the applications for membership by Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Islamic Republic of Gambia.

Malta associates itself with the statement delivered by Slovakia on behalf of the European Union and I would just like to add a few additional remarks in my national capacity, which are of particular importance to my country.

Mr. President,

Malta continues to underline its absolute and unwavering support to the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and essential for the enhancement of co-operation in peaceful uses of nuclear technology whilst striving to achieve nuclear disarmament. We therefore unequivocally support the universalisation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and invite States which are not yet parties to the Treaty, to reassess their position, and to ratify the Treaty without further delay.

Malta's strategic location in the centre of the Mediterranean, sharing maritime borders with Southern and Eastern Mediterranean neighbours, compels us to follow with great attention the events unfolding in this region. Malta regrets that the Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, which was foreseen to take place in 2012 by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, has not yet been convened. We emphasise that, in spite of the lack of concrete progress in this regard, the goals of the 1995 Resolution remain as valid as ever. Malta believes that furthering non-proliferation and disarmament efforts in the Middle East would be of great benefit and significance not only to the region itself, but indeed to the entire international community. In view of this, we call upon all States of the region to engage in constructive, positive dialogue, cooperating and working in good faith, towards achieving tangible progress to this end.

Mr. President,

Malta appreciates that the IAEA has a vital role in ensuring, through effective multilateralism and its safeguards system, that nuclear technology is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, in tandem with Additional Protocols, are fundamental to the IAEA's verification work. Malta supports the universalisation of the verification standards established by the Agency and therefore encourages the relevant States to sign and put into force these verification tools. Such tools serve as confidence-building measures for the international community.

Mr. President,

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), signed last year between the E3/EU+3 and Iran, remains historic and significant. Malta welcomes the ongoing implementation of the JCPOA, and encourages the ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocol by Iran, as foreseen in the agreement. Such a demonstration of adherence to the JCPOA, in conjunction with the complete and timely implementation of the Roadmap, would bear witness to the potentially game-changing effects which can be brought about also in the field of non-proliferation through effective multilateralism. Malta commends and fully supports the IAEA's central role and work in the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and the JCPOA. We welcome further cooperation between Iran and the Agency, as this fosters not only an improvement of relations with Iran itself, but indeed a more stable, more secure, Middle East.

While the developments under the JCPOA are a cause for optimism, recent developments on the Korean Peninsula have been far from encouraging. Malta unreservedly condemns the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in January and September of this year, as well as missile-related activities such as the submarine-launched ballistic missile in August, and the launch of ballistic missiles in September. These

tests and activities by the DPRK are in clear violation of its international obligations, are provocative, aggravate tensions in the region, and represent a threat to international peace and security more broadly. We strongly urge the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic programmes. We further call upon the DPRK to comply fully, unconditionally and without further delay, with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions, including Resolution 2270, and with IAEA General Conference Resolutions, and to return to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA Safeguards as expeditiously as possible.

Syria's non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement, is likewise a cause for continuing concern. Moreover, the ongoing conflict complicates the IAEA's verification capabilities in the country. Malta calls upon Syria to cooperate fully and promptly with the IAEA, so as to address all unresolved issues, and bring into force an Additional Protocol without delay.

Mr. President,

We are faced today with new, evolving and dynamic security challenges, at the forefront of which, is the dispersion of the nuclear threat, and the potentiality of a nuclear event. States are therefore duty bound to ensure that weapons-grade nuclear material is not made accessible to parties operating outside international law, particularly terrorist groups. Vulnerable nuclear material must be secured and protected. The non-proliferation of such material is fundamental to maintaining global peace, order, safety and security. Malta strongly supports the central role of the IAEA in the global nuclear security framework and looks forward to the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security in December.

While Malta acknowledges that nuclear safety and security within the international community continue to form the core of the IAEA's work, these priorities should not, however, be restricted simply to land systems. We believe that nuclear safety and security should also be extended to transport networks, and in particular to maritime transport. As an

island state and a leading Maritime Flag State, Malta has a special interest in ensuring that the highest safety standards, combined with adequate communication and cooperation, are followed at sea as well. The ramifications of an incident at sea could be profoundly devastating, with a high risk of long-term contamination of the ecological and natural sea environment.

In line with our commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we must also not forget the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Malta strongly supported the Humanitarian Conference hosted by Austria in 2014, followed by its Austrian Pledge, which subsequently culminated in its internationalisation in 2015 as the Humanitarian Pledge. The widespread support by a multitude of States is an important, clear and vocal indication that many of us here share this humanitarian concern.

Mr. President,

As a final point, I would like to make reference to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme, which enables the Agency to work closely with Member States in a safe and secure nuclear technology environment. The Technical Cooperation Programme is something which my country continues to ascribe a great deal of importance to because we have witnessed first-hand the tangible and important benefits which it can accrue. Malta has a positive track record of participation in this invaluable programme, both at a national and at a regional level. Last year, Malta implemented national projects notably in terms of radiation therapy for medical purposes, and at a technical level in the regulatory and infrastructural sectors. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Agency for its assistance, cooperation and technical support, and look forward positively to participating in future programmes.

In conclusion, may I reiterate Malta's unwavering support for the work, and activities of the IAEA across various international levels and fora, while wishing all delegations a most successful Conference in the spirit of positive cooperation in pursuit of our common goals.

Thank you.