

BE DRAFT STATEMENT – IAEA MINISTERIAL 5.12

Mr. Chairman, Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to participate in this ministerial conference. In our view, it gives much-needed political impetus to the topic of nuclear security, and elevates it to one of a collective and multilateral responsibility. It is timely that we should hold the ministerial this year, and it is fitting that it should take place under the auspices of the IAEA, given its wide membership and technical expertise.

Belgium is one of these countries which has an extensive nuclear sector: 7 nuclear power reactors, research facilities, waste treatment and the production of medical isotopes which accounts for over 20% of the world market.

We understand, to its full extent, the benefits which splitting the atom can bring to all of us. They go far beyond nuclear power. They drive technological developments across the board. They are engrained in the tissue of our economies.

We understand what is at stake if a nuclear security incident, a security breach, let alone an act of nuclear or radiological terror, occurs. And we are unfortunately one of these countries that can testify that such an act of terror is no longer a theoretical threat, it is real.

It is thus up to us as states to take every possible precaution. Only a multifaceted approach can function, and we should therefore act on the fronts of prevention, reaction as well as reduction of sensitive materials .

In terms of prevention, we have set up a strict regulatory framework, aimed at improving our nuclear security infrastructure, including an extensive system of clearances. Additionally, we are updating the legal and regulatory framework for radioactive materials which are not nuclear.

In terms of reaction, we are creating a new directorate of the Federal Police tasked with providing a permanent armed response capacity at the nuclear sites. In the meantime, the military has been deployed on our nuclear sites to provide this armed response capacity until the new directorate is fully operational.

On reduction, we remain committed to HeU conversion and to developing alternative technologies through research and development. We will promote

these within technical and economically acceptable boundaries. The conversion of the research reactor BR2 to low enriched uranium will occur as soon as the appropriate high density fuel has been qualified for these purposes. The Belgian research center SCK-CEN is leading a broad international cooperation effort with the aim to qualify high density LEU-fuels which can be used in different high performance research reactors throughout the world. Likewise, the conversion of the processing facility of the National Institute for Radioelements (IRE) for medical radio-isotopes is very advanced and runs on schedule.

While states can do many things on their own, the key of a truly successful approach lies in close cooperation. For this, we look to the IAEA. It will be up to the Agency to provide guidelines, training, advisory services, and pool/share relevant information. This is a "central" role, which is underlined by the entry-into-force of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM). It will be up to the Agency to help guide those countries which have ratified the amended CPPNM as they start implementing the amended Convention, and reach out to others who have not yet done so.

For all this to happen, a secure financial footing is needed. Within existing resources, the regular budget for Nuclear Security could and should be strengthened. Voluntary contributions can supplement the regular budget in certain areas. Since 2010, Belgium has yearly contributed to the Nuclear Security Fund, for a total of more than 2 million US \$. We hope that other countries in a position to do so can also commit voluntary funds.

Mr Chairman, I have started by saying that nuclear security is a collective responsibility. I shall do so again. My hope is that all of us will leave Vienna with a sense of urgency. It is only through mutual learning and consistent vigilance that we can keep the promise of nuclear power and technology intact.