

Statement on behalf of Euratom

delivered on 19 September 2019 by

Mr Stephan Lechner
Director of Euratom Safeguards, European Commission

on the occasion of the

63rd General Conference of the IAEA, Vienna

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Atomic Energy Community, Euratom.

At the outset, Euratom expresses its deepest condolences to the family of late Director General Yukiya Amano and to the IAEA staff upon the passing of Mr Amano. This is a great loss for the Agency and for the international community as a whole. The EU would like to thank the IAEA acting Director General and the Secretariat for the dignified ceremony in commemoration of late DG Amano on 21 August.

Let me also congratulate you, Madam President, on your election as President of this General Conference.

We welcome St. Lucia as a new IAEA Member State.

Cooperation between the IAEA and Euratom is long and well established. We welcome the comprehensive role that the International Atomic Energy Agency plays in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and other radiation technologies.

Safeguards

Since the conclusion of the safeguards agreement between the IAEA, Euratom and its Member States in the 1970s, Euratom is a formal partner in the global IAEA safeguards system associated to the UN.

Euratom is a well-functioning regional framework, allowing for the use of nuclear materials in a heterogeneous group of EU Member States. Close collaboration with the IAEA on nuclear non-proliferation is particularly important in the wider political context of climate change.

Euratom appreciates the close collaboration with the IAEA on joint safeguards inspections on a daily level and the joint use of common safeguard equipment.

Euratom especially underlines the importance of the “Safeguards-by-Design”-concept, incorporating nuclear safeguards measures early in the planning and design of nuclear installations. Euratom welcomes in this regard the good progress made on novel projects in the EU Member States and would like to intensify the collaboration on the safeguards-by-design concept with the IAEA. We see scope for expanding our cooperation in areas such as the recycling of uranium from the production of medical isotopes and for the encapsulation and deep geological disposal of spent fuel.

Euratom is committed to continuing its expert and technical support to IAEA safeguards through the dedicated European Commission Support Programme.

The partnership between Euratom and the IAEA is key to strong safeguards in the territory of all EU Member States now and in the future, also given that the quantity of nuclear materials under Euratom Safeguards is continuously increasing.

Nuclear Safety

Our approach to nuclear safety in the European Union is anchored on the principles of meeting standards for highest level of nuclear and radiation safety and aiming for continuous improvement. Euratom has given legal force to the objectives of the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety through its amended Nuclear Safety Directive.

I would like to highlight that ENSREG held its fifth biennial nuclear safety conference 6 and 7 June 2019. The conference key topic was the follow-up of the first European Topical Peer Review, focussed on ageing management of nuclear installations. Decommissioning, waste management, supply chain standardisation and knowledge management completed the agenda.

We support the ENSREG invitation to the IAEA to make full use of the outcomes of the topical peer review when developing and revising IAEA safety standards and safety review mission guidelines, as appropriate. We are ready to share our experience at the topical session dedicated to ageing management to be organised during the 8th Review Meeting of the Nuclear Safety Convention in 2020.

The Commission is pleased to co-host, on 4 to 7 November 2019 in The Hague, Netherlands, the IAEA International Conference on Effective Nuclear and Radiation Regulatory Systems.

Nuclear Safety cooperation

The EU has continued to cooperate with third countries, in particular in our neighbourhood, to improve nuclear safety and the safety of nuclear power plants. ENSREG has taken a leading role conducting stress tests and peer review of nuclear power plants in third

countries. The Commission is ready to support other countries in the region to implement the EU methodology stress tests.

The European Commission, working with the IAEA and other partners, is supporting the implementation of the strategic master plan for environmental remediation in Central Asia. The first practical remediation project is about to start in Kyrgyzstan and the European Commission calls upon Member States to join the programme that still needs additional funding for a full implementation.

Spent fuel, radioactive waste and decommissioning

The long-term safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel, including decommissioning and financial aspects of the back-end of the fuel cycle, require our increasingly close attention. Euratom has given legal force to the requirements included in the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management, to which Euratom is a Contracting Party.

The Commission and IAEA are closely cooperating to strengthen the safety of radioactive waste and spent fuel management, in particular on Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation (ARTEMIS)

Since their inception in 2017, Artemis missions have been conducted in Poland, France, Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Estonia. Spain hosted the first combined IRRS and ARTEMIS mission in October 2018.

We encourage all IAEA Member States, and especially embarking countries, to take advantage of all peer review missions which are relevant to their nuclear power programmes and to implement the recommended actions in a timely manner and to host follow up missions. Euratom strongly supports the publication of outcome reports from such review missions.

We welcome the cooperation between the Commission, the IAEA and the OECD NEA on the Status and Trends in Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Management Project, as well as in the efforts to harmonize the radioactive waste and spent fuel inventory reporting requirements for their Member States.

Iran

The European Commission attaches a great importance to the full and proper implementation of the JCPOA. The European Commission continues to fulfil the EU commitments for civil nuclear cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran as foreseen under Annex 3 of the JCPOA which focuses on nuclear safety and regulatory affairs.

The European Commission supports the IAEA's verification activities that are the basis for demonstrating confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

The framework for EU-Iran civil nuclear cooperation is set out in the outcomes of the high-level seminars on international nuclear co-operation and governance. These seminars provide the basis for mutual engagement, which takes different forms. Under the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation, the European Commission has projects to support the Regulatory Authority, including through the establishment of a nuclear safety centre in Tehran and the implementation of the stress tests at Bushehr nuclear power plant. In the area of science, technology, research and innovation, the EU has organised conferences and visits to EU facilities for Iranian scientists. The overall EU intervention in the implementation of civil nuclear cooperation in Iran currently amounts up to €10 million, while more activities are in the planning.

The European Commission is supporting Iran's wishes for a swift accession to those international nuclear conventions to which Iran is not yet a party. A two-day training session was organised on 11-12 March 2019 on the Joint Convention on spent fuel and radioactive waste with Iranian, EU and IAEA experts.

Nuclear Security

We welcome the preparation for the 2021 conference of State Parties to the amended CPPNM. Close cooperation in preparing the review conference will be key for this instrument to play its role in tackling current and future security threats.

The European Commission has continued its support and collaboration with the IAEA in the field of detection of nuclear materials, nuclear forensics and training for front-line officers. The EU CBRN Centres of Excellence continue working on regional basis.

Euratom is committed to the minimisation of high-enriched Uranium (HEU) in civil uses and continues to actively work towards that goal

Nuclear Non-power Applications

Allow me now to address also the application of nuclear technologies in the non-power areas. The EU continues to support the advancement of nuclear and radiation sciences and technology in different fields, including medicine, industry and research.

Our technical collaboration with the IAEA in nuclear non-power applications is longstanding and has been reinforced by Practical Arrangements for cooperation in nuclear science applications, signed between the EC and the IAEA on 15 February 2017.

At the end of 2018 more than 32 joint actions were being undertaken in the areas of soil science, emergency preparedness, use of satellite data, food safety, traceability and authenticity, ocean and marine science, environmental monitoring, sustainable water management and medical applications.

Research and training

The general objective of the Euratom Research and Training Programme is to pursue nuclear research and training activities with an emphasis on continuous improvement of nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and decommissioning, security, radiation protection and fusion energy research. In 2019, the European Commission launched the first European Joint Programme in research on Radioactive Waste Management, which aims at coordinating Member States' research activities on agreed priorities of common interest and organised in collaboration with the IAEA and the University of Milan the 11th edition of the Summer School on Nuclear Decommissioning and Waste Management frames within the European ELINDER project.

The IAEA remains an important partner under this European Joint Programme in fields such as knowledge management, including human resources development, where we expect to further strengthen our cooperation in the near future in other nuclear areas such as nuclear decommissioning.

The future Euratom Research and Training Programme will increase its focus on non-power applications such as healthcare and medical equipment, and supports the mobility of nuclear researchers under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

ITER

Finally, the EU continues to prioritise research into fusion energy technology as a potential power source for the future and has therefore assumed a leading role as the host of the ITER project. The European Commission has proposed to allocate €6.07 billion to ITER for the period 2021 to 2027. Furthermore, the EU has started to explore with the IAEA the possibility of setting up a common framework for the safety of fusion devices. We hope that all countries involved in fusion research will work together to fully capitalise on this exciting new technology.

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nuclear safety, security, and safeguards are a concern for the whole international community.

Let us take full advantage of the IAEA's more than 60 years' accumulated experience and its continuous contribution to developing nuclear power in a safe and sustainable manner.

Thank you for your attention.