

63rd General Conference of the IAEA

Statement

The Republic of Latvia

Mr. Edvīns Balševics, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia,

Vienna, Austria, 16-20 September 2018

Madam President,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Latvia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

Madam President,

I join others in congratulating you on your election as the President of the 63rd General Conference and look forward to work under your guidance. Latvia would like to express its gratitude to the Agency's Secretariat for its professionalism and thank acting Director General Cornel Feruta for leading the Agency during this period. We were deeply saddened to hear of Director General Amano's passing. His skilful leadership and dedication was highly valued and respected. We trust his investment in the Agency's work will carry on, as we together uphold the spirit of his commitment to this organization and its work.

Madam President,

I would like to draw attention to some issues, which are important to my country.

A strong rules-based international order and effective international cooperation is paramount to tackle proliferation and other transnational security challenges.

It is important to emphasize Agency's safeguards system in the implementation of non-proliferation obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, especially regarding the third pillar of peaceful use of nuclear energy. This issue has been made more pronounced by questions of energy security and the effects of climate change.

In order to contribute to global non-proliferation efforts, Latvia successfully chaired the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2018-2019. We have made important strides in enhancing the Nuclear Suppliers Group's relevance to the broader non-proliferation regime, raising awareness of its role internationally, and emphasizing the importance of our work.

We express our continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which is an important multilateral achievement. We are deeply concerned about Iran's recent announcements and the increase of uranium enrichment above levels allowed by the JCPOA. Full implementation of the JCPOA by Iran is essential to provide assurances on the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We encourage the IAEA to continue the verification and report to the Member States.

Latvia also strongly supports finding a peaceful and diplomatic solution for the situation on the Korean Peninsula. To achieve that, we need to maintain international pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We call on the DPRK to move toward a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. The continuation of its nuclear programme is a clear violation

of relevant UN Security Council's resolutions. We welcome Agency's readiness to verify the nuclear disarmament of the DPRK.

In terms of nuclear safety and security, compliance with the highest safety standards and nuclear security guidance is important. The application of new technologies is crucial for the advancement of many fields, but nuclear safety and security must be ensured and to this end, the Agency's assistance to the Member States is important.

Safe construction, use and maintenance of nuclear facilities can have a broad impact on regional and global security and the right conditions for the construction of Nuclear Power Plants are set through international agreements and standards. Latvia continues to highlight the importance of stress tests and values the significance of principles proposed in the 2015 Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety regarding the safety assessment for existing nuclear power plants.

Transparency, international cooperation and an efficient information exchange among neighbouring countries are the main elements to ensure nuclear safety on the global level.

Latvia attaches great importance to the improvement of nuclear safety and updates its regulatory framework on a regular basis. Next month Latvia will host IAEA's Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) Mission and in December – the Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation (ARTEMIS) Mission. A review of such scale will be conducted in Latvia for the first time. From our side, preparation works are well underway and we hope to benefit from these missions.

We look forward to the outcomes of the review missions, which are significant for strengthening our regulatory infrastructure, radiation and nuclear safety.

Technical Cooperation

Latvia commends the IAEA Technical Cooperation Department for its invaluable support to Member States, particularly its guidance on adjusting regulatory frameworks to ensure the high standards of safety, security and safeguards.

Latvia has benefitted from different projects funded by the Technical Cooperation Fund for more than 20 years.

Three Latvian national projects have been implemented within the framework of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program during the period 2018-2019 and in the next technical cooperation planning cycle 2020-2021, Latvia has submitted two national projects. These new projects will focus on improving the culture of radiation safety in the medical field and on enhancing the competence and infrastructure for providing training in radiation technologies and safety in Latvia.

We are also ready to host IAEA regional project events. In February 2020, a Regional Workshop on Review and Improvement of Decommissioning Plans for Small Facilities will take place in Latvia.

We are grateful to the IAEA for providing Latvia's institutions the possibility to strengthen their competence in various areas of radiation and nuclear safety and security.

Madam President,

In conclusion, Latvia highly values the important role of the Agency in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear technology and its central role in strengthening global nuclear safety and security. The Agency's contribution to the effectiveness of international cooperation and dialogue is highly respected and serves to solve complex issues of international peace and security.

Thank you!