



AFGHANISTAN

STATEMENT

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Khojesta Fana Ebrahimkhel

at the

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Strengthening Efforts (ICONS 2020)

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International Atomic Energy Agency

Vienna International Centre (VIC)

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In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

**Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi,
Mr. President Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu, Romania
Mr. President Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Federico Alfaro, Panama
Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, please allow me to express my congratulations to Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Bogdan Aurescu and Vice-Minister H.E. Federico Alfaro on your election as the *Co-Presidents* of this Conference. We are confident that under your leadership this conference will be very successful and productive.

Furthermore, let me congratulate the hard work and the excellent leadership of Director Rafael Mariano Grossi in promoting global nuclear security including through providing continued technical assistance services as well as publishing important guidance documents in this important area. My appreciation also goes to the highly professional and dedicated team of the Agency's Secretariat for the efforts undertaken to prepare for this important conference.

We commend the tireless efforts of the Co-chairs to arrive at a document which enjoys the consensus of all participating States. The Ministerial declaration adopted earlier today is an important milestone in demonstrating the international community's commitment for nuclear security.

Dear Co-Presidents,

We believe that a worldwide agreement, global consensus and effective cooperation of member states with the Agency is essential in overcoming the problem of safe and secure use of nuclear energy for global sustainable development.

Being a state party to the Comprehensive Safeguard Agreement and the NPT, Afghanistan strongly supports the establishment of a Nuclear- Weapons-Free-Zone in the Middle East, as a positive and complementary step towards achieving the United Nations' Nuclear-Weapons-Free-World objectives.

Ladies and Gentleman,

We are happy to say that a new Country Programme Framework for the period of 2019-2023 for Afghanistan has been signed at the margins of the last IAEA 63rd General Conference. This Framework was prepared and completed by the joint efforts of the Agency Technical Cooperation Department and the Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency.

This signed framework will contribute directly and cost-effectively to national priorities and goals in line with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and the National Health Strategy as well as other Afghanistan's sectoral priorities.

We appreciate the efforts that are being made by IAEA and my Afghan counterpart and stakeholder to further align the Country Programme Framework (CPF) with the specific needs and priorities of member states.

I am convinced that this Framework will serve as a key instrument for the design, review, and implementation of Afghanistan technical cooperation projects over the next six years and a new milestone of fruitful technical cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the IAEA.

It provides an excellent cooperation framework in four mutually agreed areas, namely:

- Radiation Safety Infrastructure
- Food and Agriculture
- Human Health and Nutrition
- Human Capital Development

With the assistance of IAEA, the Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency, the main implementing partner in Afghanistan, along with other relevant agencies in the country, will be fully committed to implementing cooperation in the four national priority areas.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Afghanistan's Nuclear Energy Act, which was supported by the Agency and drafted by the Afghanistan Nuclear Energy Agency, was approved by Afghan parliament in 2017. As a result, the Afghanistan National Nuclear Regulatory Authority has been established for protecting public health and safety-related to

the use of nuclear science and technology. Our Regulatory body has made a great effort to implement Afghanistan's Nuclear Energy Act, especially in the area of issuing license for nuclear activity, monitoring facilities that use ionization radiation such as hospitals and ports, and drafting relevant regulations.

As a result of their efforts, at the beginning of last year, our radiation protection regulation has been approved by Cabinet and has been signed by the President of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the first annual national report on radiation facilities across the country has been recently published.

In the area of health, the establishment of a Radiology Diagnostic Centre, and Radiotherapy centre are projects with high importance and relevance in the country. However, despite all good wills, up to now, there has not been any notable progress in this area. Afghanistan still does not have any nuclear medicine centre in the country and every year thousands of people travel abroad for cancer treatment. We hope that with the support of Agency, its member states, and the effective collaboration of all stakeholders in Afghanistan, we can soon overcome this problem and establish our first centre at Aliabad hospital.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The current security situation in Afghanistan is such that large areas of the country are controlled by insurgent groups and national and international terrorist groups are active across the country. As a result, we have a serious concern about the illegal transportation of nuclear materials through Afghanistan by these groups.

In light of this, we believe that such illegal activities will make the current situation more complex and may put the lives of thousands of people in danger. Thus we sincerely request IAEA members to pay careful attention to this matter.

Ladies and Gentleman,

In conclusion, Afghanistan is grateful to IAEA for its significant support to the country, for providing training and workshops for our scientists, and supporting our national projects. We kindly request from IAEA members, in particular, the

regional members, to pay special attention to Afghanistan and to continue supporting us in areas of capacity building and training our scientists.

Also, we fully support Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi personal commitment to full gender parity. We are confident that together we can achieve significant progress towards gender parity and women empowerment in the field of nuclear security within just a few years.

Thank you!