

Statement of Belgium at the International Conference on Nuclear Security

10-14 February 2020



H.E. Mr. Ghislain D'hoop

Ambassador, Governor and Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the IAEA

Excellencies,

1. First of all, I wish to thank the Agency for the organization of this International Conference on Nuclear Security. My country attaches the highest priority to nuclear security and is keen to contribute to the **political impetus** the issue deserves.

Belgium understands what is at stake if an act of nuclear or radiological terror would occur; notably because we are unfortunately one of these countries that can testify that an act of terror is no longer theoretical. In addition, at our global level, we should collectively recognize that much more work needs to be done – in particular to respond to the evolving challenges and threats to nuclear security, including for what regards cyber security.

2. Therefore, it is thus up to us, as States, to take every possible precaution. My country is fully committed to **continue strengthening nuclear security, by acting on the fronts of prevention, reaction as well as reduction of sensitive materials.**

In terms of prevention, Belgium is committed to continue developing and enhancing its national nuclear security regime. We have set up a strict legislative and regulatory framework, aimed at maintaining and improving our nuclear security infrastructure. Belgium has mainly reinforced this framework for what regards response forces, cyber-security and security of radioactive materials.

In terms of reaction, we have created a specialized police force within the Federal Police ("DAB"). Deployed at the nuclear sites, these federal police units ensure a permanent armed response capacity.

Regarding the reduction of sensitive materials, we reaffirm our commitment to minimizing the use of highly enriched uranium (HEU) in civilian applications. This commitment is fully shared with the United States of America. Tomorrow, Tuesday 11 February 2020, Belgium together with the USA will deliver a Joint Statement on this topic in the margins of this Conference. We are fully committed to completing the conversion of both Belgium's medical isotope production facility and its research reactor to low enriched uranium (LEU) targets and fuel as soon as technically and economically feasible. On both aspects, significant progress has been made, thanks to our common commitment, resources and technical cooperation.

Before turning to international cooperation, let me mention that Belgium hosted an International Physical Protection Advisory Service (**IPPAS**) **follow-up mission** in June 2019 covering also computer security and regulations for facilities holding radioactive sources. The IPPAS team saw significant enhancements since the previous mission, observing that the nuclear security regime in Belgium is robust.

3. Even if the basic principle of nuclear security is that responsibility for it rests with each individual State, **bilateral, regional and international cooperation is key**. In this regard, we reaffirm our support to the central role of the IAEA in facilitating and coordinating international cooperation. I would like to stress the importance of the assistance provided by the Agency, for instance the IPPAS missions I've mentioned earlier; let me mention here that Belgium will host at the end of this year the *Third International Seminar on Sharing Experience and Best Practices from Conduct of IPPAS missions*.

In our perspective, this central role of the Agency also applies to the preparation for the Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2021. Belgium hopes that this future Conference and its preparatory work will help assess the efficiency of the Convention and its Amendment, as well as promote its universalization and effective implementation.

The **Symposium on Insider Threat Mitigation** that US NNSA and the Belgian FANC co-hosted in March 2019 in Brussels illustrates the added-value and cross-fertilization of international cooperation. The purpose of the symposium was to provide an international forum to discuss challenges to insider threat mitigation, share best practices, and encourage additional subscribers to the "*Joint Statement on Mitigating Insider Threats*". I am convinced that the outcome of this event will facilitate further international efforts in this field.

In this respect, I wish to draw your attention to the side-event we are organizing on the issue in cooperation with the USA NNSA [*on Tuesday 11 February*]. We will review the outcome of the Symposium and present the terms of reference of the Advancing Insider Threat Mitigation Working Group.

Let me also mention that the Belgian regulatory body contributes actively to training, for instance by hosting next year an International Advanced Training Course of the IAEA on that topic.

To end with the international cooperation aspects, I wish to underline that a **secure, sustainable and sufficient financial footing** is needed for the IAEA's nuclear security work, including from the Regular Budget. Therefore, within existing resources, the regular budget for Nuclear Security could and should be strengthened. 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.

4. Excellencies,

We look forward to the contribution this Conference, and its ministerial Declaration, will make to further enhancing the nuclear security worldwide in the next years.

In conclusion, let me assure you that Belgium remains fully committed to continue to strengthen international co-operation in that field, because nuclear security is a collective responsibility requiring mutual learning and consistent vigilance.

Thank you.