

## **STATEMENT**

**by Mr. Tsanko Bachiyski**

**Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria**

**Head of the delegation to the 65<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the IAEA**

**Vienna, September 20 – 24, 2021**

Dear Mister President,

Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Bulgaria I would like to congratulate you for your election as President of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I avail myself of this opportunity to assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Bulgarian delegation in the fulfillment of your important and responsible task during the session deliberations.

The Bulgarian delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Please, also allow me to express our ardent support to Director General Mr. Grossi and to all IAEA staff for their diligent implementation of their responsibilities in these turbulent times of COVID-19 pandemic.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the IAEA for the preparation of the 2020 Annual Report. We appreciate the fact, stated in the Report that the Agency continues to support Member States with existing nuclear power plants to enhance performance and ensure safe, secure, efficient and reliable long term operation, including development of human resource capability, leadership and management systems.

Dear Mister President,

The Republic of Bulgaria is strongly committed to the efforts for further nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. For 50 years the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons as well a firm basis for the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The IAEA Safeguards mechanism is a key instrument for its implementation. The Republic of Bulgaria strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and spares no efforts to promote their comprehensive, balanced, and full implementation. In this vein, we will engage actively in the preparation of the upcoming NPT Review Conference. We once again call for the universalization of the NPT and the IAEA Additional Protocol. I would like to underline our full support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as agreed by NPT States Parties.

Bulgaria reaffirms its support to the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and diplomatic actions within the Joint Commission. We are concerned by the actions inconsistent with the JCPOA and urge Iran to fully, unconditionally and without delay, cooperate with IAEA, and return to its Safeguards obligations. We thank Director General Grossi for his strong efforts and dedication to ensure that the IAEA fulfils its mandate to provide credible assurance of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We consider that only through cooperation and mutual understanding we can attain the desired consensus and make progress towards establishing peaceful co-existence of all nations in the Middle East.

Regarding DPRK we are concerned by the information that a nuclear reactor may have been operational in the country as well as by the continuous launches of missiles

in violation of UN resolutions. We hope that the DPRK will achieve full compliance with all its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations as a non-nuclear weapon state, sign and ratify the CTBT, stop any testing of missile systems and abandon its delivery systems programs. We continue to insist on the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Dear Mister President,

Nuclear power in Bulgaria continues to be a major factor in the country's energy balance, under conditions of high technology, production efficiency, competitive prices and maintaining of a high level of nuclear safety, security and radiation protection. Ensuring the safety and security of nuclear facilities is a national policy in the development of nuclear energy in my country.

Units 5 and 6 of the Kozloduy NPP were operated in 2020 in full compliance with the international safety standards. The plant continues its activities to ensure safe long term operation of the units as demonstrated within the IAEA SALTO peer review mission held in July 2021.

Bulgaria considers safety and security of the nuclear facilities a major factor for developing nuclear energy. In this respect we welcome and participate actively in the preparation of the 2022 Review Conference of the Amended Convention on physical protection of nuclear material. We hope that the conference will help State Parties to the Convention to further improve national nuclear security regimes thus strengthening the nuclear security worldwide.

We regret the postponement of the reviews under the Convention for nuclear safety and the Joint Convention due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19 pandemic

and we are looking forward to engage in a constructive discussion on safety and safe management of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste in 2022 and 2023.

Bulgaria follows the scientific and technological developments in nuclear energy, including the ITER project. We commend the Agency for its proactive role in the nuclear energy technology field through various projects and initiatives including the SMRs Nuclear Regulators Forum. We welcome the launch of the Agency-wide platform on SMRs and within this the IAEA activities in support of the review of the applicability of Agency safety standards to novel advanced reactors, in particular SMRs. We encourage IAEA to intensify its efforts in this field and continue to work towards harmonized approach to these technologies. We are looking forward to the results of these activities and are ready to engage in the discussions on the operational and regulatory aspects.

We consider knowledge management as key element of the integrated management system of the nuclear facilities and support any measures which can ensure sustainability of nuclear education and training in all areas of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Distinguish delegates,

Our understanding is that the Technical Cooperation Program is the Agency's key mechanism for transferring technology, building capacities and for improvement of nuclear safety and security in the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology with the aim of addressing a wide variety of socio-economic human development needs of Member States. In this respect we strongly believe that the Program shall render

support to all Member States upon their request and according to their needs, based on non-discriminatory principle.

In 2020, the implementation of the new cycle of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program for 2020-2021 started with three national projects for Bulgaria in the field of capacity building, agriculture and animal health. In the framework of this cycle, our country participates in over 30 regional and interregional projects from the Program, which are in the field of nuclear energy, nuclear safety and radiation protection, radioactive waste management, healthcare and agriculture. Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic situation and the limitations on the organization of the most of the IAEA seminars, training courses, technical meetings, conferences and other scientific forums organized in 2020 IAEA continued to provide supply of equipment, devices and consumables including technical assistance for emergency equipment of 2 laboratories in the country for conducting PCR tests for Covid-19. I use the opportunity to commend the efforts of the Agency and all Member States who continue to implement their national projects and participate in their regional program despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Regarding the financing of the Technical cooperation activities we consider that it should be ensured, sufficient and predictable. In this respect I would like to declare that my country pays its annual contribution to the TC fund fully and on time. In addition, I would like to underline our full support and financial contribution of 30 000 Euros to the ZODIAC initiative of the Agency. We look forward to the implementation of this project, which shall help Member States in combatting zoonotic diseases, preventing future pandemics and building resilience.

Dear Mister President,

Distinguished delegates,

Bulgaria continues its active participation in the other international organizations in the field of peaceful use of the nuclear energy, including ENSREG, WENRA, VVER regulators forum etc. Today, I am pleased to announce that Bulgaria became effective member also of the Nuclear Energy Agency of OECD as of January 1st 2021.

In conclusion, I wish to assure you that as in the past Bulgaria will be a constructive partner in all activities of IAEA and will contribute effectively to the achievement of the IAEA's main objectives: non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, enhancement of nuclear safety and security, and widening the scope of the peaceful application of the nuclear energy.

Thank you, Mister President.