

New Zealand National Statement

65th IAEA General Conference

Tuesday 21 September 2021

Thank you, Mr President.

Since our last General Conference, the global pandemic has continued to test the international community, including by challenging our efforts to collaborate to address pressing issues of global concern and importance. For New Zealand, this crisis has more than ever highlighted the value of multilateralism – that we live in an age where national responses to international issues are insufficient. There is a commonly cited Māori proverb in New Zealand that captures this sentiment: *“He waka eke noa”* – we are all in this canoe together.

As the many reports to this Conference have clearly shown, the IAEA has effectively continued its critical work over the past year. New Zealand joins others in commending the Director General and all Agency staff for their perseverance under these challenging circumstances. The Agency remains a cornerstone for international peace, security, and development and it has New Zealand’s full support.

Though presently global attention is rightfully captured by the pandemic response and the threat posed by climate change, the risk of nuclear proliferation remains very real in 2021. The IAEA’s safeguards work and the integrity of the international nuclear safeguards regime therefore must not be taken for granted. New Zealand fully supports the efforts of the original signatories of the JCPOA to return the deal to full functionality. Iran’s continued systematic breaches of the JCPOA limits are deeply concerning and present a growing nuclear proliferation risk. It is therefore in all our interests that the JCPOA is restored as soon as possible, so we urge all parties to redouble efforts to reach a positive outcome. Similarly, the DPRK’s nuclear programme remains an ever-present challenge to international security and we urge the DPRK to cease its provocations, including recent ballistic missile launches, and return to meaningful diplomatic dialogue to find a peaceful resolution. New Zealand thanks the IAEA for its professionalism and hard work on these and other safeguards files. We are pleased to have continued to make extra budgetary contributions to support this important work.

These challenges underscore the importance of a safeguards regime that is modern and applies the highest standards to curb the risk of nuclear proliferation. The Additional Protocol remains

the gold standard of safeguards and its universalisation is in all our interests. We also fully support the Director General's efforts to ensure that all states with outdated Small Quantities Protocols either rescind them or adopt the modified SQP, most critically those states that are already developing nuclear programmes without the appropriate Agency monitoring.

As clearly demonstrated by the Agency's activity over the past year, nuclear science, technology, and applications can deliver great benefits for us all. They also carry undeniable risk that must be thoroughly mitigated. As history has shown, a nuclear safety or security incident anywhere can have significant transboundary impacts and regional – or even global – implications. Each country must apply the highest standards of safety and security for our mutual protection. New Zealand believes the IAEA's work in this regard provides critical support for the peaceful use of the atom. We look forward to the upcoming nuclear safety conference in November on the lessons learned in the decade following the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear accident and the December Conference on the Safe and Secure Transport of Nuclear and Radioactive Materials. Both subjects are of critical interest to New Zealand and the Pacific region and there is certainly more work to be done.

Finally, Chair, it is important that the international legal framework on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses remains current and fit-for-purpose. New Zealand looks forward to the delayed Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty now scheduled for January in New York. We support a positive consensus outcome that covers all three interdependent pillars of the Treaty and highlights the IAEA's essential role in its implementation. New Zealand also commends the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Our work here in Vienna does not exist in a vacuum. Nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humankind and must be abolished. The TPNW bolsters the international legal framework on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses and we look forward to advancing our work at the first meeting of states parties in Vienna in March next year.

Mr President, let me close by once again thanking the Director-General and the IAEA staff for their tireless work over the last year. I wish you all a successful General Conference.

Thank you.