

**Statement of Sri Lanka
at the IAEA General Conference
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Agenda Item 7 - General debate and Annual Report for 2021

Delivered by

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Mr. President, Director General and Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka it is a privilege and honour to congratulate you Mr. President on assumption of the Presidency of the 65th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). My delegation assures you, Mr. President, our fullest support to steer the deliberations of the Conference to achieve tangible outcomes.

The COVID 19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for the whole world. We express our sincere appreciation to the Director General and the Agency for their tireless efforts in ensuring programmatic delivery of services to Member States which continued unabated during the global crisis. We remain grateful to the Agency for providing laboratory diagnostic equipments and accessories to contain the spread of the virus. Given the global nature of the pandemic we emphasise the necessity to maintain strong international solidarity and multilateral cooperation in the fight against COVID-19 and other zoonotic diseases. Coordinated efforts of Member States to recover from the economic and social impact of the pandemic can only be reached when working hand in hand with multilateral organisations. We endorse the Agency's efforts to support Member States in using nuclear and nuclear derived techniques to enhance global response preparedness to combat future recurrence of zoonotic diseases such as Covid 19.

We note with appreciation as reflected in the Annual Report the significant adaptations in the Agency's methods of work to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of its mandate in peaceful uses of nuclear technology, enhancing nuclear safety and security as well as nuclear verification and safeguards.

Sri Lanka continues to support the establishment of the IAEA Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action project (ZODIAC),. Sri Lanka is grateful to the IAEA for laboratory diagnostic equipments and accessories which will be utilized to upgrade Veterinary Investigation Centres in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka also appreciates for the assistance provided by the IAEA in Mitigation of Marine Ecological Disaster occurred due to X-Press Pearl ship which caught fire off the coast of Sri Lanka in May 2021. The spillage of chemicals and plastics that resulted from the disaster were a grave danger to the surrounding marine and coastline environment. The IAEA experts have already conducted several scientific discussions with the local experts. They will look closely on the pollution monitoring

program available at the moment with National Aquatic Resources Research & Development Agency (NARA) and will identify the gaps and then assist to conduct a comprehensive monitoring program for short- and long-term periods.

The IAEA's NUTEC plastics project which aims at combating marine plastic pollution with the help of nuclear derived techniques, is welcoming and Sri Lanka assures its full support to this project.

The Sri Lankan Atomic Energy Regulatory Council (SLAERC) with the assistance of the IAEA has prepared a national nuclear or radiological emergency management plan for possible emergencies in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The SLAERC has submitted a project proposal to the IAEA for the 2022 – 2023 project cycle on "Strengthening the National Capabilities for Responding to Nuclear or Radiological Emergencies – SRL2020002 for strengthening preparedness and management of nuclear or radiological emergency in the country.

Sri Lanka is grateful for the IAEA for the technical support extended by the IAEA in enhancing the capacities of Sri Lankan institutions dealing with nuclear and radiological sources.

Sri Lanka considers the role of the Agency in promoting the peaceful uses and varied applications of nuclear technology as an important supportive modality for Member States to achieve their nationally defined targets under the Sustainable Development Goals. Sri Lanka therefore extends its fullest support for the renovation of the Seibersdorf laboratories under the RENUAL project.

Our cooperation with the IAEA under the Technical Cooperation Programme and the IAEA's direct technical support, research and development, capacity building and expertise has facilitated the country to move into cleaner technologies, in making improvements in the agriculture and health sectors. As we progress on the implementation of the current phase of the technical cooperation programme in the country, Sri Lanka is keen to focus on strengthening of the regulatory infrastructure for radiation safety & source security and will continue to work closely with the Agency and other bilateral partners to this effect.

We encourage the Secretariat to continue building up nuclear technology capacities of Member States, especially developing states, by

supporting and the use of nuclear technologies in agriculture, energy, Industrial, health and water management as well as nuclear power. Sri Lanka recognizes the pivotal role of the IAEA, in facilitating nuclear techniques and energy for peaceful purposes.

While being aware of emerging trends and challenges in the nuclear field, Sri Lanka is keen to explore the possibilities for expanding the use of nuclear power for the electricity generation and other technologies. .

My delegation would like to underline the importance of the role that the Agency plays in promoting nuclear safety and security around the world. The peaceful use of nuclear technology can only serve their purpose if they are safely and securely deployed.

Sri Lanka firmly believes in the positive potential that the IAEA can provide by effectively sharing the benefits of safe and secure applications of nuclear technology with all.

I wish to extend Sri Lanka's deep appreciation to the Director General Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi and to all of the staff of the IAEA who have worked under unprecedented challenges over the past year.

We look forward to an equally meaningful year ahead and to working with the IAEA in a spirit of cooperation.

Thank you