

STATEMENT

by Mr. Tsanko Bachiyiski

Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency of Bulgaria

Head of the delegation to the 66th General Conference of the IAEA

Vienna, September 26 – 30, 2022

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 66th 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 Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the IAEA for the preparation of the 2021 Annual Report. Please also allow me to express our ardent support to Director General Mr. Grossi for his decisive leadership and to all IAEA staff for their courage and determination in accomplishing their tasks in these turbulent times, including during IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhia.

Bulgaria is deeply concerned with the severe threats to the nuclear safety, security and safeguards caused by Russia's military aggression in Ukraine. Therefore we call for full implementation of the fundamental Seven Pillars as outlined by the Director General in order to ensure nuclear safety, security and implementation of the safeguards system in Ukraine. We call also on the immediate termination of any attacks on nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes. We welcome the objectives of the Director General's

proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and look forward on the elaboration of the modalities to be agreed that should respect the Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity. We recall the IAEA General Conference consensus decision from 2009 stating that “any armed attack on and threat against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes constitutes a violation of the principles of the UN Charter, international law and the Statute of the Agency”.

Dear Mister President,

Republic of Bulgaria is strongly committed to the efforts for further nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We regret that an important opportunity to make tangible progress in all three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was missed during the 10th Review Conference of the (NPT) this year. We consider the safeguards system of the IAEA as a fundamental component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and guaranty for the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Efforts must continue to further strengthen its effectiveness and efficiency in particular through universalization of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol.

Bulgaria reaffirms its support to the full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran and calls on Iran to refrain from any further escalatory steps, to reverse all activities inconsistent with the JCPOA and return, without any further delay, to its full implementation and to its obligations under the Iran’s NPT Safeguards Agreement. We call for the full restoration

of the Agency's necessary oversight activities, including transparency measures foreseen under the JCPOA. We believe that complete and unconditional cooperation with the IAEA is essential for Iran to demonstrate the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

Regarding DPRK we are deeply concerned with the continuation of its nuclear program and call on DPRK to revert to full compliance with all its NPT and IAEA safeguards obligations as a non-nuclear weapon state, sign and ratify the CTBT and stop any testing of missile systems.

I would also like to underline once again 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.

Dear Mister President,

Nuclear power in Bulgaria continues to be a major factor in the country's energy mix, under conditions of high technology, production efficiency, competitive prices and maintaining of a high level of nuclear safety, security and radiation protection.

Bulgaria considers nuclear safety and security of the nuclear facilities a major factor for developing nuclear energy. In 2021 Units 5 and 6 of the Kozloduy NPP were operated 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 2021.

The National report of Bulgaria at the Seventh Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the

Safety of Radioactive Waste Management was approved acknowledging Bulgaria's strong commitment to implement its obligations under the Joint Convention.

Bulgaria participated actively in the 2022 Review Conference of the Amended Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. As the only legally binding act in nuclear security the Convention is important milestone for national nuclear security regimes. Therefore it is important that together with other State Parties we formed the necessary majority to call for a next review conference of the Convention.

Bulgaria submitted in time its 9th National report under the Convention on Nuclear Safety in August 2022. We are looking forward to engage in a constructive discussion on the nuclear safety during the Joint 8th and 9th Review meeting in 2003.

We commend IAEA for its proactive role in this field through various projects and initiatives including the SMRs Nuclear Regulators Forum and the launch of the Agency-wide platform on SMRs. We welcome the Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative announced by the Director General Grossi and participated in its kick-off meeting in June 2022.

We consider knowledge management as key element of the safe and secure operation of nuclear facilities and support IAEA initiatives promoting sustainability of nuclear education and training in all areas of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In order to strengthen the human capacity and to address the existing insufficiency of young professionals the Bulgarian government adopted in 2022 National Strategy on Human Resource Development in the Nuclear Sector 2022 – 2032.

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 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 2022, the implementation of the new cycle of the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program for 2022-2023 started with three national projects for Bulgaria in the field of radiation protection, knowledge management and agriculture. In the framework of this cycle our country participates in over 30 regional and interregional projects from the Program. Regarding the financing of the Technical cooperation activities I would like to declare that my country pays its annual contribution to the TC fund fully and on time. Bulgaria has also supported the ZODIAC initiative with financial contribution in support of the developing countries.

Dear Mister President,

Distinguished delegates,

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.