

66TH SESSION OF THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE

STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

Delivered by Head of Delegation, H.E. Mario HORVATIĆ,

Ambassador and Permanent Representative

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

at the outset, Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chair of the 66th session of the General Conference. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary leadership. We have full confidence in your ability to steer the work of this General Conference towards its successful conclusion.

I would also like to express profound gratitude to the Agency and Director General Grossi for all the efforts put into stabilization of the global nuclear safety and security, most notably with regard to the extremely serious situation in Ukraine. We are particularly impressed by the outstanding courage and determination of the IAEA expert team led by Director General Grossi in their mission to Europe's largest nuclear power plant Zaporizhzhya, in the heart of the warzone.

Russian invasion of Ukraine has created an unprecedented situation in which an active nuclear power plant has become the object of shelling and destruction of the infrastructure required to connect the plant to electrical power grid. Moreover, the same nuclear power plant has been occupied, used to station military units and to carry out offensive activities, while continuing to operate the entire time. This undermines all principles of nuclear safety and infinitely raises the possibility of

a nuclear accident and radiological contamination with cross-border impact. Using the nuclear power plants and other sites for military purposes and as means of intimidation and blackmail is an intolerable precedent for which there can be no excuse. Attacks on Zaporizhzhya, Chernobil, Harkiv and other nuclear sites across Ukraine seriously undermine security of all countries and Russian Federation must responsibly join the international community in treating nuclear sites as demilitarized zones.

Russian military aggression against Ukraine also creates severe negative effects on climate change, which are not felt only in Europe, but around the whole world. Disruptive impact on supply chains, including energy and food, is another critical global challenge.

Taking all of this into account, the direction in which IAEA member states should go is clear. Strengthening the resilience and protection of critical infrastructure in the sectors of energy, communication and information technology, transport, health, food supply, transport of dangerous substances, public services and protection of cultural values is of utmost importance.

Even though the European Union undertook the strictest measures against Russia, in full accordance with the international law, the energy independence of individual EU member states for the time being remains questionable.

The European Union, for the purposes of taxonomy, has labelled nuclear energy as green and, in the light of dependency on Russian energy imports, accelerates the diversification of fuel supply for nuclear power plants. Having that in mind, the importance of implementation of the highest standards of nuclear safety and security remains a priority.

Mr. President,

turning to national issues, I am happy to inform that Croatian cooperation with the Agency remains exemplary. We are grateful to IAEA staff and experts for their assistance in our implementation of international standards, thus strengthening our efforts to improve radiological and nuclear safety in Croatia and the surrounding countries.

In the course of 2022 Croatia has been working intensively to improve the national regulatory framework in the field of radiological and nuclear safety through the implementation of international commitments and in accordance with the recommendations of the Integrated Regulatory Review Service Follow Up Mission.

The national Country Programme Framework 2020-2025 identifies the following priority areas for technical cooperation with the IAEA:

1. Radiological and nuclear safety and security;
2. Food and agriculture;
3. Health;
4. Water and environment;
5. Energy and industry

Currently, three national projects were proposed within 2024–2025 technical cooperation programme. Croatian scientists and experts participate in several regional projects in accordance with the priorities of the Country Programme Framework.

Croatia has participated in the 7th Review Meeting of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. We have also have submitted the 9th national Report for the upcoming Joint 8th and 9th review meeting of the Convention of Nuclear Safety.

Croatia is prepared to host the ARTEMIS peer review mission in June 2023, in order to fulfil its obligations under Article 14.3 of the Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom of 19 July 2011, establishing a Community Framework for the Responsible and Safe Management of Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste. The scope of the peer review will be the assessment of the national radioactive waste, disused sealed radioactive sources and spent fuel management as well as the relevant regulatory framework.

Croatia is committed to continuing a successful bilateral cooperation with our neighbouring countries – Slovenia and Hungary – in particular, regarding the timely exchange of information in the event of a radiological emergency.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to underline once again Croatian determination to continue close cooperation with the Agency and I wish this session of the General Conference full success.

Thank you very much.