

66th General Conference of the IAEA

Statement

The Republic of Latvia

Mr. Edvīns Balševics, State Secretary of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia,

Vienna, Austria, 26 – 30 September 2022

Mr. President,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Latvia fully aligns with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

Mr. President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of this Conference and allow me to commend the Director General and the staff of the Agency for being an example of trusted professionalism in these unprecedented circumstances.

Mr. President,

We express our utmost concern over the nuclear safety and security risks caused by the Russian Federation in its unjustified invasion of Ukraine. Russia's dangerous actions include seizing control of nuclear facilities, endangering and even damaging said nuclear facilities, their safeguard systems and other infrastructure elements, significantly raising the risk of a nuclear accident that would endanger both the local and international community.

Latvia highly values the rigorous work of the Director General and the Agency since Russia's brutal invasion began in sustaining global nuclear safety and security. From closely monitoring Ukraine's nuclear facilities, implementing safeguards and conducting IAEA's expert missions to Ukraine, to providing the required technical support and assistance. The IAEA has taken considerable steps to reduce the risk of a severe nuclear accident.

Latvia attaches great importance to the fact-based information provided by IAEA about the nuclear safety situation in Ukraine, reducing misinformation and improving public understanding. IAEA access to nuclear facilities in Ukraine is critically important. The IAEA mission to Zaporizhzhya was beneficial, but it showed that the situation is grim and we are thankful to IAEA for ensuring constant monitoring through its experts.

Mr. President,

This uniquely grave situation underscores the value and expertise of the IAEA. It is not only a core component of the global non-proliferation regime through its safeguards under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also has the foremost role in upholding nuclear safety and security.

As for the IAEA's role in upholding safeguards under the NPT, we must mention the regrettable lack of an outcome document at the recent NPT Review Conference. This was due to Russia and its dislike of reality, in particular, the acknowledgement of its reprehensible actions in Zaporizhzhya and the reminder that the world remembers the Budapest memorandum.

Mr. President,

We remain confident of the utility and benefits that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) provides. Despite international efforts, Iran has continued to reduce

its commitment to the JCPOA. We condemn such detrimental actions to international non-proliferation, including prohibition of full IAEA verification and reporting.

Latvia also condemns continued provocations and nuclear rhetoric from the DPRK¹. We call for it to move toward complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation, as its nuclear programme and arsenal are clear violations of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We appreciate the readiness of the Agency to verify DPRK's nuclear programme.

Furthermore, Latvia highly values the Agency's role in strengthening global nuclear safety and security, as well as facilitating peaceful uses of nuclear technology and advancing nuclear research. We must continue these efforts in order to both prevent nuclear terrorism and sustain peaceful uses of nuclear technology that enable breakthroughs in energy, medicine and beyond.

Mr. President,

On technical cooperation, Latvia thanks the IAEA Technical Cooperation Department for its invaluable support to Member States, particularly its guidance on adjusting regulatory frameworks to ensure high standards.

In May of this year, IAEA review mission carried out an audit on Quality Improvement Quality Assurance Team for Radiation Oncology (QUATRO) in the largest radiotherapy centre in Latvia.

I express my gratitude to IAEA experts who ensured this QUATRO audit mission and shared recommendations on improving radiotherapy practices.

Mr. President,

¹ Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Latvia has started three new Technical Cooperation Cycle projects this year, including strengthening the regulatory framework for radiological emergencies and radioactive waste management.

Latvia appreciates the opportunities offered by the Agency's Technical Cooperation program.

In the next Cycle of 2024-2025 Latvia plans to improve the quality management system of the Radiation Safety Centre, the quality assurance procedures in diagnostic radiology and measures in radiotherapy at one hospital and the radiation safety control system at the radioactive waste disposal repository.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude by reminding this Conference of our collective responsibility to uphold international law and norms, which is crucial in our efforts to achieve a cleaner, healthier and safer future for all.

Thank you.