



**IAEA General Conference: September 2022
New Zealand National Statement**

Thank you Mr President,

As many other speakers have noted, we meet this week under the shadow of Russia's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal invasion of Ukraine. Russia's act of aggression has given rise to unprecedented threats to nuclear safety, security, and safeguards, particularly at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant but also across Ukraine's peaceful nuclear facilities. Russia has undermined decades of our work here with the IAEA to advance the peaceful use of the atom. That these reckless and illegal actions are wilfully committed by a nuclear weapon state and Permanent Member of the UN Security Council with deep nuclear knowledge and expertise make this senseless situation all the more difficult to comprehend. New Zealand unequivocally condemns Russia's war and the threat it has created of a Russian-made nuclear disaster. We commend Director General Grossi and the IAEA for their tireless efforts this year to uphold indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security in the face of Russia's relentless erosion of their foundations.

Russia's nuclear sabre rattling has further underscored for New Zealand the importance of our fight against nuclear weapons. New Zealand has always championed nuclear non-proliferation and the IAEA's vital role in this regard, but only the prohibition of nuclear weapons will truly address their scourge on humankind. As New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said to the UN General Assembly last week, the only way to guarantee our people that they will be safe from the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is for those weapons not to exist. That is why New Zealand calls on all states to join the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We choose the challenge of nuclear disarmament over the consequences of a failed strategy of weapons based deterrence.

It is for this reason that New Zealand also prizes the role of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and was so bitterly disappointed in the failure of the Review Conference in New York last month when Russia blocked consensus. As discussions during the Review Conference and here in Vienna continue to demonstrate, the work the IAEA does across its mandate continues to be invaluable to the international community and this would have been bolstered by a positive RevCon outcome. The high level of international support for the IAEA reflects the clear return on investment it provides in ensuring non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the safe, secure, safeguarded, and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Mr President,

New Zealand regrets that the international safeguards system continues to face challenges that go against our shared interests in bolstering this system. Iran's significant expansion of its nuclear programme raises serious concerns. New Zealand continues to hope that restoration of the JCPOA will see Iran's nuclear programme return to a place that is demonstrably civilian in purpose and is effectively monitored and verified by the IAEA. New Zealand also wishes to emphasise the importance of Iran's compliance with its safeguards obligations to address the IAEA's questions and concerns relating to undeclared nuclear material and activities there. These are essential matters of compliance that underpin the international safeguards system and we urge Iran to cooperate with the Agency to address them. Continued nuclear activity in the DPRK and Syria's on-going failure to address its noncompliance with its safeguards obligations for over a decade represent additional challenges to the integrity of a system that is vital to our collective peace and security.

Mr President,

It is equally important that the IAEA system as a whole remains as modern and "fit-for-purpose" as it needs to be across the IAEA's mandate. There are readily available ways that the safeguards system can be as comprehensive as it needs to be, with universal adoption of the Additional Protocol, and with relevant states amending or rescinding their Small Quantities Protocols, particularly where nuclear facilities are planned. As recently reported to the Board, the Agency is also working to ensure appropriate safeguards arrangements for nuclear naval propulsion, a new challenge that has drawn understandable interest from IAEA Member States. New Zealand has full confidence in the Agency's expertise, impartiality, and professionalism to deliver this work and to keep Member States fully informed as it progresses.

Nuclear safety and security are also key considerations for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. This is particularly true as we see increasing uptake of nuclear applications, science, and technology globally. The IAEA supports incredible work in these areas that can have widespread benefits for our people and prosperity, but nuclear energy also carries undeniable risks that must be thoroughly mitigated. As we all know well, a nuclear incident or accident does not respect lines on a map. New Zealand continues to maintain a close interest in the potential risks from the transport of nuclear materials and from nuclear power generation. It is critical that innovative technologies, such as SMRs and transportable nuclear power plants, are developed in a way that prioritises safety and security over speedy deployment.

In conclusion, Mr President, it is clear from the activity around this General Conference that the IAEA continues to deliver valuable work and is being asked to do even more over the year ahead. New Zealand believes the Agency is up to the challenge, but it will continue to need the full support and cooperation of all Member States if it is to succeed. And given the risks, we all do absolutely need it to succeed.

Thank you Mr President.