



**Statement by
H.E. Tanja Fajon
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia
at the Sixty-sixth Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference
Vienna, 26 September 2020**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by congratulating you, Ambassador, for assuming the role of the President of the 66th Session of the IAEA General Conference. I wish you every success in discharging your duties.

Mr. President,

(In addition to what has been said on behalf of the European Union, I would like to make a couple of points in my national capacity.)

First of all, I have to touch upon ***Russia's war on Ukraine***, which has had significant ramifications for global nuclear safety and security. Slovenia condemns in strongest possible terms the unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. The Board of Governors has acted decisively in this regard.

I would like to encourage Russia to stop disregarding demands set by the Board. The seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security must be fully respected.

Allow me to use this opportunity to commend you, Director General, and your team for your dedication, professionalism and impartiality in addressing the pressing situation regarding nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine.

Russian occupation of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant - the largest nuclear power plant in Europe - remains a major risk factor. The presence and activities of the Russian personnel at Zaporizhzhia created an unacceptable nuclear safety risk. We urge Russia to immediately withdraw from the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant its entire staff.

The situation in Zaporizhzhia was reflected in the lack of consensus at the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) Review Conference. Concretely, I deeply regret that despite intense negotiations, consensus on the outcome document could not be achieved. In particular, we deplore the fact that Russia did not see the situation in Zaporizhzhia as a matter of concern, and has blocked the adoption of appropriate language.

Secondly, *Mr. President*, Slovenia has repeatedly expressed its support for the **JCPoA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action)**, as well as concerns regarding Iran's decision to stop the implementation of transparency measures as envisaged in it. The nuclear deal is a vital part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and needs to be preserved. I therefore call on Iran to refrain from any further escalatory steps, to reverse all activities inconsistent with the JCPoA and return to its full implementation.

Thirdly, my country is concerned with the lack of substantive cooperation of Iran with regard to the **outstanding safeguards issues**. Even after the decisive action of the Board of Governors in June this year, Iran has not provided technically credible answers yet to Agency's questions on the undeclared locations. We need to be assured of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. I am convinced that progress is possible and I call on Iran to start co-operating immediately and in full with the IAEA to resolve all outstanding safeguards matters.

Fourthly, Slovenia commends the transparent manner in which Australia, UK and the US have approached the potential acquisition of conventionally armed and nuclear powered submarines by Australia – by informing all relevant fora. We expect the **AUKUS** partners will continue to pursue their goals in concert with the IAEA Secretariat and in full respect of their international obligations.

Finally, *Mr. President*, as a country benefiting from nuclear energy, we deeply **appreciate the Agency's work** related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards. We promote sustainable development through our support to the activities of the IAEA on the broad range of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including as a clean and reliable energy source. In this regard, Slovenia is proud to have been able to financially support the renovation of the Seibersdorf Laboratories.

At the same time, I cherish the activities of the Secretariat in pursuit of **gender equality and gender balance**. Slovenia has for this reason provided a donation to the Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship Programme.

Speaking on gender issues - I sincerely hope that the governors will be able to support the only female **candidate for the Chair of the Board of Governors** - the Slovenian permanent representative to the IAEA. Of course, gender is not the only reason to support the Slovenian candidate. We have significant experience in steering international fora of great importance, including the IAEA's Board of Governors, which we have chaired twice in the past. We did that because we have keen interest in supporting the important work of the Agency. This was true 30 years ago when Slovenia joined the IAEA and it is true in the difficult times we are facing today.

Under the motto "**Building trust – Securing future**" Slovenia is running for a **non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the period 2024-2025**. We have proven many times in numerous fora that we can bring to the table the perspectives of a small state, which is mindful of contemporary security challenges and strongly supportive of the effective multilateral cooperation at the global and regional levels.

Dear delegates, let me conclude by wishing us all effective multilateralism that will bring us to a less turbulent future starting by a successful conclusion of this IAEA General Conference.

Thank you