

## **IAEA 66<sup>th</sup> General Conference**

### **Australian National Statement**

**Delivered by HE Mr Richard Sadleir, Resident Representative of Australia to the  
International Atomic Energy Agency**

**27 September 2022**

President,

It is a tremendous privilege for me to address this General Conference, after two years of virtual General Conferences; to be joined here by the leaders of Australia's nuclear agencies; and to address my colleagues from across the world on the vitally important issues we are in Vienna to consider.

I want to begin by reaffirming Australia's strong commitment to the goals of the International Atomic Energy Agency and our support for the Director General and his staff. Australia commends the work of the Agency – you have our full confidence, trust and respect.

The work we all do here in Vienna is critical to achieving many of our shared interests, including meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals and preserving a global environment conducive to peace, security and development.

But we find ourselves at a moment of immense global challenge. International security is being undermined by states which are prepared to disregard well-established international rules and norms and which seek to pursue their aims by the exercise of power and aggression.

As Australia's Foreign Minister emphasised to the United Nations General Assembly last week, this is why Russia's illegal, immoral invasion of Ukraine cannot be normalised and cannot be minimised.

Australia condemns Russia's nuclear brinkmanship. We remain deeply concerned by the nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications of Russia's illegal and reckless actions in Ukraine.

We welcome the IAEA's commitment to monitoring the situation at Ukraine's nuclear facilities, including establishing a continuous presence at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Russia's ongoing occupation of the site constitutes an unprecedented and unacceptable threat to nuclear safety and security, and endangers the safety of Ukrainian and IAEA staff at the NPP. We call on Russia to cease hostilities and withdraw immediately from the site, and from the whole of Ukraine.

Australia was pleased to provide funding to support the IAEA's work to address nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, and we were one of the first countries to deliver radiation monitoring equipment and personal protective equipment for use by Ukrainian

operators through the IAEA's response mechanism. We are committed to supporting the IAEA in its efforts to ensure the integrity of the 'seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict'.

President,

In the midst of this disruption, it is vital that the Agency is able to continue its work to promote access to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. Nuclear applications enable us to enhance human health, investigate the origins of disease, assist industry, and address environmental challenges – including water sustainability, climate change and marine pollution.

Australia has a long history of supporting the IAEA's excellent work in this area and of applying our own leading nuclear science expertise, enabled by regulatory and safety architecture established seventy years ago.

This year, we were pleased to contribute extrabudgetary funding for priority projects for our region and beyond, including to help combat plastic pollution, to provide Marie Skłodowska-Curie scholarships for women from Pacific Island Countries, to support Tonga's engagement with regional technical cooperation activities, and to support the renovation of the IAEA's nuclear applications laboratories.

Australia is a proud supporter and member of the *Regional Cooperative Agreement for Asia and the Pacific*, the RCA, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The RCA has delivered vast and profound benefits for our region - particularly in human health, agriculture and the environment. We are honoured to hold the position of RCA Chair for the coming year, and look forward to hosting the 2023 National Representatives Meeting in Sydney in May. We remain committed to supporting the critical work of the RCA for decades to come, and to continuing to contribute to technical cooperation activities in our region.

President,

Access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology is best facilitated when people, society and the environment are protected from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation, and when we guard against the misuse of nuclear material or technology. Australia is a firm supporter of the Agency's work on safety, security and safeguards.

Strict adherence to IAEA safeguards obligations is a critical element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture. Australia sees the combination of a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol as the contemporary standard for verification. We will continue to work for the universalisation of the Additional Protocol. We welcome the IAEA's successful completion of 12 inspections, design information verification visits and complementary accesses in Australia in the past year.

The IAEA must be able to conduct its important safeguards work, including the analysis of all safeguards relevant material.

We remain deeply concerned by Iran's failure to resolve outstanding NPT safeguards issues in a full and technically credible manner. This situation cannot continue. We emphasise

Australia's strong and continued support for the professional work of the Director General and IAEA staff as they seek to implement NPT safeguards in the Islamic Republic and note with grave concern that Iran's actions prevent the Agency from providing assurances that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.

We support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and call on Iran to reverse its steps away from its nuclear-related commitments under the agreement.

We also regret that Syria has not provided any new information to resolve outstanding questions about undeclared facilities and activities at its Dair Alzour site.

President,

Australia condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s ongoing development of its illegal and destabilising nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Recent legislation passed by the DPRK seeking to normalise its possession of nuclear weapons is deeply concerning, as was Kim Jong Un's categorical rejection of negotiations on denuclearisation.

Australia urges the DPRK not to resume nuclear testing, which would seriously undermine regional peace and security. It is imperative that the DPRK returns to compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, permits the return of IAEA safeguards inspectors, and signs and ratifies the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We also urge the DPRK to comply fully with the UN Security Council resolutions which require it to abandon its nuclear, other weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

President

We were deeply disappointed that the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) did not reach a consensus outcome despite the urgency of the international security environment. We will continue our active engagement in the implementation of the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and seek to advance its three pillars - disarmament, non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

President

In September 2021, the Governments of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States announced an 18-month consultation process to determine the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Since that announcement, our three Governments have been focussed on developing a rigorous and robust non-proliferation approach for this endeavour which strengthens the integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The need to set a very high standard was emphasised by the Director General to the senior-most levels of the Australian Government during his visit to Australia in July. The leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States reaffirmed on 24 September that the international community can be

confident that our nations will continue to work transparently with the IAEA towards an approach that will strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

We have been, and will continue to be, transparent and open in our technical consultations with the IAEA and in our engagement with the international community. This is entirely consistent with the longstanding and deep commitment of all three partners to the nuclear non-proliferation regime, and our track record of upholding our respective legal obligations. We will continue to provide updates on our consultations with the IAEA.

We welcome Director General Grossi's report to the September Board of Governors on consultations between the IAEA Secretariat, Australia, the UK and the US, on the development of suitable verification measures for Australia's naval nuclear propulsion program to enable the Agency to confirm the non-diversion of nuclear material. DG Grossi has expressed his satisfaction with the level of engagement of AUKUS partners to date. The report presents a factual and independent technical account of our consultations – consistent with the IAEA's well-established mandate and authority on these issues. We strongly support the Director General's prerogative to report as he deems appropriate.

President,

The work of the IAEA and of the Director General is central to all our endeavours. The Agency's staff and leadership work diligently, professionally and impartially in extremely challenging circumstances. Australia commends the Agency's efforts to improve gender equality across its operations and activities, and to help increase the representation of women in the nuclear sector. We urge the Agency to continue to build a flexible, inclusive workplace with a diverse workforce, and to strengthen its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. We are proud to be a founding member of the Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear.

We note the very pressing issues that the Director General has raised in relation to the IAEA's budget. Australia has always paid its assessed contributions to the Agency in full and on time and we urge others to do the same. We are committed to working with the Agency to address the pressures on its budget while preserving the broad range of activities within its mandate.

Thank you, President.