

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

STATEMENT OF THE HEAD OF DELEGATION

H.E. Ambassador Mario HORVATIC, Permanent Representative to IAEA

67th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

Vienna, 25-29 September 2023

Madam President,

On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Croatia, I would like to congratulate you on your election as the President of the 67th General Conference and assure you of our full support in the successful management of the work of this General Conference.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Croatia fully aligns itself with the statement made earlier by Spain on behalf of the European Union. Let me add a few remarks in our national capacity.

First of all, let me extend our warmest congratulations to IAEA Director General Grossi for his well-deserved appointment to the second term of duty. We thank DG Grossi for his outstanding performance in the past four years and look forward to the continuation of our exemplary cooperation in the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank DG Grossi and the entire Agency for their continued efforts and commitment in ensuring nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, as well as maintaining IAEA safeguards for nuclear materials and activities during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Military operations in the vicinity of the largest European nuclear power plant Zaporizhzhya significantly increase the risk of a nuclear accident and incident, compromising the Agency's seven pillars of nuclear safety and security, endangering above all the population of Ukraine and the surrounding countries, but also the world population as a whole. Therefore, in order to ensure the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, we emphasize that Russian Federation must join the international community in treating nuclear power plants as demilitarized zones.

Croatia is also deeply concerned by the decision of Iran to withdraw the permission of the IAEA inspectors to carry out verification activities of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Safeguard Agreement in enrichment facilities in Iran. Therefore, we call on the government of Iran to renew cooperation with the IAEA in order to implement the NPT Safeguards

Agreement and provide evidence that Iran's nuclear program will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

Madam President,

This year, more than ever, we are witnessing the unprecedented severe consequences of climate change, which manifested themselves through wildfires, severe storms and floods that hit various areas of our planet. We felt them strongly also here in Europe, with loss of human lives and enormous material damage. This is a reminder to us all that we need to make an extra effort to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and reduce our carbon footprint. Progress in nuclear technology creates global opportunities, but also challenges in strengthening and modernizing national legal and regulatory frameworks to enable the operation of small modular reactors as key elements in the transformation of nuclear energy application technology and industrial development. In that context, we thank the Agency for organizing a large number of educational workshops aimed at expanding the knowledge and understanding of the key characteristics and application of the technologies of small modular reactors and microreactors between national stakeholders, with an emphasis on the security and safety of these facilities. The development and deployment of small modular reactors significantly rely on global standardization and harmonization of regulatory and industrial approaches, and the Agency contributes significantly to this process through its Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative.

Croatia continues good cooperation with the Agency by investing in the improvement of radiological and nuclear safety through the implementation of international standards and strengthening of national capacities.

Let me provide just a few examples of such activities in 2023.

Croatia continues intensive work on improving the national regulatory framework in the field of radiological and nuclear safety through the implementation of assumed international obligations and in accordance with the recommendations of the IRRS Mission and the ARTEMIS mission.

Croatian scientists and experts continuously participate in national and regional IAEA projects in accordance with the priorities of the national framework program.

In March 2023, Croatia participated in the work of the Joint 8th and 9th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

In June 2023, Croatia hosted the ARTEMIS mission in order to fulfill the obligations under Article 14.3 of Council Directive 2011/70/Euratom of June 19, 2011, on the establishment of a Community framework for the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. The recommendations and suggestions of experts of the ARTEMIS mission represent valuable guidelines for the improvement of the national system of management of radioactive waste, disused sources and spent nuclear fuel. Croatia is strongly committed to strengthening the national regulatory and legal framework in this area, which will reduce the transfer of the burden of disposal of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel to the next generations.

Finally, Croatia continues to maintain highly successful bilateral cooperation with its neighbours - Slovenia and Hungary - especially with regard to the timely exchange of information in the event of a nuclear and radiological threat.

Madam President,

let me conclude by once again emphasizing Croatia's commitment to the continued close cooperation with the Agency and by wishing success to this General Conference.

Thank you for your attention!