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MONTENEGRO STATEMENT

By

Ms. Biljana Šćepanović, PhD, Minister of Science and Technological Development

Ms. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the very beginning, allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Ms. President, on your appointment as the Chairperson of the 67th General Conference of the IAEA.

We are confident that under your guidance and leadership we will be able to reach a fruitful conclusion of our deliberations, to build on our shared interests and find ways to overcome those issues that divide us.

Montenegro fully aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the EU. I would like to, nonetheless, address you in my national capacity and highlight just few key issues of particular importance to my country.

Ms. President,

The IAEA has made an incalculable contribution to global peace, security and overall scientific development throughout the years.

The response of the Agency to the grave global challenges we have been facing has only proven the value and the indispensable role that the IAEA plays across sectors and fields. These range from health and food issues, energy crisis and climate change, to the contribution of the IAEA to the compromised geopolitical stability and security, most notably today with respect to the highly precarious situation in Ukraine.

We are extremely worried about the continuous threats to nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, especially at the illegally seized NPP Zaporizhzhya site and the devastating consequences we could all face in case of a nuclear accident.

We, once again, unequivocally condemn the unprovoked and unjustified Russian aggression of Ukraine and we call on Russia to fulfil the IAEA Board's resolutions and stop breaking the core norms of international law and international humanitarian law.

We thank the Director General Grossi and the IAEA staff for their bravery and commitment shown since the first days of this brutal aggression. We fully support the IAEA's presence and work at all nuclear sites in Ukraine, and we reaffirm our support for the 5 principles outlined by DG Grossi in May, aimed at preventing nuclear accident and protecting the NPP Zaporizhzhya.

Ms. President,

The International Atomic Energy Agency IS its mandate, its structures and platforms, its vast body of regulatory norms, standards and guidelines, its technical assistance programs, its **laboratories**, which Montenegro has supported both politically and financially through the Renewal projects.

Critically, the Agency *IS* its PEOPLE, its scientific, management and administrative staff, who work with utmost professional and expert rigor to deliver results to us in an unbiased, objective and independent manner. We highly appreciate this relentless dedication, and we rely on it to ensure that our safety and security is protected.

Having said this, allow me to join all others in congratulating Director General Grossi on the new mandate at the helm of the Agency.

Director Grossi, the early agreement among us on your reappointment is a testament to Your skills, commitment and passion, as well as boldness you have demonstrated in the past three years. We have full trust in your work and guidance for the upcoming period.

Ms. President,

As a small, non-nuclear state, Montenegro has benefited substantively from the fruitful cooperation with the IAEA, through comprehensive and wide-ranging technical assistance programmes. The new Country Programme Framework for Cooperation between Montenegro and the IAEA, for the period 2022-2027, which we signed during the last year's General Conference, defined new priorities and deepened avenues of our joint cooperation.

We are committed and determined to provide and showcase our unequivocal support to the Agency on the issues of this and future TC Cycles. As a constitutionally declared ecological state and a promoter of sustainable development, we strongly support the IAEA's global initiatives such as ZODIAC, NUTEC and the Rays of Hope and we welcome the newly launched Atoms4Food.

We are confident that this will be another example of how strong partnerships and synergies among international organizations can bring the most value added to us as member states.

Montenegro is firmly committed to giving its utmost contribution to the successful implementation of these and other initiatives within the IAEA. In this regard, I would like to use this opportunity to **express our commitment to contribute, among the other things, to the gender equality initiatives of the IAEA.**

In addition, allow me to **express our readiness to convene and host events in cooperation with the IAEA,** making additional contribution to our already outstanding cooperation with the Agency.

Distinguished colleagues,

Montenegro is strongly committed to the full implementation and universalization of the multilateral regime for disarmament and non-proliferation. We are a state party to all major IAEA conventions and other relevant international instruments, striving to meet the highest of standards when it comes to nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

At these unprecedented times, international cooperation is more important than ever.

Let me assure you of the full support of the delegation of Montenegro during this week.

I thank you.