

Statement of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the
Technical Cooperation Programme to be delivered by Ambassador Manizha Bakhtari,
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the IAEA
26–28 November 2024, Vienna, Austria

Co-Chairs,
Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to extend my appreciation and congratulations to Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA Secretariat, and the Co-Chairs of this conference for organizing this important platform to address newly emerged global issues that demand our collective attention since the last Ministerial Conference in 2018.

I commend the Agency for its continued efforts to promote innovation and the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology to tackle important challenges in food, health, and the environment. We also warmly welcome the IAEA's recent four cross-cutting initiatives—Atoms4Food, NUTEC Plastics, Rays of Hope, and ZODIAC—which demonstrate the Agency's commitment to doing more to overcome some of the world's greatest challenges.

Afghanistan resonates deeply with all the topics of this important conference, as they reflect the critical challenges our country faces every day.

Afghanistan is currently facing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with famine threatening the lives of millions, exacerbated by a worsening economic situation. Decades of conflict and instability have disrupted our agricultural sector, leaving farmers with outdated techniques, limited resources, and a population that has doubled over the last 20 years.

Afghanistan is also among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Rising temperatures, droughts, and unpredictable weather patterns, including heavy rains and floods, have devastated livelihoods. Water scarcity is also one of the most pressing challenges Afghanistan faces today. Our capacity to manage and adapt to these changes remains extremely limited.

The interconnected challenges of poverty, environmental degradation, and limited access to healthcare have underscored the need for a “One Health” approach in Afghanistan. From pandemic preparedness to improving diagnostic and treatment capabilities, nuclear technology can play a transformative role in strengthening our fragile healthcare system and promoting public health.

Harnessing nuclear techniques across food security, climate change, health, and water resource management will enable Afghanistan to address these pressing challenges more effectively.

However, while we should strive to leverage nuclear science for development, Afghanistan faces unique challenges stemming from the current socio-political situation, which has hindered the implementation of these programs. In particular, the total ban on the engagement of women and girls—key to ensuring the sustainability of our developmental efforts—remains deeply concerning.

After more than three years of Taliban rule, the human rights crisis in Afghanistan has worsened dramatically, particularly for women and girls. The recent Law on the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, announced in August, institutionalizes a growing list of restrictions that blatantly violate their rights. The law even prohibits women from speaking in public, alongside other severe restrictions, such as forcing women to fully cover their faces, restricting their movement, banning solo travel without a male guardian, and forbidding interactions with men who are not close relatives. This systematic gender oppression constitutes gender apartheid. I call on all States to codify this term, welcoming the recent initiatives of the CEDAW committee and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

We urge the IAEA and its Member States to continue to support the people of Afghanistan, not only through the transfer of knowledge and technology but also by fostering partnerships that promote resilience and empower all segments of society, particularly women and girls.

We commend the IAEA for its efforts to ensure that everyone can benefit from the safe and peaceful uses of nuclear techniques in medicine, food safety and security, and environmental protection. Let us not forget the people of Afghanistan, who must also be given the opportunity to benefit from these advancements and work toward a prosperous and dignified global future.

I thank you.