

STATEMENT OF GEORGIA
Ms. Maia Bitadze, Deputy Minister,
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia
International Atomic Energy Agency
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Madam President,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the 61st IAEA General Conference. You have the assurance of the close cooperation of my delegation.

Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of Georgia, let me congratulate His Excellency Mr. Yukiya Amano on his re-election as the Director General of IAEA. At the same time, I would like to commend DG Amano for his leadership, dedication and hard work in the fulfilment of the IAEA's mandate. Georgia highly values the whole range of the Agency's activities, from verification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to increasing nuclear safety and security, as well as the promotion of peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology. Let me assure you, Mr. Amano, of Georgia's unfailing support.

We also welcome the newly elected members of the Board of Governors. Wish you all the success in serving the Board.

Georgia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the European Union. Allow me, in addition, to make the following comments from a national perspective.

Among other countries, Georgia condemns recent nuclear tests in DPRK, which are undermining the international norms against proliferation of nuclear weapons that put under danger the whole world. We call upon the DPRK to comply fully with its obligations, to cooperate promptly with the Agency and ensure full and unconditional compliance with all the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

Madam President,

Increasing threats emanating from various terrorist groups make the possibility of exploitation of security vulnerabilities with criminal intent highly probable, while some actors have already demonstrated acute interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction to terrorize the world.

The proliferation of nuclear and radioactive materials remains a subject of serious concern for Georgia, taking into account the close proximity to the region posing a high risk of proliferation.

In recent years, we had several recorded attempts of smuggling nuclear and radioactive materials via Georgia's territories, which are outside of the government's control, and which further amplifies the sense of danger. Fortunately, these illegal activities were duly prevented by Georgian law enforcement agencies. However, in the absence of the international presence on Georgia's occupied territories, it has become virtually impossible to conduct any type of verification activities on the ground. As a result, the risk of proliferation of the WMD-related materials in and from these regions has increased considerably.

Georgia plays its essential role in supporting existing global security architecture through implementing its components on the national level, providing sufficient commitments to the international legal instruments and among others joining global initiatives in this field.

Our Government attaches great importance to the IAEA's core responsibilities and decisive role in the field of non-proliferation, nuclear energy, nuclear safety, nuclear security and technical cooperation. Bearing in mind that nuclear safety is a global issue, which requires multilateral cooperation and support, we will continue our work with the IAEA with the aim to achieve lasting peace worldwide for current and future generations.

Georgia supports all measures to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system, which we consider an essential part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. We call on all countries to conclude Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Additional Protocol as the world-wide standard for verifying compliance with the NPT. The spread of nuclear weapons must be prevented.

Madam President,

Allow me to highlight steps taken by the Georgian side for the period of 2016-2017 aimed at contribution to the work of IAEA. Georgia being party to the *Agreement with IAEA for the application of safeguards in connection with the treaty of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons* and following current international concerns and analyzing national needs, has adopted national regulation on *activities related to nuclear non-proliferation guarantees*. Mentioned regulation defines out responsibilities of regulatory body of Georgia and physical/legal persons possessing nuclear material in a clear, precise and understandable way. Additionally, regarding the harmonization process, initiative of accessing to the *Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency* reported last year, was approved by the Government of Georgia and is already submitted to the Parliament for the finalization of accession process.

Moreover, I would like to emphasize the importance of Technical Cooperation Programs for Georgia, which remain the main tool of attaining improvements in the field of nuclear and radiation safety and security. Technical Cooperation Programs have been expanded for Georgia for the period of 2018-2021 which is both success and responsibility at the same time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me underline our successful partnership with the European Union. Beside the projects already implemented in cooperation with the EU, with the active participation of Swedish Nuclear Regulatory Authority we plan to commence an ambitious project of making thorough research for building new repository and processing facilities, which will be in full compliance with IAEA and European standards.

The contribution of United States Department of Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission is highly appreciated by Georgia. They play a crucial role in enhancing regulatory body system, as well as developing relevant infrastructure. I would like to express my country's gratitude to the US for provided support in this field.

In addition, let me emphasize that Georgia adopted National Strategy on Radioactive Waste Management that is the huge step towards implementing national and international standards and requirements. The strategy approved by the Government of Georgia is supplemented by the action plan – reviewed and renewed every 2 years ensures step-by-step achievement of strategy goals, with the aim to create ground for new sophisticated repository facility and improve national regulatory system.

To conclude Madam President, on behalf of my delegation I wish to express my sincerest thanks for continuous and substantial contribution that the Agency, the European Union and all our partner countries have made through the years to a number of sectors in my country.

I would like to reiterate our readiness for an open and constructive cooperation and thank all the participants of the conference for their most valuable contributions.

I thank you for your attention.