



Statement by

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Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Malta

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Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset may I convey my congratulations to you, Ambassador Maria Zeneida Angara Collinson, on your election as President of this 61st Session of the IAEA General Conference, and assure you of my delegation's cooperation and support towards successfully accomplishing the important work before us. I would also like to express our appreciation to the outgoing President, the distinguished Governor of Malaysia, Ambassador Dato' Adnan Bin Othman, for his work over the past twelve months.

Over the past year, the Agency has continued to play a truly instrumental role in the nuclear field; fulfilling a crucial technical mandate, playing a vital role in verification, helping steer the international community towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and striving to ensure the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to the benefit of Member States, in line with the concept of Atoms for Peace and Development. In this regard, I again take the opportunity to thank the IAEA Director General and the Secretariat for their diligent and professional work and congratulate the Director General on his re-election.

As countries continue to recognise the Agency's valuable work, we welcome the application for membership by Grenada.

With these comments, Malta associates itself with the statement delivered by Estonia on behalf of the European Union. I would, however, like to add a few additional observations in my national capacity, relating to specific points of importance to my country.

Madam President,

This year, we entered a new review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Malta reiterates its absolute and unwavering support to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime and essential for the enhancement of cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear technology whilst striving to achieve nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the Treaty. For this reason, Malta welcomes the successful First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference in May of this year. Malta would like to thank Ambassador Henk Cor Van der Kwast of the Netherlands for his impeccable stewardship of the proceedings and we look forward to the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee making further progress in this important endeavour under the able chairmanship of Poland next year. The 2017 session demonstrated the shared will of all NPT State Parties to uphold and preserve the Treaty as a key multilateral instrument, to seek further adherence to it and to strengthen its implementation. Malta continues to unequivocally call for the universalisation of the NPT, and invites states which are not yet parties to the Treaty, to reassess their position and to ratify the Treaty without further delay.

Despite being a small island with no notable nuclear power, given Malta's strategic central location in the Mediterranean, we continue to closely follow the events unfolding in this region, notably in the South of the Mediterranean as well as in the East, and specifically the

Middle East in particular. Malta regrets that the Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, which was foreseen to take place in 2012 by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, has not yet been convened. We emphasise that, in spite of the lack of concrete progress in this regard, the goals of the 1995 Resolution remain as valid as ever. Malta believes that furthering non-proliferation and disarmament efforts in the Middle East would be of great benefit and significance not only to the region itself, but indeed to the broader international community. In view of this, we call upon all States of the region to engage in constructive, positive dialogue, cooperating and working in good faith, towards achieving tangible progress to this end.

Madam President,

Malta wishes to take this opportunity to highlight one of the most challenging dossiers we are faced with today. The dangerous behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) continues to escalate as a global concern. Malta condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 3 September of this year, as well as the continuing missile-related activities, particularly the launches on 4 and 28 July, 29 August and 15 September. Such tests and activities by the DPRK are inherently provocative and in clear violation of international obligations. They also serve to aggravate tensions in the region and constitute a grave threat to international peace and security more broadly as well as to the global non-proliferation regime. With this in mind, we call on the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic programmes, to cease all nuclear testing and to immediately re-engage in a dialogue with the international community. Malta further calls upon the DPRK to comply fully, unconditionally and without further delay, with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and with IAEA General Conference Resolutions, and to return to the NPT and IAEA Safeguards as expeditiously as possible.

Likewise, Syria's continuing non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement remains a cause for concern, while we are mindful that the ongoing conflict certainly complicates the IAEA's verification capabilities there. Nonetheless, Malta calls upon Syria to cooperate fully and promptly with the IAEA, to address all unresolved issues, and bring into force an Additional Protocol without delay.

On a more positive note, Malta continues to view the significant and historic Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the E3/EU+3 and Iran in a very favourable light. We welcome the ongoing implementation by all parties of the JCPOA, and encourage the early ratification and full implementation of the Additional Protocol by Iran, as foreseen in the agreement. We take heart from the demonstration of adherence to the JCPOA, which reflects the potency of effective multilateralism in the field of non-proliferation. In light of this, Malta commends and fully supports the central role which continues to be played by the IAEA in the verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities, in line with UNSCR 2231, and the JCPOA itself.

The IAEA continues upon its vital mission to ensure the exclusive application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, through effective multilateralism, and Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, in conjunction with Additional Protocols. Such methods of engagement with the international community have facilitated the IAEA's verification work, and, in this regard, Malta endorses the universalisation of verification standards as established by the Agency, and we encourage the relevant States to sign and put into force these verification tools.

As I have already had occasion to allude to, the contemporary international environment is fraught with longstanding challenges, but we must not lose sight of the emerging ones either. Primary amongst these is the unprecedented cyber security threat we face today and the many

actors operating outside international law, such as non-state actors and terrorist groups. The non-proliferation of nuclear and radioactive material is crucial to maintaining global order, peace, safety and security. Vulnerable nuclear material must be secured and protected and we emphasise that states are duty-bound to ensure that weapons-grade material remains fully secure. Malta strongly supports the central role of the IAEA in the global nuclear security framework.

Madam President,

While nuclear safety and security are at the core of the IAEA's work, such priorities should not be restricted only to land systems. We firmly believe that this focus should be extended to transport networks, particularly maritime transport. As an island state and a leading Maritime Flag State, Malta retains a special interest in ensuring that the highest standards, in terms of preparation, communication and cooperation, are followed at sea to the same extent as on land. Malta emphasises that the consequences of an incident at sea could be devastating, with a severe environmental risks.

Malta is a member of the Mediterranean Regional Transport Network - the so-called MedNet - that was established through an IAEA project under a contribution agreement with the European Commission. As a central hub in the Mediterranean Sea, Malta has actively participated and, as a result, has benefitted immensely through this project. MedNet has established a more direct link between all the countries involved and the drive to harmonise procedures and processes. Guides have been prepared to this extent. The project has also allowed for training in various areas relating to transport safety. Through the IAEA's constant support, MedNet has also presented a paper in the 2016 Packaging and Transportation of Radioactive Materials (PATRAM) Symposium in Kobe, Japan. It is also worth noting that similar projects were initiated in other regions. Malta believes that, through the tireless work

of the IAEA staff involved and of the MedNet members themselves, this project was a huge success and would like to see continued support from the Agency in sustaining this and other regional transport safety networks around the world.

Malta would also like highlight the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme, which enables the Agency to work closely with Member States in a safe and secure nuclear technology environment. The Technical Cooperation Programme is something which my country continues to ascribe a great deal of importance to because we have witnessed first-hand the tangible and important benefits which it can accrue. Over the past year, Malta has continued to implement national projects notably in terms of radiation therapy techniques for medical purposes, further strengthening our radiation safety regulatory framework and upgrading technical capabilities in the scientific application to cultural heritage. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Agency for its assistance, cooperation and technical support, and look forward to participating in future programmes.

Madam President,

As a final point, I would like to make reference to the issue of multilateral nuclear disarmament, which Malta has been following for a number of years in accordance also with its commitment to the important issue of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Malta had in fact strongly supported the 2015 Humanitarian Pledge. In line with its longstanding policy on nuclear disarmament, Malta supported the call for a UN Conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons and voted in favour of the draft Treaty when it was put to a vote at the end of the negotiations in July. Malta welcomed the negotiations and their outcome, especially since they were the first multilateral negotiations on nuclear weapons in more than 20 years. Malta firmly believes that efforts for a nuclear

weapon-free world are more important than ever, and believes that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an important step towards this end.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate once more Malta's full support for the work and activities of the IAEA across various international levels and fora, whilst wishing all delegations a most successful Conference in the spirit of positive cooperation in pursuit of our common goals.

Thank you.