



Statement by Ambassador Andrej Benedejčič, Head of Delegation, Governor on the Agency's Board of Governors and Resident Representative to the IAEA, at the 62nd Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference, Vienna, 19 September 2018

Madam President,

In the past year, the IAEA has proven again its important role in contributing to peace and development in the world. Yet, significant challenges still remain. In addition to what has been said on behalf of the European Union, I would therefore like to make several remarks in the name of Slovenia.

Madam President,

A key responsibility that has been entrusted by the international community to the IAEA is the monitoring of the JCPoA. Slovenia calls on continued compliance with the nuclear deal by all the parties and commends the IAEA for its professional and impartial work in the verification of Iran's implementation of its nuclear commitments. We regard the JCPoA as an integral part of the international non-proliferation architecture, which is why at the end of last year my Government contributed financially to its implementation.

Slovenia also welcomes the high-level talks between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK, as well as the June Summit between the United States and the DPRK. These developments have created a positive momentum and raised prospects for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We therefore call on the DPRK to ratify the CTBT and return to the system of IAEA Safeguards Inspections. Slovenia counts as well on the Agency to stay abreast of the situation and keep ready for a possible verification role in the DPRK.

Madam President,

I would now like to turn to one of the other core activities of the Agency, which is technical cooperation. It provides invaluable support to Member States in harnessing nuclear power and safe application of nuclear techniques. It is therefore important that the Technical Cooperation Program stays open to all Member States and that the IAEA maintains a diverse range of TC projects, including those that tackle more demanding areas, such as nuclear safety and technology. It is also important that the resources of the Technical Cooperation Fund remain sufficient, assured and predictable. Slovenia is therefore proud to have been entrusted with the role of a co-facilitator on the Due Account Mechanism by the Chairperson of the Agency's Board of Governors.

Madam President,

Turning to Slovenian activities at the national level, I would like to highlight the adoption of the new Ionizing Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act. This is an important milestone not only because it has aligned our domestic legislation with the latest developments in radiation protection, but also because it represents the culmination of a demanding process of internal coordination, which was needed to ensure the implementation of the requirements.

I am also pleased to report that with the on-going post-Fukushima upgrade program, the Krško NPP is firmly set to continue with its excellent production and safety record. Earlier this year, its Emergency Control Room was built. Work on the establishment of the dry spent fuel storage facility is also under way, with the construction planned next year and the beginning of operations in 2020. The OSART follow-up mission is scheduled for this October to verify the implementation of recommendations issued last June.

Madam President,

Before concluding, I would like to underline the significance that Slovenia attaches to nuclear security, both as a member of the Nuclear Security Contact Group and of international organizations. In its role as the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation, which is one of the two decision-making organs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Slovenia organized a special event this spring on "Nuclear Security in the OSCE Area", which also highlighted the key role of the IAEA. We thought this would be important not only because the lion's share of all nuclear facilities are located in the OSCE participating States, but also because of our current role as a member of the Agency's Board of Governors. In this connection, I would like to express my appreciation to the leadership of the IAEA Secretariat, especially to Deputy Director General of Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, for taking an active part in the event.

This also brings me to my final point. One of Slovenian priorities in Vienna is to promote better synergies among the international organizations that are based here. This is because they have much in common, dealing as they are with issues that are either security-related or science-oriented. Since these fields have been perceived in the past as traditional male domains, this also means that Vienna-based organizations share similar challenges when it comes to the promotion of equal opportunities. Slovenia was one of the initiators of the launching of the Vienna chapter of the International Gender Champions initiative last year and I am happy to report that all the heads of international organizations are now its members. I would also like to inform you that work is underway to institutionalize the initiative and that one month ago agreement was reached to establish the IGC Hub Steering Group in Vienna.

Let me therefore conclude by saying that Slovenia appreciates all the gender mainstreaming efforts by the IAEA Secretariat to date. I would especially like to highlight the event on "Unconscious Bias", which was organized this spring on the occasion of the International Women's Day and chaired by the Deputy Director General of Department of Management. The Agency can therefore count on Slovenia remaining its strong partner and supporter in the efforts to increase the proportion of women on its staff, especially in more senior positions, and looks forward to gender parity among the most senior officials by 2021.

Thank you.