

## STATEMENT

By H.E. Mr Ivan Kondov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria  
Head of Delegation to the International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS)  
Vienna, 20-24 May 2024

*Distinguished co-chairs,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,*

At the outset allow me to join others in expressing condolences to the relatives of the victims and solidarity with the people of Iran.

Bulgaria associates itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Mr. Jan Lipavský, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and with the statement on Ukraine.

We regret the fact that consensus was not possible for the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, and we align with the Co-Presidents' Joint Statement. We highly appreciate their efforts.

I would like to congratulate Director General H.E. Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi and the IAEA Secretariat for the strong leadership and the preparation of the Fourth International Conference on Nuclear Security.

We strongly support the IAEA's central role in facilitating nuclear security cooperation and assisting countries to strengthen their national nuclear security regimes. In particular we highly value and contribute with expertise to the Nuclear Security Series delivered by the Nuclear Security Guidance Committee which provide international consensus guidance on many aspects of nuclear security. We strongly encourage MS to take advantage of these instruments.

Bulgaria reiterates its strong commitment to sustain and strengthen effective and comprehensive nuclear security of all nuclear material, nuclear facilities, other radioactive material and associated facilities and to implement effective measures to detect nuclear and radioactive material out of regulatory control.

*Excellencies,*

It is difficult to reflect on shaping the future of nuclear security when the world is facing unprecedented regional and global threats caused by the unprovoked and unjustified Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. The illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) by itself is one of the biggest security threats but also jeopardizing the nuclear power potential in addressing the global climate challenges, enhancing energy security and boosting a climate-neutral economic growth.

Bulgaria, as a close neighbour of Ukraine, is seriously concerned also for the risks related to the physical integrity of all Ukraine's nuclear installations and facilities with radioactive sources, illicit

trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials and technologies, as well as acts of sabotage at nuclear sites.

We therefore support IAEA's crucial and unique role with its physical presence in all Ukraine's nuclear sites to help alleviating risks. The Seven indispensable pillars for nuclear safety and security in armed conflict and the Five concrete principles outlined by DG Grossi are crucial for avoiding nuclear accidents and must be fully observed at all times.

The only sustainable way to ensure the nuclear security in Ukraine is for Russia to urgently withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine, including from Ukraine's ZNPP, and for the plant to be immediately returned to its rightful owner, Ukraine.

*Distinguished delegates,*

High level of nuclear security provide the confidence necessary to allow for nuclear energy and nuclear technology power and non-power applications to be beneficial for all, including in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Having in mind the development of new nuclear technologies like Small Modular Reactors we underline that safety, security and safeguards shall be ensured through all stages of their design, development and deployment. In this respect we remain engaged in Director General Grossi's Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative. Technological developments like artificial intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles and others may also present new security risks, challenges and threats. we call on IAEA to support MS's efforts to address these developments.

As a State Party to the Amended Convention of Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities Bulgaria participated actively in achieving the adoption of the outcome document from the first review meeting of the Convention in 2022. The amended Convention is a solid base for the fight against nuclear terrorism and other criminal acts against nuclear material and nuclear facilities and we call on all Member States to adhere to this important legal instrument. Last but not least I would like to reiterate Bulgaria's political commitment to the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and its supplementary Guidance documents. We call on all MS to do so.

"Shaping the future" is the slogan of our conference. Outreach to young people is essential for building broad nuclear security culture. Bulgaria highly values and actively participates in the IAEA Nuclear Security Support Centers Network initiative. In cooperation with IAEA we have established a Master Program in Nuclear Security and with the IAEA support students and young professionals from developing countries receive solid knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the nuclear security.

I thank you for your attention.