

IAEA

International Conference on Nuclear Security: Shaping the Future

Vienna, 20-24 May 2024

**Statement delivered by H.E. Amb. Debora Lepre,
Permanent Representative of Italy to the International Organizations in Vienna**

Distinguished Co-Presidents, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

I wish to express my condolences and solidarity for the tragic helicopter crash that took place yesterday in Iran.

We are gathered here to share best practices and reflect on the evolving challenges of nuclear security in an increasingly complex international system. It is not only our **interest**, but also our **duty** to live up to it. Our civil societies deserve it, future generations need it. That's shaping the future!

As for the content of our reflections, Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by His Excellency **Jan Lipavský, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic**, on behalf of the European Union. I will add a few remarks in my national capacity.

Since the IAEA's last International Conference on Nuclear Security in 2020, the world has experienced tremendous changes. The **international security context has profoundly deteriorated**, and we are facing new and dramatic conflicts.

The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine continues to pose serious threats to nuclear safety and security, in particular at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The only way to ensure its safety and security is the **immediate Russian withdrawal** from illegally seized Ukrainian territory and the return of the plant under the full control of the competent Ukrainian authorities as the rightful owner. The strict adherence to Director General Grossi's "Seven indispensable pillars" to preserve nuclear safety in armed conflicts and the "Five Concrete Principles" established by the IAEA is crucial to avoid a nuclear accident at the ZNPP.

[**Conflicts and areas of instability**, including in the Middle East, are still a source of concern for nuclear security and non-proliferation].

The recent **international developments coupled with terrorist threats**, compel the international community to remain vigilant against the risk of nuclear materials falling into the hands of criminals and non-state actors. In this context, we need to make every effort to minimize the vulnerability of nuclear installations and nuclear and radioactive materials and to adapt to evolving technologies and threats.

Technological progress represents a challenge to nuclear security and provides opportunities to improve it. New and emerging technologies, such as advanced **Small Modular Reactors, Medium Modular Reactors and Micro Reactors**, attract growing interest around the world. However, States should be aware of the potential risks and challenges related to their deployment and fuel design, their transport and proliferation risks.

Thus, it becomes even more urgent **to adopt national policies** to prevent any theft, diversion and sabotage of nuclear facilities. At the same time, while recognising the benefits that artificial intelligence will bring to nuclear security, it is also crucial to be prepared for new challenges that may arise.

Italy, also through its **G7 Presidency**, remains focused on the promotion of a trustworthy framework for this technology, in order to develop an ethical and safe use of AI applications, respecting democratic values and fundamental freedoms.

Nuclear security is and must remain a primary responsibility of the State. Nevertheless, the pursuit of **multilateral cooperation is crucial**, since the international community as a whole has a common interest in ensuring the highest standards of nuclear security. In this framework, **the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency is essential**. Upon request, its technical and legal assistance can provide precious help to States in undertaking national policies on nuclear security.

Distinguished Co-Presidents,

Italy is fully committed to achieve a better international security environment. We strongly support the central role of the IAEA in the global nuclear security framework and we encourage all States to cooperate with the Agency in order to fulfil their nuclear security responsibilities. **Nuclear safety and security are among the priorities of the G7 Italian Presidency,** and we are committed, together with partners, to promoting full implementation by all States of the highest standards of nuclear safety, security, and safeguards consistent with IAEA standards and guidance.

We are **engaged in decommissioning activities** of nuclear installations and we have removed the largest part of **highly enriched uranium and plutonium** from our territory. We reaffirm our commitment to further reduce the remaining materials and make progress on global goals of HEU and plutonium reduction.

Italy has ratified the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment. We invite all States to do the same. We share the need to convene a new revision conference of the A/CPPNM to take stock of the implementation of the Convention and enable it to address new challenges and threats. Italy is also party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Bearing in mind that radioactive sources are indispensable instruments for **medicine, food security, industrial and research development,** we believe it is a shared priority to enforce and enhance effective security measures throughout their life cycle. We therefore encourage further political commitments and implementation of the **Code of Conduct** on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

Finally, with an integrated approach and focus on capacity building, Italy pays special attention to the development of **nuclear security culture.** We value the opening of the IAEA Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre, to which we actively contribute through the donation of equipment.

We highly appreciate the work of the Centres of Excellence, as well as the IAEA Collaborating Centres. Since 2010, Italy has been funding the **Joint ICTP-IAEA School of Nuclear Security in Trieste**, a key centre aimed at disseminating nuclear culture and developing international cooperation programmes to train qualified personnel.

Speaking of qualified personnel, Italy renews its **commitment to gender equality**. We believe that gender equality and women's empowerment represent key drivers to shape the future also of nuclear security. In this regard, we guarantee our support to the Marie Curie Fellowship Program, to the activities carried out by Women in Nuclear and to the Women in Nuclear Security Initiative (WINSI) of the IAEA.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

We regret that the final draft of the Ministerial Declaration for the ICONS 2024, carefully prepared by the Co-Chairs after a long negotiating process, was objected by one delegation. In this vein, **Italy thanks the strong engagement of the Co-Chairs and welcomes the Co-Presidents' Joint Statement**. It will be a useful guidance for our future activities in the nuclear security domain.

We also reiterate our full support to convening regular conferences on nuclear security. They remain our common primary framework **to develop international assistance, promote a nuclear culture and allow nuclear security to gain momentum**. Italy is ready to keep working on these priorities.

I thank you.