

**Statement by H. E. Ms. Ana Tinca, State Secretary for Strategic Affairs within the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania,
at the International Conference on Nuclear Security „*Shaping the Future*” – ICONS 2024
Vienna, 20-24 May 2024**

Director General,

Co-Chairs,

Distinguished participants,

It is my pleasure to be here today at the fourth International Conference on Nuclear Security. I would like to thank the Director General of the IAEA, for maintaining this topic on the international agenda.

Four years ago, together with Panama, Romania presided over this conference. Including from this perspective, I want to commend our current co-chairs, Australia and Kazakhstan, for their contribution to the success of ICONS 2024.

I would also like to convey my gratitude to our distinguished co-chairs of the consultations process, Ambassadors of Australia and Kazakhstan, for their relentless efforts over the past months. Romania subscribes to the Co-chairs Joint Summary as the document capturing the determination of the international community to improve nuclear security.

In 2020, we have collectively shown our determination to make significant progress. We agreed upon a wide range of elements essential for further advancing on the path of nuclear security globally. It is in this spirit that we would like to highlight the importance of maintaining these commitments and actions, principles and responsibilities for a safer, more secure world. While the 2020 ICONS Conference focused on sustaining and strengthening our efforts, this year's theme focuses on the future.

Distinguished participants,

The international security is gravely affected by unprecedented threats and challenges. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is raising nuclear security concerns unseen before. Extensive attacks on civilian energy infrastructure in Ukraine were preceded by the illegal seizure by the Russian forces of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. These are highly disturbing events have significantly raised the risk of a nuclear accident, with potential severe consequences for Ukraine and beyond.

Romania would like to commend the IAEA Director General for his work and that of the courageous Agency staff in ensuring that a nuclear incident at Ukraine's nuclear facilities does not take place, while respecting Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Our commitment to Ukraine remains strong and we fully support the joint statement in this regard.

Amid increasingly volatile risks to nuclear security, including from nuclear terrorism, insider threats, as well as the potential misuse of nuclear materials remain significant challenges to international peace and security. The evolving threats encompass a diverse set of actors, potentially accentuated by technological advancements. We strive to advance the state-of-practice for insider threat mitigation and we will continue to show our commitment by endorsing the revisions to the *Joint Statement on "Mitigating Insider Threats"*, put forward by Belgium and the United States.

Distinguished participants,

Although nuclear security is within the responsibility of each Member State, it also requires collaboration. We look towards governments and international organisations coming together to share their expertise, best practices and facilitate the identification of effective solutions.

The IAEA has proven its central role in coordinating global efforts and assisting Member States implement effective nuclear security. Romania strongly supports the work of the Agency, which continues to provide a valuable contribution to international peace and security. The Agency is indispensable in the development of international security guidance, the provision of support to Member States and the coordination of nuclear security activities.

As a founding member of IAEA, Romania has extensive knowledge and experience in developing a nuclear programme exclusively for peaceful purposes for more than half a century. As a country known for its high standards and expertise, we are proud of our efforts and advancements and we will continue to strengthen our domestic nuclear safety and security.

In ensuring nuclear security we highlight the need for preparedness and effective response to any potential nuclear incident. As such, Romanian National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control (CNCAN) has developed a strong collaboration with the IAEA, contributing with technical experts and active participation of national experts in peer-review missions.

Through actions such as the 2023 Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission undertaken by IAEA experts in Romania, we have been able to showcase our systematic approach in addressing the interface of safety and security in regulatory oversight programme for nuclear power plants. Furthermore, Romania's regulatory infrastructure for nuclear safety and security has been strengthened through the Enhancement of Nuclear Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness in Romania (NORROM) project. Completed this year with financing from the Norway Grants and supported by the IAEA, this project led to the establishment of a new emergency information and training centre, thus showing our commitment towards preparedness.

Furthermore, our Nuclear and Radioactive Waste Agency, with valuable support through the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, commits to strengthen the national infrastructure for the safe and secure management of radioactive waste.

We also operate a Nuclear Forensics Laboratory, within the auspices of the Horia Hulubei National Institute for R&D in Physics and Nuclear Engineering. This has allowed for the development of a unified nuclear forensics approach as a tool for the growth of nuclear security. This is an opportunity to facilitate connections and mutual nuclear forensics assistance and information sharing between countries.

Excellencies,

Distinguished colleagues,

International cooperation stands at the basis of technological progress in the field of nuclear energy. By working with the United States and other key partners, Romania is determined to develop its nuclear energy program through enhancing large-scale production capacity and deploying the innovative Small Modular Nuclear Reactor technology (SMRs).

Within our development process, we are committed to ensuring nuclear safety and security during the design, development and deployment phases. To this end, Romania is actively participating to the Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative (NHSI), launched by the IAEA Director General.

At national level, we put an emphasis on the early stages of SMRs development and we are keen to ensure that advancements in civil nuclear energy technologies will bring a positive contribution to achieving our climate goals. Our support is evidenced not only by our actions at national level, but also through the support we lend to the IAEA's Atoms4NetZero initiative.

It is also our view that a strong nuclear security regime remains a critical element for the advancement of nuclear energy globally and will continue to take actions described in the *Joint Statement on Advanced Nuclear Energy Technologies*.

In concluding, allow me to reassure of Romania's determination for continuous strengthening of nuclear security. We aim to uphold our commitments and contribute to furthering achievements made, by fostering cooperation with international partners and continuing our relentless support to the work of the IAEA.

Thank you!