



***Statement by HE Ms Barbara Žvokelj,
Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the International Organisations in Vienna,
at the International Conference on Nuclear Security: Shaping the Future,
Vienna, 20 - 24 May 2024***

Co-Presidents, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by congratulating H.E. Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General for convening this important conference on nuclear security.

At the same time I would also like to commend the efforts and work of Ambassador of Australia, HE Mr Ian Biggs, and Ambassador of Kazakhstan, HE Mr Mukhtar Tileuberdi and their teams, for doing their best to reach a consensus on Ministerial Declaration.

Despite thorough and substantial negotiations for the past three months among Member States, the consensus unfortunately was not reached. Slovenia, however, aligns with the joint Statement, document which contains all important topics to be addressed today in the field of nuclear security.

Co-Presidents,

In addition to what has already been said on behalf of the EU, including expressing condolences to the people of Iran, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

As the field of nuclear security continues to evolve, so do our efforts, interests and activities. In the past years, we have witnessed considerable engagements of the Agency to maintain a momentum and nurture progress in nuclear security.

Slovenia clearly recognises the central and leading role of the Agency for providing the Member States with various guidance, peer reviews, training opportunities, reports and e-learning tools. The recently operational Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre at Seibersdorf will undoubtedly support Member States by further enhancing the capacity building programmes in nuclear security.

Witnessing a renaissance of nuclear power makes it even more important to keep nuclear material and installations resilient to any natural or human made crisis.

Russia's continued aggression against Ukraine, in particular the unprecedented seizure of Europe's largest nuclear power plant and its subsequent developments, have created entirely new challenges for the existing international nuclear security regime.

An attack on civilian nuclear installation or prevention of its normal operation may have irreversible consequences.

This serious new development, that surpasses previous risks and challenges to nuclear security, requires our full attention.

Slovenia believes that this is the right moment to look into the existing nuclear security doctrine in crisis situations, including cases of an armed conflict. We hope we could initiate a discussion on what measures are needed to strengthen the international nuclear security regime, especially during armed conflicts. We believe that this conference will, through national statements as well as side events, confirm that there is a momentum for such an effort.

Co-Presidents,

Allow me also to highlight some of our activities at national level that have been accomplished since the last ICONS conference:

- In 2020, Slovenia joined the international initiative on Mitigating Insider Threats (INFCIRC/908). Advancing in this domain was important for key national stakeholders. Our expert will share our lessons learned on implementation at the side event this Tuesday.
- Slovenia also joined *Joint Statement on Advanced Nuclear Energy Technologies* and *Joint Statement on the Role of Nuclear Security in Harnessing the Power of Nuclear Energy*. They focus on the aspect of nuclear security and its integration with other developments (e.g. nuclear safety, the role of nuclear security in the transition to a low-carbon society, the consideration of nuclear security from the design of nuclear facilities onwards, including new technologies).
- Two second-tier pieces of regulation, based upon the “Nuclear Act”, were published last year.
- Periodical safety reviews for our nuclear facilities have begun to include also “physical protection”.
- The Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration organized several national exercises on cyber security at nuclear facilities as well as trainings of national stakeholders and capacity building. Such exercises will be further upgraded in the future. The next, scheduled for 2025, will again bring together all key domestic and international stakeholders.
- Slovenia, with the valuable support of the Agency, recently shipped a high-activity radioactive source, cesium-137, for possible recycling abroad.
- Various Slovenian experts from the Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration and the Police, have been supporting the Agency’s efforts spanning from exercises and contingency planning, to cyber security or combating illicit trafficking.
- Our cooperation within the European Nuclear Security Regulators’ Association (ENSRA) represent an indispensable tool for regional networking and sharing national expertise, good practices and insights.
- As member of the ENSRA’s Troika we will be hosting the annual plenary meeting this autumn.

Co-Presidents,

Slovenia will continue to work actively with relevant international partners to assure that nuclear installations, as well as nuclear and radioactive materials, remain secure and that existing commitments and instruments governing nuclear security are rigorously respected and, where necessary, strengthened.

This is why we are also convinced that the universalization and effective implementation of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment (A/CPPNM) as well as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) are crucial. We encourage all States Parties to report according to the Article 14 of the convention and its amendment and to share experiences in implementing the international obligations, deriving from both of them. Every State Party should earmark a set of milestones towards the next conference.

Before concluding, Co-Presidents,

I would also like to underline the importance of human resources and expertise as well as security culture. Nuclear security is an enduring responsibility, with a number of interfaces. It is an enabler of peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

Slovenia also supports all the efforts related to women in nuclear security. Skilled and talented experts in the nuclear security field are required. We commend and support all initiatives and programmes aiming at gender equality in nuclear security, including by contributing to Marie Skłodowska Curie Fellowship.

Finally, I would like to express my firm belief in the success of this Conference with the Co-Presidents, HE Sungat Yessimkhanov, and HE Tim Watts, being at the forefront of this Conference. Slovenian delegation is eagerly looking forward to and participating in the topical sessions and technical discussion of this conference.

I thank you Co-Presidents.