

**AUSTRIA**  
**Statement by H.E. Nikolaus Marschik**  
**Secretary General for Foreign Affairs**  
68<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference  
Vienna, 17 September 2024

Mr. President!

Director-General, dear Rafael!

Dear Heads of Delegation

Dear delegates!

Please let me first express my warmest welcome to all of you - as proud host country of the International Atomic Energy Agency – Welcome to Vienna!

You are coming to Vienna in challenging times: not only if you look to the state of international affairs, but also if you look at the masses of water, the rains, the floods, the rivers full of water in Austria and in our neighbourhood! Please let me thank all those who are helping the people in need and distress – in particular the police, crisis units, Fire Fighters as well as support by the military forces!

And please let me thank previous speakers here at our conference for having expressed their sympathy and solidarity.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

We fully align ourselves with the circulated statement of the European Union.

In addition, I would like to focus on 3 particular issues:

**1) Ukraine**

Nowhere is the Agency currently more on the frontlines than in Ukraine. Where Russia continues to pursue its unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression. Thereby, violating the

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UN Charter and international law as well as the most basic rules we have set ourselves. This war of aggression must end!

Just as the Russian irresponsible activities must end with the Zaporizhzhia Power Plant as well as other nuclear installations in Ukraine! It is irresponsible to put weapons in the vicinity of these installations. And we condemn using the territory and direct vicinity of the Zaporizhzhia power plant to launch artillery or rockets against targets in Ukraine.

### **2) The international nuclear taboo is weakened**

Today, past achievements are being abandoned, the implementation of existing agreements remain incomplete and a renewed nuclear arms race is visible in front of our eyes with the expansion and upgrading of arsenals.

Today, wherever we look, the nuclear landscape is extremely worrying:

- **Iran** – Iran continues its nuclear program at an alarming rate. Therefore, we call on the new government to cooperate fully with the IAEA and to provide the information necessary to resolve open safeguards issues.
- **The DPRK** – the DPRK needs to reverse course, stop provocations and return to diplomacy. A further escalation on the Korean Peninsula cannot be in anybody's interest!

And with the NPT, we witness failure after failure. This has been going on for 14 years! Progress on nuclear disarmament is not only a treaty obligation, it is an urgent necessity.

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It is urgent, because we see an accelerating slide into multiple arms race dynamics. It is urgent, because an international security system that is based on the threat of mass destruction is simply too risky and not sustainable.

Nuclear deterrence is a high risk bet. And today, the risks inherent in nuclear deterrence policies are higher than ever.

Looking at the state of geopolitics, many experts assess that international affairs are more and more driven and triggered by irrational behaviour. Moreover, history is full of miscalculations as well as human and technical errors. And today we are confronted with substantial and systematic disinformation campaigns!

We all share the position that deterrence failure and nuclear weapons use would have a catastrophic global impact. Consequently, we strongly support the TPNW / the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and call on all states to engage constructively.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

My final remark and it will not surprise you:

### **3) Our position on nuclear power**

As you are aware, we fully respect that each country has the sovereign right to choose its own energy mix. However, in our view, nuclear power is simply neither safe nor sustainable. On this issue, we disagree with those who have commented on our position as being “ideological”.

On the contrary: Austria’s position on nuclear energy comes from a serious concern for our common future. We are concerned, about the environmental damages, about the health damages of nuclear accidents. We are concerned, about the unresolved question of what to do with nuclear waste.

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For those nonetheless opting in favour of the use of nuclear power, we urgently underline the necessity to uphold the highest standards with due priority to safety and security.

Continuously improving nuclear safety for existing installations has to be implemented based on the Principles established under the “Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety” of the CNS (Convention on Nuclear Safety). And nuclear safety standards must also be fulfilled by so-called “advanced” technologies.

Mr. President!

I wish you and all of us a very successful General Conference! Please be assured that the Austrian delegation will fully support you and your team in chairing and steering this important conference.

We consider it a privilege to host all delegations and the Agency and its experts here in Vienna.

In our assessment, the Agency’s contribution to international peace, security and development cannot be overstated. Let us put the “spirit of Vienna” into practice in order to achieve further progress.

Thank you very much.