



Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Barbara Žvokelj
Acting Secretary General
at the Sixty-eight Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference
Vienna, 17 September 2024

Mr President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment. You can count on our full support. Let me also commend Director General Grossi and his staff for their work over the past year. We highly appreciate the crucial role of the Agency in these increasingly challenging circumstances.

Slovenia aligns itself with the EU official statement, to which I would like to add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr President,

Every year, we gather in Vienna to endorse and adopt key documents for the effective functioning of the IAEA, to showcase achievements in the use of nuclear technology and to discuss challenges and concerns.

As we speak, nuclear power plants provide about 9% of the world's electricity from some 440 power reactors.

The applications of nuclear technology beyond electricity generation have many uses that are fundamental to our daily lives.

These applications are becoming indispensable in view of the growing global interest in nuclear energy, the increasing importance of energy security and the rising demand for energy due to technological advancement.

Clearly, the IAEA and its professional staff are key to ensuring the safe and reliable use of these technologies. Therefore, confidence in the Agency and its methods is essential.

Mr President,

Slovenia has been producing nuclear energy for decades. I am pleased to report that at the beginning of the year, **the Krško Nuclear Power Plant started long-term operation**. We have successfully completed all the relevant procedures and upgrades that will allow the extended operation of the Krško Plant until 2043.

As regards the safety of spent fuel, the **new building for dry storage of spent fuel** at the Krško Plant was completed in January 2023. This year, **construction began on a repository for low- and intermediate-level waste**.

Slovenia is very proud to report that the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana has joined the IAEA's flagship cancer initiative, **Rays of Hope Anchor Centres**, this year, to become one of nine such centres worldwide. As a knowledge and capacity-building hub for Europe, the Slovenian Institute will help advance the goal of cancer care for all by strengthening radiation medicine capacity.

Mr President,

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. Slovenia is fully committed to meeting emission reduction targets and moving towards carbon neutrality. Like many other countries, we are planning our energy transition based on renewable and nuclear energy. Recently, the **Slovenian Parliament has adopted the Resolution on the long-term peaceful use of nuclear energy** with an overwhelming majority. We have laid a solid foundation for the expansion of our national nuclear energy programme. We hope that in the upcoming referendum, the Slovenian public will support our policy, including the construction of a new nuclear power plant.

Mr President,

Despite the revival of nuclear energy and nuclear technology, we continue to face major proliferation challenges. We **remain deeply concerned about the continued expansion of Iran's nuclear programme and the continued development of DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes**.

This comes on top of another alarming development. **We have nuclear facilities in the midst of an ongoing war**. Russia's illegal seizure of Ukrainian nuclear power plant represents a qualitatively new and serious situation, surpassing previous nuclear safety and security risks and challenges.

We commend the DG's recent activities and visits to the region to get an up-front assessment regarding the sustainment of nuclear security and safety. We remain concerned about the situation at the ZNPP. **Wherever nuclear power plants are located, their physical integrity must be ensured**. In this regard, the implementation of the seven pillars for

ensuring nuclear safety and security in the event of armed conflict and the five principles remain essential.

Slovenia believes that we **need to review the existing nuclear security doctrine in crisis situations, including armed conflicts**. Slovenia is planning to initiate a discussion on what measures are needed by the international community to strengthen the international nuclear security regime, especially during an armed conflict.

Mr President,

Slovenia concluded its chairmanship of the informal Group of Friends of **Arealess States**. Slovenia's mission remains to help solve the problem that should not exist. To help ensure sovereign equality of all Member States within the Agency. To find a home for Arealess States.

Another issue that is long overdue is the **entry into force of the amendment to Article VI**. In this regard, I am pleased to inform you that Slovenia, together with the Republic of Korea, the EU, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Namibia, is organising a side event in the margins of this year's conference (Tuesday, 17 September, at 13:00–14:00) to facilitate the early entry into force of the amendment to Article VI. Collective efforts and the principle of sovereign equality are at the forefront of these issues. We therefore appeal to those Member States that have not yet ratified the amended Article VI to do so without delay.

Mr President,

In conclusion, on behalf of my Government, I would like to reiterate Slovenia's firm commitment to continue to provide the Agency with its fullest support. We must work together to prevent nuclear conflicts and disasters in order to benefit from the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Thank you.