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NPT Safeguards Agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran

Report by the Director General

A. Introduction

1. This report of the Director General is on the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement^{1,2} in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran). It also addresses the implementation of the Joint Statement of 4 March 2023.³ It covers the period since the issuance of the Director General's previous quarterly report.⁴

B. Background

2. The comprehensive evaluation of all safeguards-relevant information available to the Agency is essential in ascertaining that there are no indications of the diversion of declared nuclear material from

¹ The Agreement between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (INFCIRC/214), which entered into force on 15 May 1974.

² Iran's Additional Protocol (INFCIRC/214/Add.1) was approved by the Board of Governors on 21 November 2003 and signed by Iran on 18 December 2003. Iran implemented voluntarily the Additional Protocol between December 2003 and February 2006. On 16 January 2016, Iran began provisionally applying the Additional Protocol in accordance with Article 17(b) of the Additional Protocol. As of 23 February 2021, Iran stopped the implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), including the Additional Protocol (see GOV/INF/2021/13).

³ The Joint Statement was agreed between the Director General and HE Mr Mohammad Eslami, the Vice-President of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) on 4 March 2023, GOV/2023/9, Annex.

⁴ GOV/2024/62.

peaceful nuclear activities and that there are no indications of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State with a comprehensive safeguards agreement.⁵

3. As a result of its evaluations, the Agency identified in 2019 a number of questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities in Iran that had not been declared to the Agency and requested responses to these questions from Iran, pursuant to Article 69 of the Safeguards Agreement and Article 4.d. of the Additional Protocol. The Agency also provided Iran with detailed information upon which the Agency had made its requests for clarification.⁶

4. In 2019 and 2020, the Agency conducted complementary accesses at three of four undeclared locations in Iran – Turqzabad (2019), Varamin (2020) and ‘Marivan’ (2020) – and found uranium particles of anthropogenic origin at each of these three locations, for which it sought explanations from Iran. As the fourth location – Lavisian-Shian – had undergone extensive sanitization and levelling in the past, the Agency assessed that there would be no verification value in conducting a complementary access at this location.⁷

5. The Director General became deeply concerned that, as proven by the verification activities conducted by the Agency, nuclear material had been present at three of these undeclared locations in Iran, and that the current location of this nuclear material was not known to the Agency. He communicated the requirement for Iran to clarify and resolve these safeguards issues without further delay by providing information, documentation and answers to the Agency’s questions concerning the correctness and completeness of Iran’s safeguards declarations.⁸

6. In January 2022, the Agency provided Iran with its technical assessment of the safeguards issue related to Lavisian-Shian. The Agency assesses that activities were conducted at Lavisian-Shian involving the drilling and processing of natural uranium in the form of a metal disc in order to produce metallic flakes that were subsequently subjected to chemical processing on at least two occasions at this location. These activities and the nuclear material used therein were not declared by Iran to the Agency as required under the Safeguards Agreement. While recognizing the concerning nature of the undeclared nuclear-related activities that the Agency assesses had been carried out at this location, the Agency concluded that further efforts to resolve the safeguards issue in relation to Lavisian-Shian were unlikely to prove fruitful due to the lack of information being provided by Iran, the levelling/sanitization of the location subsequent to the activities having taken place and the time that had elapsed since those activities took place. On this basis, the Agency informed Iran in January 2022 that it regarded the safeguards issue in relation to Lavisian-Shian to be no longer outstanding at that stage.⁹

7. In its resolution of 8 June 2022, the Board, inter alia, expressed its “profound concern” that the safeguards issues related to the three undeclared locations remain outstanding “due to insufficient substantive cooperation by Iran, despite numerous interactions with the Agency”.¹⁰

⁵ GOV/2020/15, para. 2.

⁶ GOV/2020/15, paras 3 and 4; GOV/2020/30, paras 3 and 4.

⁷ The Agency had access to Lavisian-Shian in 2004. As the location had undergone extensive sanitization and levelling in 2003 and 2004, the Agency assessed in 2021 that there would be no verification value in conducting complementary access at this location (GOV/2004/60, paras 42-46, GOV/2021/15, para. 11).

⁸ GOV/2021/42, paras 28 and 30; GOV/2021/52, paras 2 and 14.

⁹ GOV/2022/5, paras 6 and 7.

¹⁰ GOV/2022/34, operative para. 2.

8. Following the Director General's report to the Board in November 2022 that there had still been no progress in clarifying and resolving the outstanding safeguards issues,¹¹ the Board, in its resolution of 17 November 2022, decided that it was "essential and urgent in order to ensure verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material that Iran act to fulfil its legal obligations and, with a view to clarifying all outstanding safeguards issues".¹²

9. The analysis of all safeguards-relevant information available to the Agency related to 'Marivan' is consistent with Iran having conducted explosive experiments with protective shielding in preparation for the use of neutron detectors.¹³ In the reporting period March–June 2023, Iran provided a possible explanation for the presence of depleted uranium particles at 'Marivan'. On this basis, while its assessment of the undeclared nuclear-related activities that were undertaken by Iran at 'Marivan' remained unchanged, the Agency regarded the matter as no longer outstanding at that stage.¹⁴

10. Following the Director General's report to the Board in June 2024 that Iran had yet to clarify and resolve outstanding safeguards issues,¹⁵ the Board, in its resolution of 5 June 2024,¹⁶ reaffirmed its decision of November 2022 that it was "essential and urgent in order to ensure verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material that Iran act to fulfil its legal obligations and, with a view to clarifying all outstanding safeguards issues, take the following actions without delay" and called upon Iran, inter alia, to "implement without delay the Joint Statement" (see Section D below), to "reverse its withdrawal of the designations of several experienced Agency inspectors", and to "implement the modified Code 3.1, which is a legal obligation for Iran".

11. Following the Director General's report to the Board in November 2024 that Iran had yet to clarify and resolve outstanding safeguards issues, the Board, in its resolution of 21 November 2024,¹⁷ reaffirmed its decisions of November 2022 and June 2024 that it was "essential and urgent" to clarify all outstanding safeguards issues. The Board, in its resolution, also requested the Director General:

"...to produce a comprehensive and updated assessment on the possible presence or use of undeclared nuclear material in connection with past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme, including a full account of Iran's cooperation with the IAEA on these issues, addressing the Agency's ability to verify Iran's implementation of its safeguards obligations including the non-diversion of nuclear material, based on all information available, for consideration by the March 2025 Board of Governors or at the latest by spring 2025."

¹¹ GOV/2022/63, para. 9.

¹² GOV/2022/70, para. 3.

¹³ GOV/2022/26, para. 20.

¹⁴ GOV/2023/26, Section C.2.

¹⁵ GOV/2024/29, Section C.1.

¹⁶ GOV/2024/39, paras 3–8.

¹⁷ GOV/2024/68, paras 3–8.

C. Outstanding Safeguards Issues

C.1. Two undeclared locations

12. The Agency's assessments of the outstanding safeguards issues related to two undeclared locations in Iran, which have been presented in previous reports of the Director General since May 2022,¹⁸ are as follows:

Varamin: The Agency assesses that Varamin was an undeclared pilot-scale plant used between 1999 and 2003 for the processing and milling of uranium ore and conversion into uranium oxide and, at laboratory scale, into UF₄ and UF₆.¹⁹ This location underwent significant changes in 2004, including the demolition of most buildings.²⁰ The analytical results of environmental samples taken by the Agency at Varamin in August 2020 indicated the presence of anthropogenic uranium particles, consistent with uranium conversion activities, that require explanation by Iran. The Agency also assesses that there are indications, supported by the results of the environmental samples analysis, that containers removed from Varamin were eventually transferred to Turqzabad. However, the nuclear activities assessed by the Agency to have been carried out at Varamin do not explain the presence of the multiple types of isotopically altered particles found at Turqzabad.

Turqzabad: The Agency assesses that Turqzabad was involved in the storage of nuclear material and/or equipment.²¹ From early November 2018 onwards, the Agency observed, through the analysis of commercially available satellite imagery, scraping and landscaping activities at the location. In February 2019, the Agency took environmental samples at Turqzabad, the analytical results of which indicated the presence of multiple natural uranium particles of anthropogenic origin, and isotopically altered particles, including low enriched uranium particles with a detectable presence of U-236, and particles of slightly depleted uranium that require explanation by Iran. The Agency concluded that the containers that were stored at Turqzabad had either contained nuclear material or equipment that had been heavily contaminated with nuclear material, or both. The Agency assesses that while some of the containers stored at Turqzabad were dismantled at the location, others were removed from the location intact in 2018 and moved to an unknown location.²²

13. As previously reported, with reference to the nuclear material particles identified at Varamin and Turqzabad, Iran stated in June 2023 that it had "exhausted all its efforts so as to discover the origin of such particles" and that "[t]here has not been any nuclear activity or storage in these locations".²³ In August 2023, Iran informed the Agency that none of the containers had been transferred intact from Turqzabad; they were all dismantled at the location.²⁴ Iran also stated that it would provide this information to the Agency, as well as information related to the whereabouts of the dismantled containers, but it still has not done so.

¹⁸ GOV/2022/26.

¹⁹ GOV/2022/26, para. 25.

²⁰ GOV/2020/30, para. 4, second bullet.

²¹ Statement by the Deputy Director General for Safeguards to the Board of Governors, 7 November 2019, GOV/OR.1532, para. 11.

²² GOV/2022/26, para. 34.

²³ INFCIRC/1094, paras 3 and 4.

²⁴ GOV/2023/43, para. 23.

14. In March 2024, Iran stated that “all Iran’s nuclear material and activities have been completely declared to the Agency”.²⁵ With respect to Varamin, Iran stated that there has “never been any undeclared location which is required to be declared under the CSA”.²⁶ With respect to Turqzabad, Iran stated that “[t]here has not been any nuclear activity or storage at this location”.²⁷

15. No progress was made towards resolving the outstanding safeguards issues in relation to Varamin and Turqzabad during the reporting period.

16. While the Agency regards the safeguards issues relating to Lavisian-Shian and Marivan as no longer outstanding at this stage, its technical assessment – that nuclear material was used in undeclared nuclear-related activities at Lavisian-Shian and that nuclear material was also planned to be used in undeclared nuclear-related activities at Marivan – remains unchanged.

C.2. Discrepancy in nuclear material balance

17. As previously reported,²⁸ in March 2022, the Agency verified at the Uranium Conversion Facility (UCF) the dissolution of 302.7 kg of natural uranium, as declared by Iran, in the form of solid waste and items of uranium metal transferred from the Jaber Ibn Hayan Multipurpose Laboratory (JHL). The Agency identified a discrepancy that needed to be addressed in the amount of nuclear material it had verified compared to the amount declared by Iran.

18. In February 2024, Iran provided the Agency with corrected nuclear material accounting reports.²⁹ On the basis of these reports, the Agency considered, at UCF, the discrepancy in the nuclear material balance to have been rectified.³⁰ However, the Agency informed Iran that the amount of uranium contained in the solid waste sent from JHL to UCF for dissolution was less than had been declared by Iran in 2003-2004.³¹ In May 2024, the Agency informed Iran that the material balance of the uranium involved in uranium metal production experiments conducted at JHL in 1995-2000 included an amount of nuclear material unaccounted for, which could not be explained by accountancy measurement errors.

19. In August and September 2024, the Agency presented its findings to Iran that the amount of nuclear material unaccounted for, related to the mass balance of the aforementioned experiments conducted at JHL, was greater than had been previously communicated to Iran.

20. On 2 October 2024, Iran stated that the Agency’s evaluation results concerning the amount of nuclear material unaccounted for in respect of uranium metal production experiments conducted at JHL were “not correct” and that the related accounting reports for UCF “must be revised”.

21. In its reply of 21 October 2024, the Agency stated that the rectified discrepancy at UCF was consistent with the Agency’s verification results and technically sound and that reopening of the discrepancy at UCF would not be conducive to resolving the discrepancy at JHL.

²⁵ Communication from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Agency, INFCIRC/1183, 7 March 2024, para. 28.

²⁶ INFCIRC/1183, 7 March 2024, para. 13.

²⁷ INFCIRC/1183, 7 March 2024, para. 14.

²⁸ GOV/2023/8, paras 47 and 48.

²⁹ The corrected nuclear material accounting reports indicate that the amount of uranium contained in the solid waste, arising from undeclared conversion experiments conducted between 1995 and 2000, sent from JHL to UCF for dissolution, was less than had been declared by Iran in 2003-2004. GOV/2024/8, footnote 24.

³⁰ GOV/2024/8, para. 15.

³¹ GOV/2024/8, para. 38.

22. On 6 November 2024, Iran stated that the Agency's evaluation of the material balance for the uranium metal production experiments conducted at JHL, as well as the results concerning the nuclear material unaccounted for, "is not correct and cannot be considered as factual and technical results".

23. There has been no progress during this reporting period towards resolving the discrepancy, regarding which the Agency's technical assessment remains unchanged.

C.3. Modified Code 3.1

24. The modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements General Part to Iran's Safeguards Agreement provides for the submission to the Agency of design information for new nuclear facilities as soon as the decision to construct, or to authorize construction of, a new facility has been taken, whichever is the earlier. The modified Code 3.1 also provides for the submission of fuller design information as the design is developed early in the project definition, preliminary design, construction, and commissioning phases.³² Iran remains the only State with significant nuclear activities in which the Agency is implementing a comprehensive safeguards agreement but which is not implementing the provisions of the modified Code 3.1.

25. As previously reported, Iran has made a number of references to having decided the locations for new nuclear facilities, for which it has not provided the Agency with preliminary design information despite having been requested to do so.³³

26. In February 2024, Iran informed the Agency that "implementation of modified code 3.1 is suspended"; "currently the implementation of the initial Code 3.1 is the legal obligation" for Iran "under the Subsidiary Arrangements (General Part) of the CSA"; and that "the relevant safeguards information for any new facilities... will be provided in due time".³⁴

27. The Director General has reminded Iran on many occasions that implementation of modified Code 3.1 is a legal obligation for Iran under the Subsidiary Arrangements to its Safeguards Agreement. In February 2024, the Agency again reiterated to Iran that the Subsidiary Arrangements cannot be modified, or their implementation suspended, unilaterally by Iran. The Agency reminded Iran that Iran had accepted modified Code 3.1 in 2003 and that, according to Article 39 of Iran's Safeguards Agreement, the Subsidiary Arrangements can only be changed by agreement with the Agency. The Agency also indicated to Iran that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has no legal effect on Iran's obligations under its Safeguards Agreement and Subsidiary Arrangements thereto. Therefore, Iran's unilateral decision to stop implementation of modified Code 3.1 is contrary to its legal obligations set out in Article 39 of the Safeguards Agreement and in the Subsidiary Arrangements.

28. In a letter dated 12 June 2024, Iran reiterated the position outlined in February 2024. In its reply dated 18 July 2024, the Agency stated that, contrary to Iran's assertion, Iran had accepted modified Code 3.1 as a legally binding obligation. Therefore, the Agency repeated its request for Iran to provide preliminary design information for the power reactors and research reactors previously cited. Iran has not done so.

³² The initial Code 3.1 only required the submission of design information for a new facility "normally not later than 180 days before the facility is scheduled to receive nuclear material for the first time".

³³ Information published on the AEOI website in June 2023 indicated that Iran has decided the locations for new power reactors and a new research reactor in Iran (GOV/2023/43, footnote 29). In November 2023, Vice-President Eslami made a statement referring to the excavation of the main building of the planned IR-360 reactor "in the coming days" and information available on the AEOI website referred to the "start of the executive operation of the construction of "Iran Hormoz" nuclear power plants by order of the president" (GOV/2024/8, para. 20).

³⁴ GOV/2024/8, para. 21.

29. Iran's failure to implement the provisions of modified Code 3.1 has prevented the Agency from receiving early design information for any of the new nuclear reactors which Iran has publicly announced it plans to construct. This significantly obstructs the Agency's ability to conduct design information verification in respect of such new facilities and to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

D. Joint Statement

D.1. Background

30. On 4 March 2023, as a result of discussions between the Director General and the Vice-President of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), HE Mr Mohammad Eslami, the Agency and the AEOI agreed a Joint Statement³⁵ as follows:

- Interactions between the IAEA and Iran will be carried out in a spirit of collaboration, and in full conformity with the competences of the IAEA and the rights and obligations of the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on the comprehensive safeguards agreement.
- Regarding the outstanding safeguards issues related to the three locations,³⁶ Iran expressed its readiness to continue its cooperation and provide further information and access to address the outstanding safeguards issues.
- Iran, on a voluntary basis will allow the IAEA to implement further appropriate verification and monitoring activities. Modalities will be agreed between the two sides in the course of a technical meeting which will take place soon in Tehran.

31. It should be noted that Iran's obligations under its NPT Safeguards Agreement, including those referred to in Section C, are not dependent on the implementation or otherwise of any voluntary activities in relation to the Joint Statement.

32. Limited progress was made towards implementing the Joint Statement in the reporting period March-June 2023.³⁷

33. As previously reported,³⁸ in September 2023, Iran withdrew the designation of several experienced Agency inspectors designated for Iran. This followed a previous recent withdrawal of the designation of another experienced Agency inspector designated for Iran. This measure, while formally permitted by the NPT Safeguards Agreement, was exercised by Iran in a manner that directly and seriously affects the Agency's ability to conduct effectively its verification activities in Iran, in particular at the enrichment facilities. Despite the Director General's requests to Iran to reverse its decision to withdraw the designations for these inspectors, Iran did not do so.

34. In early May 2024, the Director General held meetings with Vice-President Eslami and other senior Iranian officials, at which he shared a series of concrete proposals related to each of the three elements of the Joint Statement with a view to making the Joint Statement operational. Technical discussions between

³⁵ GOV/2023/9, Annex.

³⁶ See paragraph 9 of this report.

³⁷ GOV/2023/58, para. 24.

³⁸ GOV/INF/2023/14, para. 1.

senior officials of the Agency and Iran, scheduled for later that month, did not take place, however, due to the “special circumstances” prevailing at that time.

35. In June 2024, Vice-President Eslami informed the Director General that Iran’s position “with regard to the de-designation of those inspectors is unchanged and this position will remain as it is”.

36. On 31 October 2024, the Director General met the Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharib Abadi and other senior Iranian officials, for discussions in Vienna. The Director General conveyed proposals to Iran on how to implement the Joint Statement.

37. During his visit to Iran on 14 November 2024, the Director General met President Pezeshkian and other senior Iranian officials, including Vice-President Eslami and Foreign Minister Araghchi. Issues discussed during high level meetings included possible elements to address Varamin, the discrepancy in the nuclear material balance for the uranium conversion experiments, and Iran’s preliminary agreement to consider the acceptance of the designation of four additional experienced inspectors.

38. During these high level meetings, the possibility of Iran not further expanding its stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235 was discussed, including technical verification measures necessary for the Agency to confirm this, if implemented. On 16 November 2024, the Agency verified at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant (FFEP) and the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant (PFEP) at Natanz that Iran had begun implementation of preparatory measures aimed at stopping the increase of its stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235.

D.2. Developments since previous report

39. Following the adoption of the Board resolution in November 2024, Iran returned the rate of production of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235 at FFEP and PFEP to the rate of production before 16 November 2024 and then, in early December 2024, significantly increased the rate of production of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235 at FFEP.

40. As previously reported,³⁹ in December 2024 Iran agreed to the Agency’s request to increase the frequency and intensity of the implementation of safeguards measures at FFEP necessitated by the significant increase in production of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235 at the facility. The Agency has since implemented such a strengthened safeguards approach at FFEP and also at a nuclear material storage facility at Esfahan, consistent with Iran’s obligations under its Safeguards Agreement.

41. Iran, in a letter dated 16 December 2024, informed the Agency that “[b]earing in mind the developments that took place compromising the joint efforts by Iran and the Agency before the recent Board of Governors’ session” it was not accepting the designations of four additional experienced inspectors proposed by the Agency in a letter dated 12 December 2024.

42. At the beginning of 2025, the Director General held telephone discussions with Foreign Minister Araghchi during which the Director General reiterated his readiness to work with Iran to resume implementation of the Joint Statement. Foreign Minister Araghchi indicated Iran’s preparedness to cooperate with the Agency and raised the possibility of the Director General visiting Tehran again.

43. Overall, there has been no progress towards implementing the Joint Statement of 4 March 2023 during this reporting period.

³⁹ GOV/INF/2024/18, para. 3.

E. Summary

44. The Director General is seriously concerned that the outstanding safeguards issues remain unresolved more than two years after the Board of Governors first decided that it was “essential and urgent in order to ensure verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material” for Iran to clarify those outstanding safeguards issues. These issues stem from Iran’s obligations under its NPT Safeguards Agreement and unless and until Iran resolves them the Agency will not be in a position to provide assurance that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.

45. Iran has neither provided technically credible explanations for the presence of uranium particles of anthropogenic origin at undeclared locations in Iran nor informed the Agency of the current location(s) of the nuclear material and/or of the contaminated equipment involved. Instead, Iran states that it has declared all of the nuclear material, activities and locations required under its Safeguards Agreement. This is inconsistent with the Agency’s assessments of the unexplained nuclear-related activities that took place at all four of the undeclared locations in Iran referred to above, and of the origin of the uranium particles of anthropogenic origin found at three of these locations: these assessments remain unchanged. The Agency is, therefore, at an impasse with regards to resolving these outstanding safeguards issues.

46. Iran’s unilateral decision to stop the implementation of modified Code 3.1, in contravention of its legal obligations set out in Article 39 of the Safeguards Agreement and in the Subsidiary Arrangements, is having a negative impact on the Agency’s ability to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme.

47. The Director General deeply regrets that Iran, despite having indicated a willingness to consider accepting the designation of four additional experienced Agency inspectors, did not accept their designations.

48. There has been no significant progress in the past 21 months towards implementing the Joint Statement of 4 March 2023. In the context of Iran’s agreement that the Joint Statement continues to provide a framework for cooperation with the Agency and for addressing the outstanding safeguards issues, the Director General calls upon Iran urgently to implement the Joint Statement through serious engagement.

49. The significantly increased production and accumulation of high enriched uranium by Iran, the only non-nuclear weapon State to produce such nuclear material, is of serious concern.

50. The Director General will continue to report as appropriate. In response to the Board’s request in its resolution of November 2024, the Director General will produce a comprehensive and updated assessment on the presence and use of undeclared nuclear material in connection with past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran’s nuclear programme. This assessment will include a full account of Iran’s cooperation with the Agency on these issues and address the Agency’s ability to verify Iran’s implementation of its safeguards obligations, including the non-diversion of nuclear material, based on all information available.