



European Union

EU Statement on

Agenda item 4: Nuclear and Radiation Safety: Nuclear Safety Review 2021

IAEA Board of Governors

Vienna, 01 - 05 March 2021

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey[§], The Republic of North Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro^{*}, Iceland⁺, Serbia^{*}, Albania^{*}, Bosnia and Herzegovina^{*}, Norway⁺, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia and San Marino.
2. The EU thanks the Director General for the “Nuclear Safety Review 2021” as contained in document GOV/2021/3 and Deputy Director General Lentijo for the technical briefing on 9 February, as well as for the follow-up DG’s progress report on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic as contained GOV/INF/2021/6.

Madam Chair,

3. Nuclear safety and its continuous improvement and strengthening in all countries pursuing peaceful uses of nuclear energy is of paramount importance for the EU and its Member States. Complacency must be avoided. We fully support the Agency’s activities in this area, welcome its prioritized approach and the increased emphasis on the human-related aspects of nuclear safety, in particular enhanced focus on management, strong safety culture and leadership in safety. We welcome the International Conference on a Decade of Progress After Fukushima-Daiichi in November 2021, an opportunity to plan for the future and to take stock of the improvements achieved to date.
4. The EU’s long-term commitment to nuclear safety is also demonstrated by our financial contributions. We are pleased to announce that the allocation of 300 million € for the period of 2021-27 through the European Instrument for Nuclear Safety is in the final stages of approval. It will promote effective nuclear safety, including high nuclear safety and radiation protection standards and the establishment of effective and efficient safeguards in third countries.

Madam Chair,

5. We appreciate the Agency’s continued commitment and its urgent attention to ensuring that Safety Standards remain fully applicable and up-to-date, including in light of the progress made after Fukushima and also in pandemic situation. The announced conduct of a gap analysis study to consider whether a further strengthening of the standards is required is a welcomed step.

[§] Candidate Country

^{*} Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁺ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

6. In light of a growing interest of countries in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, we welcome the increased number of requests from Member States to host the Agency's peer review and advisory services. EU Member States have hosted many Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS), Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation (ARTEMIS) and other missions and we also support neighbouring States through the carrying out of stress tests. We call upon the Secretariat to continue to encourage Member States, especially embarking countries, to request these missions, to publish the peer review reports in favour of transparency and to continue to seek improvements, as appropriate, in the conduct of combined and back-to-back missions, including within the Peer Review and Advisory Services Committee (PRASC). We recognise the current difficulties of performing the missions due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions and understand the existing planning constraints. Effective solutions need to be found without compromising the quality of these services.
7. We also regret that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic both the 8th Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the 7th Joint Convention (JC) on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management review meetings had to be postponed. Regarding the President's proposal to merge the 8th and 9th CNS review cycles, we understand such an approach given the unprecedented nature of the existing situation. However, we reiterate the importance for all Contracting Parties to address their nuclear safety issues independently of the postponement and to fulfil their legal obligations. Active participation is essential to ensure a robust peer review process. The EU is also ready to actively participate in the postponed 7th review meeting of the Joint Convention in 2022. We also encourage Member States that have not yet done so to demonstrate a strong political commitment to nuclear safety by becoming Contracting Parties to all international nuclear safety and security conventions.

Madam Chair,

8. We thank the Agency for keeping robust regulatory infrastructure and decision-making processes a priority, including scientific knowledge, expertise and support provided by the Technical and Scientific Support Organisations (TSOs) and other relevant institutions. We request the Secretariat to continue to make this a priority.
9. Building effective emergency preparedness and response (EPR) capabilities should be a priority for every Member State. We reiterate our commitment and encourage all States to uphold the principles of transparency and responsibility to citizens when dealing with incident and emergency scenarios. We encourage all countries to make use of the existing tools, including in a business as usual context, and to report in a timely and transparent manner on all relevant follow-up activities undertaken. Without prejudice of communication arrangements pertaining to nuclear security, it is crucial that information on all relevant events, including those that have an actual, potential or perceived transboundary radiological significance, is shared directly and through the IAEA, and communicated with a view to satisfying concerns, especially those from public.
10. We also reiterate our call for Member States to avoid imposing an undue burden on future generations by seeking and applying transparent, safe and long-term management solutions for radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel. Development of decommissioning strategies and plans, including accurate cost estimates and work on final disposal solutions is and must be an essential part of any nuclear power or radiation technology programme. We call upon Member States to implement these solutions in a timely and coherent manner. We reiterate the International Nuclear Safety Group (INSAG) Chair's call for action to deal permanently with the accumulation of spent fuel and radioactive waste. We highlight important milestones reached across our Member States with regard to deep geological disposal facilities such as in Finland and Sweden. We stand ready to share our experience and lessons learned.

11. Regarding ageing management and long-term operation (LTO), we recognize there is still room for improvement and recall the need to also systematically consider elements related to human resources policies and knowledge transfer between generations. We welcome and also encourage the Agency to continue enhancing its related activities, including through its assistance in the preparation of safety upgrades in existing nuclear power plants (NPPs), support in developing adequate ageing management, refurbishment and modernization programmes as well as via Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation (SALTO) missions.
12. The EU and its Member States support the effective application of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the two Supplementary Guidance and the facilitation of the sharing of experience in this area. We welcome that, in 2020, an additional six Member States made their political commitments to the Supplementary Guidance on the Management of the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources and the Supplementary Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources. We also welcome the Agency's activities, including regulatory oversight, aimed to achieve high level of safety in the transport of radioactive material.

Madam Chair,

13. While recognizing the existing differences between nuclear safety and nuclear security, the added value of an improved management of their interface in all stages of NPP and nuclear fuel cycle facility is clear, without compromising each other. We ask the Agency to continue addressing the existing safety-security interface challenges in a coherent, coordinated and integrated manner, and welcome the joint INSAG & IAEA Advisory Committee on Nuclear Security (AdSec) publications.
14. Our focus on safety also extends to advanced nuclear technologies, such as Small and Medium Sized or Modular Reactors (SMRs), including transportable nuclear power plants. An increased interest in this topic, particularly in the review of applicability of the Agency's safety standards to SMRs designs, underlines the need to foster international cooperation on SMRs regulation. We encourage the IAEA to continue supporting the SMR Regulators' Forum and to seek ways and means to ensure involvement of all interested Member States. We also encourage the Departments of Nuclear Safety and Nuclear Energy to work together, and with relevant international partners, to ensure consistency, avoid duplications and fill any gaps in the safety framework.
15. Following last year's announcement to establish a Consolidated Plan for Nuclear and Radiation Safety (CPS), we renew our call to the Secretariat to keep Member States informed of the matter.
16. With these comments, the EU takes note of the report on "Nuclear Safety Review 2021" as contained in GOV/2021/3.

Thank you, Madam Chair.