



European Union

Statement on the occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors

Vienna, 9-13 September 2019

Agenda item 5: Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. 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 European Union would like to thank the Director General for his report contained in document GOV/2019/26-GC(63)/3 on "Strengthening the Agency's Activities related to Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications".
3. The Agency's work on nuclear science technology and applications underpins the inalienable right of all States Parties to the NPT to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination, in accordance with Article IV of the NPT. The Agency's activities assist Member States and foster international cooperation in further development of the application of radiation and nuclear technologies to significantly contribute to the peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Nuclear technologies can also be of great help to fight global warming, mitigate its consequences and monitor its impact. The EU remains committed to ensuring the responsible development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Madam Chair,

4. The EU and its Member States commend the important role played by the Agency to help meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by supporting the development of nuclear science and applications in Member States and promoting the practical use under the highest achievable safety, security and non-proliferation conditions.
5. In this regard, we welcome the large and high-level attendance of the 2018 IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology: Addressing Current and Emerging Development Challenges, which discussed the contribution, integration and

[§] 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.

use of nuclear science, technology and applications for peaceful uses. The EU strongly supports the activities of the Agency to develop radiation and nuclear related technologies and their application to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This conference and the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration highlighted the growing demand for further utilisation of nuclear applications. While we appreciate the efforts of all Member States in agreeing to a Ministerial Declaration, we regret that agreement could not be reached this time on a reference to the contribution the IAEA makes to the fulfilment of pillar three of the NPT. This required significant compromise on the part of EU Member States.

6. We welcome the designation of 4 new Collaborating Centres, bringing their total number to 33. Collaborating Centres play a key role to help the Agency implement its programmatic activities. Together with technical workshops as well as the IT tools and online e-learning modules developed by the Agency, they constitute a major vehicle to ensure continued training and dissemination of knowledge.
7. We renew our encouragement to the Secretariat to continue to strengthen its cooperation and partnership with other relevant organisations, such as the World Meteorological Organisation to address climate change issues, or with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help tackling malnutrition, and responding to non-communicable disease epidemics worldwide.
8. In that spirit, we commend again the achievements of the joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture in promoting the cost-effective integration of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) into area-wide integrated pest management campaigns, and more specifically its contribution to the African Union's Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign. We positively note that the support provided through the Regular Budget and Technical Cooperation Fund has a direct positive impact on the socio-economic development of these regions, while notably improving human health. We also welcome the research conducted at the Insect Pest Control Laboratory in Seibersdorf, whose activities help developing new eradication strategies and contribute to the cost reduction and simplification of SIT application against major tsetse fly species, which remain an extremely severe threat to the health of millions of people worldwide. Capacity building also constitutes a key to the success of those projects and we encourage the Secretariat to maintain its efforts in this regard.
9. Agricultural development also remains a major challenge for addressing rising food demand, malnutrition and lingering food insecurity. The EU therefore commends the efforts made by the Agency to develop and promote the utilisation of isotope hydrology tools as part of national water strategies. As global groundwater depletion poses a significant threat to water security, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas, management of water resources is of crucial importance.
10. The EU and its Member States welcome the progress of the implementation of the Renovation of the Agency's Nuclear Applications Laboratories at Seibersdorf (ReNuAL project), with the achievements of various milestones over the last year, such as the inauguration of the new Flexible Modular Laboratory (FML), the entry into operation of the new energy centre and the commissioning of the new linear accelerator facility. Full funding for the first phase of the project has now been completed and we note that the overall extra budgetary funding raised for the two phases (ReNuAL and ReNuAL+) now reaches €36 million. We commend the Secretariat for its innovative resource mobilisation strategy, which enabled reaching out to non-traditional entities, such as foundations and private companies. We note that raising an additional €2.6 million is still required to complete the resource mobilisation requirements for ReNuAL+ and call upon all Member States to consider a pledge, noting the significant contributions by EU Member States.

11. Several departments of the IAEA are working on the subject of small and medium size or modular reactors (SMRs) to explore how SMRs can be used for producing electric and non-electric applications, such as heating and water desalination. Such technologies are being considered by many newcomer countries in the development of nuclear power programmes. International collaboration and exchange of information on such programmes should aim to develop and ensure the implementation of robust safety and security measures as well as a strong regulatory framework as well as dialogue on how to ensure the technology is economically and environmentally viable. We note that the Agency continues to attend global forums on SMRs

Madam Chair,

12. While acknowledging that all countries have their sovereign right to decide on their own energy mix, some countries consider nuclear power production as a low carbon energy source that can prevent or reduce greenhouse gases emissions and thus combat climate change, whereas other countries pursue different approaches to achieve the same effect. Some IAEA Member States use nuclear power to attain energy security and environmental protection at affordable and stable generating costs. The EU and its Member States welcome the publication of the non-serial report entitled *Climate Change and Nuclear Power 2018*, and look forward to the International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power in October 2019.

13. Making a knowledgeable commitment to a nuclear power programme requires the development, implementation and continuous improvement of an appropriate infrastructure, regulatory and legislative framework. Such choice also implies, among others, adequate financing, public acceptance and ways to ensure the highest possible standards of safety and security. The firm compliance with international legal instruments is essential. We welcome the Agency's assistance to the Member States through information, support and tools to assess all the topics covering the entire lifecycle of a nuclear power programme. We welcome the dedicated attention given to long-term operation, ageing management, obsolescence management, decommissioning, environmental remediation, spent fuel and radioactive waste management.

14. We welcome the Agency's support to the Member States provided through its peer review missions and advisory services. We encourage all IAEA Member States, especially embarking countries, to make use of these services, as relevant, and to implement the recommended actions in a timely manner. Moreover, we also welcome the attention paid to facilitating information exchange in these missions by conducting them, where appropriate, in a combination of English and one of the United Nations official languages.

15. We also welcome the significant support provided by the IAEA in the field of radioactive waste and spent fuel management, including through ARTEMIS missions implemented jointly by the Nuclear Safety and Security and Nuclear Energy Departments and the organisation of a meeting in this regard with the support of the European Commission in November 2018 to receive and consider feedback from international experts involved in the first ARTEMIS reviews..

16. The International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, INPRO, brings together technology users and technology holders and provides a forum for discussion and cooperation of experts and policy makers on future nuclear energy planning, development and deployment. The INPRO project, which now comprises 42 Members, including the European Commission and eleven EU Member States, highlights the role of innovations and international cooperation when transitioning to 4th generation nuclear energy systems, such as fast reactors.

17. The EU and its Member States also take note of the Agency's proactive response to growing Member States interest in decommissioning and environmental remediation by providing assistance in developing decommissioning plans for nuclear power plants and research reactors, and dissemination of lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident. We commend the Agency's support to the 'SHARE' initiative launched in 2019 under the auspices of the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Framework Programme to determine key research needs in the area of decommissioning over the next decade and beyond.

Madam Chair,

18. The operation of research reactors is not only of high importance for the capacity building and research linked with the development and the implementation of nuclear programmes but contributes also to research in the fields of human health, food or agriculture. In this regard, we commend the continuing development of the ICERR scheme and the achievements of the second ICERR network meeting, organised in 2019 alongside the European Research Reactor Conference. This growing network will play an important role in the promotion of capacity building and research, along with the Internet Research Laboratories.

19. We also welcome the Agency's support to Member States regarding the conversion from high to low enriched uranium fuel of research reactors, notably the successful completion of the NIRR-1 project in Nigeria. We encourage Member States, on a voluntary basis, to seek to further minimise highly enriched uranium in civilian stocks and use low enriched uranium where technically and economically feasible, recognising the assistance available through the Agency to help achieve this.

20. The EU welcomes the growing attention given to concerns in human resource development and the activities performed to support nuclear knowledge management, in particular through the establishment of educational networks at regional and inter-regional level. Equally, we welcome the numerous activities of the IAEA in collaboration with European and relevant international actors, such as the European Commission and the OECD/NEA.

Finally, Madam Chair,

21. The EU is favourable to making visible the links between this report and the GC resolution and encourages the Secretariat to reintroduce, in future years, the correspondence between reported activities and paragraphs from the GC resolution in footnotes.

22. With these comments, we support the recommended Board action set forth in GOV/2019/26-GC(63)/3 and its Annexes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.