



# European Union

## Statement on the occasion of the IAEA Board of Governors

Vienna, 9-13 March 2020

### **Agenda item 4: Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications: Nuclear technology review 2020**

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: [Turkey<sup>§</sup>, Republic of North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland+, Serbia\*, Albania\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Liechtenstein+, Norway+, Ukraine, The Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and San Marino].
2. The European Union would like to thank the Director General for his report contained in document GOV/2020/4 on the "Nuclear Technology Review 2020".
3. Nuclear science and technologies are one of the drivers for improved health and prosperity and improved living standards for people. The EU and its Member States are working with the Agency "to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world", in accordance with the statute. As we are preparing for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the EU recalls that this treaty has established a solid, rigorous and successful framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Adherence to and full implementation of that treaty is the bedrock to this success. We commend the contribution the IAEA makes in the context of Article IV of the NPT.
4. The EU strongly supports the Agency's activities in supporting Member States in their efforts to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IAEA's initiatives, aimed at highlighting links between the use of nuclear technologies and relevant SDGs, help to further enhance countries' understanding of the possible contribution of nuclear science and technology in areas such as human health, energy, water management, climate change and environmental protection. Cooperation and coordination with relevant international organisations and institutions as well as outreach activities are essential in carrying forward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madam Chair,

5. The European Union and its Member States acknowledge the need to ensure energy security and to respect the right of the Member States to decide on their energy mix and to choose the most appropriate technologies. Some EU Member States have indicated that they use nuclear energy as part of their national energy mix. It is in this context that a

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<sup>§</sup> 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, Norway and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

number of EU Member States participated in the IAEA's "International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power" held in October 2019 in Vienna that is referred to in the DG's report. The Agency provides a valuable forum among interested policy makers and experts from relevant fields for discussions in this regard. Some countries count on nuclear power in meeting the Paris Agreement goals, while other countries pursue different approaches to achieve the same.

6. The firm compliance with international legal instruments, internationally accepted nuclear safety standards, nuclear security guidelines and safeguards requirements is essential in establishing a responsible nuclear power or radiation technology programme. We encourage all IAEA Member States, to make use of all IAEA peer reviews and advisory services relevant to their programmes and make findings and outcomes publicly available as appropriate and to implement the recommended actions in a timely and transparent manner. We encourage countries providing nuclear technology to actively support recipient countries in their effort to develop and enhance their infrastructure and competence in line with IAEA safety standards.
7. Effective knowledge management, capacity building, and human resource development are key elements in the planning, construction and operation of nuclear installations and are important in order to reach and maintain high levels of safety and security. We commend the efforts made by the IAEA in those fields, including the aforementioned Conference on Nuclear Knowledge Management and Human Resource Development in June 2020. Programmes such as the International Centres based on Research Reactors (ICERR) based in Belgium, France, Romania, the Russian Federation and the USA, or the Eastern Europe Research Reactor Initiative (EERRI) are essential tools to support capacity building and the development of regional centres of excellence.
8. As the fleet of nuclear power plants, and research reactors, inside and around the European Union is increasingly operating for a longer timeframe, early and adequate implementation of measures related to ageing management and development of programmes for long-term operation of nuclear power plants and research reactors is of growing importance, as well as "timely implementation of reasonably practicable safety improvements". We encourage the Agency to address all related Member States' needs.
9. The DG's report states that "The technology development of SMRs for immediate and near term deployment is progressing globally", and that there is "growing interest in using nuclear energy for non-electric applications", for which "SMRs are particularly suitable". Therefore, we note the 2019 INPRO Dialogue Forum on Opportunities and Challenges in SMRs and that the discussions related to all issues surrounding SMRs will continue including at future international conferences held under the IAEA auspices.
10. Within the EU there is already a significant level of decommissioning experience. However, further work is needed to deepen our understanding of the technical, financial and human resources and knowledge management dimensions of decommissioning programmes. Furthermore, projects aiming at the disposal of spent fuel and radioactive waste are proceeding to the implementation phase in several EU Member States. In this regard, we also look forward to continue these discussions within the Joint Convention framework, and we welcome the International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in 2021, and the first International Conference on the Management of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM) in Industry, to take place later this year.
11. We welcome the operationalisation of the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in Kazakhstan, aimed at providing countries with assurance about the supply of nuclear fuel, for which the EU and its Member States made significant financial contribution.

Madam Chair,

12. We continue to monitor the supply of medical radioisotopes and we commend the Agency for its work in this field. A European Observatory was established in 2018 by the European Commission and industry representatives to recommend, in close collaboration with EU Member State representatives, strategies and policies for a sustainable and secure supply of medical radioisotopes. Further efforts are needed as the current supply arrangements remain fragile due to possible unplanned outages of production facilities. Therefore we call on all involved actors including the IAEA to continue their efforts to ensure sustainable supply of radioisotopes, including with initiatives such as the Medical Isotope Browser.
13. We would like to welcome the IAEA's work related to the applications of accelerators and research reactors in environmental studies, biomedical applications, cultural heritage characterization, materials science and radiocarbon dating, among others, which are examples of the societal relevance and impact of nuclear technologies. The variety of applications of the muon tomography technology, to which European scientific institutions have recently contributed, is another example of how nuclear technology bears a real potential in the service of the SDGs.
14. We would like to stress the importance of the Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories (ReNuAL) Project to assist Member States through the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. We are pleased to see that the overall project target budget of €57.8 million is reached. The EU Member States supported ReNuAL and ReNuAL+ with about €7.4 million of voluntary contributions. The final project element involves the enhancement of those laboratories that will remain in the already existing laboratory buildings, which dates to the 1960s. The EU and its Member States welcome that the Secretariat will review and present options to determine the most cost effective and efficient approach how to manage this process. We take note that extra-budgetary contributions are still needed. We thus encourage Member States in a position to do so, to support this effort also in the future.

Finally, Madam Chair,

15. Looking to the future, we continue our involvement in fusion research and welcome further cooperation with the Agency. We look forward to fruitful exchanges at the 28<sup>th</sup> IAEA Fusion Energy Conference in October 2020 and are already fully involved in the International Fusion Research Council (IFRC) and in the Workshops on the Demonstration Fusion Power Plant (DEMO).
16. With these comments, we support the recommended Board action set forth in GOV/2020/4.

Thank you, Madam Chair.