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IAEA Director General's Introductory Statement to the Board of Governors

07 Mar 2022

Vienna, Austria



(https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/styles/hd_1920x1080/public/grossi-070322-1140x640.jpg?itok=mSPePcsX)

IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi delivers his remarks at the opening of the 1614th Board of Governors meeting today at the Agency headquarters in Vienna, Austria. (Photo: D. Calma/IAEA)

(As prepared for delivery)

Mr Chairperson,



Since my last statement to the Board of Governors, the IAEA's teams and I have worked without interruption, night and day, on two major issues high on the international community's agenda. First, the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear power plants amid the encroaching military conflict, and second, making progress on the clarification of the outstanding safeguards issues with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The IAEA continues to monitor the precarious situation at Ukraine's nuclear sites, issuing regular updates to the public via social media and the Agency's website. The Incident and Emergency Centre remains in 24/7 response mode.

The military operations at nuclear power facilities of Ukraine have caused unprecedented danger of a nuclear accident, risking the lives of people living in Ukraine and in neighbouring countries, including Russia. Last week a military projectile hit a building at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP, causing a fire but no release of radiation.

It was a close call.

Such a situation must not, under any circumstances, be repeated.

Russian forces now control the management of the plant and the approval of technical decisions made by the Ukrainian operators. This is not a safe way to run a nuclear power plant. Nor is it safe or sustainable for internal and external communications to have been disrupted and cut off, as it has been reported to us by the Ukrainian operator and regulator. I am deeply concerned about this turn of events.

On Friday, I announced that I would be available as soon as possible to travel so as to establish a feasible framework to re-establish the commitment to nuclear safety that has been so clearly and repeatedly violated over the past days, and to lay out concrete measures to strengthen in an effective way the safety of the



plants. Since then, I have been in direct contact with several world leaders who have extended me their generous support and backing. I also briefed the United Nations Security Council on the matter while I was on route to Tehran.

I reiterate my call – and let it be heard loud and clear – we must avert a nuclear accident in Ukraine. Let us not hide behind “all” or “nothing-at-all” solutions.

We see what is happening on the ground in Ukraine. This time, if there is a nuclear accident, the cause will not be a tsunami brought on by mother nature. Instead, it will be the result of human failure to act when we knew we could, and we knew we should.

We must not let that happen.

The IAEA says: “We’re ready to deploy. We can, and are ready, to assist.”

I have said I am willing to travel to Chornobyl, but it can be anywhere, as long as it facilitates this necessary and urgent action.

Let me now turn to the clarification and resolution of safeguards issues with the Islamic Republic of Iran. I am pleased to inform you that during my visit to Tehran on Saturday and after constructive talks, Vice-President of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, Mohammad Eslami, and I were able to agree a series of actions that will be guiding our work. There is a lot of work ahead of us and we have already started. I will come back to this in more detail later in my statement.

Mr Chairperson,

Let me now turn to other areas of the Agency’s work. With regards to our work in cancer, I am convinced the Agency, and the international community, need to step up their efforts to address the growing crisis hitting some of our Member States particularly hard. Last month, I launched Rays of Hope on the margins of the



African Union Summit on World Cancer Day, with the strong support of African leaders and heads of key international agencies, such as Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the World Health Organization. I would like to commend and thank President Macky Sall of Senegal in his capacity as chairperson of the African Union, and Moussa Faki Mahamat, chairperson of the African Union Commission, for deciding to make this noble project theirs. Together, we are working to make a real difference to cancer care on a continent where 70 per cent of the population lacks access to life-saving radiotherapy. Rays of Hope is a global initiative that starts in Africa and will extend to every region, working to assist Member States with no, or too little capacity to fight cancer. It supports them in harnessing the international community's help, and in building the infrastructure; procuring the equipment; spurring innovation; and providing training to make a real difference in addressing the gap between their capacity and their growing needs.

Rays of Hope is just one of the many areas of the IAEA's work that benefits immensely from the experts and technical assets at our Nuclear Applications laboratories in Seibersdorf. I am pleased to be able to report that the laboratories' modernization is rapidly approaching its final chapter, just in time for their 60th anniversary. Several Member States have indicated they will announce extrabudgetary contributions during this Board meeting. I look forward to honouring them at our side event on Thursday, 10 March from 13:35 to 13:45. I hope you will join us.

Two years after it began its grip on the world, COVID-19 continues to plague our Member States. Therefore, the IAEA has continued to offer its assistance. To date, we have provided support to 305 laboratories in 129 countries and territories. This latest report includes an update on the implementation of safeguards and the operation, safety and security of nuclear and radiation facilities and activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of preventing future pandemics by integrating nuclear and related



techniques, Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) is progressing with the phased delivery of equipment and training. Since the last Board, ZODIAC has been procuring equipment; developing a web portal for training and preparing to begin the first training sessions in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, with regard to overcoming the scourge of plastic pollution, NUClear TEChnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEC Plastics) has provided marine microplastics monitoring kits and capacity-building to Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America regions in 2021.

The Technical Cooperation programme is a key vehicle to fulfilling our mandate in these areas and in providing assistance in emergencies. Since my last board statement, it has responded to several urgent requests by Member States in the aftermath of natural disasters, accidents, and outbreaks of plant and animal diseases.

In Latin America, we are helping the Andean Community to prevent and address the spread of Fusarium Wilt disease in bananas. We sent an emergency fact-finding mission to the region and, just last week, I had the pleasure to meet experts from the affected nations training with us in Seibersdorf. Soon I will be in Ecuador joining the Andean Community of Nations meeting as we strengthen our cooperation in the fight against a plant disease threatening a crucial source of food and of economic income.

In 2021, the Rate of Attainment for TCF contributions was just over 95%. To ensure that resources for the TC programme are Sufficient, Assured and Predicable (SAP), I urge Member States to contribute on time, and in full, to the TC Fund.

Mr Chairperson,

Last month, the Fukushima ALPS Task Force that I established to review the safety of the planned release of ALPS-treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

power station carried out its first mission. The mission included detailed technical discussions in Tokyo and a visit to the Fukushima Daiichi site, where Task Force members observed handling of the ALPS-treated water now stored in tanks and took samples. This was the first of a number of missions that will be held before, during and after the discharge of the water.

The *Nuclear Safety Review 2022* provides an overview of Agency activities and global trends in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, as well as in emergency preparedness and response. It identifies our top priorities in these areas and provides an analytical overview of trends.

I have decided the Agency should develop a new annual *Nuclear Security Review* document with the objective of providing Member States with more information, produced in good time with regard to the preparation of the GC Resolutions. The *Nuclear Security Review* will provide an overview of global trends and related priorities for the Agency; thus, increasing the provision of relevant information to the Board. It will highlight how the nuclear community continues to make steady progress in improving nuclear security globally. This year it is planned to be submitted for the June 2022 meeting of the Board, and subsequent reports will be submitted for the March meetings. The *Nuclear Security Report* that covers the activities conducted by the Agency towards the GC Resolutions will continue to be presented to the September Board.

The Secretariat has facilitated Member States' consultations on the revision of the formalized process on sharing information on the *Code of Conduct of the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources*, and we stand ready to further assist Member States.

On March 28, we will reach a milestone in nuclear security when the *Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (A/CPPNM)* will be held, the first review Conference under the amendment. I would like to commend the work of the Co-presidents of the



Conference, Nigeria and Switzerland, and assure them of our continued assistance with the review conference of this important and only legally binding instrument in the area of nuclear security.

The IAEA will hold the *International Conference on Nuclear Law: The Global Debate* on 25-29 April. In advance of the conference, the IAEA has published *Nuclear Law: The Global Debate*, a book, available for free download on our website, that presents a global perspective on the current and emerging issues in nuclear law through articles by leading scholars, policymakers and scientists in the field. The book has been downloaded more than 75,000 times and counting. We're climbing the "bestseller list" faster than a legal thriller! Mr Chairperson,

The *Nuclear Technology Review 2021* highlights key global developments related both to nuclear power and to a broad range of nuclear applications.

As of today, the 439 nuclear power reactors operating in 32 countries provide approximately 390 gigawatts of installed capacity, supplying some 10% of the world's electricity and more than a quarter of all low-carbon electricity. There are 52 reactors under construction in 19 countries, which are expected to provide almost 55 gigawatts of additional capacity.

About 30 countries are considering, planning or starting nuclear power programmes as they seek a secure, low-carbon supply of energy. Just last week, Nigeria opened bidding for a 4 gigawatt nuclear power plant and Philippines relaunched its nuclear power programme.

Building on our participation in COP26 in Glasgow, we have launched preparations for the next UN Climate Change Conference, to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in November. I would like to thank Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, with whom I met last year, for extending his personal welcome to the IAEA and offering his full support of our contributions to this important meeting.



Back home here in Vienna, the IAEA will soon host the *International Conference on Fast Reactors and Related Fuel Cycles*, which will be held on 19-22 April.

Many Member States are looking to advances in nuclear technology, such as Small Modular Reactors (SMR), to help them meet their energy supply needs and their climate goals. With this in mind, I have launched the Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative (NHSI). It will bring together key stakeholders, including industry and regulators, in a collaborative effort to harmonize and standardize regulatory and industrial approaches in support of the global deployment of safe and secure advanced reactors, such as SMRs.

Mr Chairperson,

My report on Verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in light of United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 covers relevant activities of the Agency in the past few months. Up to 23 February 2021, the Agency verified and monitored the implementation by Iran of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. However, since that date, these activities have been seriously affected by Iran's decision to stop the implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, including the Additional Protocol.

Following constructive consultations with Vice-President Eslami on 15 December 2021, new terms were agreed in relation to the Agency's monitoring and surveillance equipment under the JCPOA. This enabled the Agency to reinstall cameras in the workshop at Karaj and to replace all storage media in JCPOA-related cameras throughout Iran. However, the repeated prolongation of the agreement I reached with Iran in February last year, which has now been in place for over one year, will pose a significant challenge to the Agency's ability to restore continuity of knowledge, which has been widely recognised as essential in relation to a return to the JCPOA.

You have received my report entitled *NPT Safeguards Agreement with the Islamic* 

Republic of Iran. This describes the Agency's efforts since my last report in clarifying questions related to the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations under its Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol.


As you will see, the Joint Statement agreed with Iran on Saturday sets out a series of steps to be conducted over the coming few months.

The Agency looks forward to receiving from Iran by 20 March written explanations, including related supporting documents, to the questions raised by the Agency and not yet been addressed by Iran, on the issues related to three particular locations.

There is a lot of work lying ahead of us. We are ready.

The number of States with safeguards agreements in force has not changed since the last Board. It stands at 186, while 138 of these States have brought additional protocols into force.

I ask States Parties to the NPT without comprehensive safeguards agreements in force to bring such agreements into force without delay. I also reiterate my call on States with small quantities protocols (SQP) based on the old standard text, to amend or rescind them. I stress that the amendment by the remaining States of their old SQPs is essential to addressing a weakness in the IAEA safeguards system recognized by the Board 16 years ago and to enable the Agency to implement effective safeguards in these States and draw soundly based conclusions. I restate that the old standard SQP is simply not adequate for our current safeguards system. I am pleased to report that Saint Lucia has amended its SQP since the last Board. I applaud Saint Lucia and I look forward to other States taking this important step.

This year marks two notable anniversaries, the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the first CSA in connection with the NPT and the 25th anniversary of the IAEA 

Board of Governors' approval of the Model Additional Protocol. The Safeguards Symposium later this year will be dedicated to these important milestones.

Since late last year, I have sent letters to States that have not concluded or brought into force an Additional Protocol to their CSAs, encouraging them to do so. In these letters I reminded relevant States of my earlier calls for amending or rescinding their SQPs. The Agency stands ready to assist any State in this endeavor.

Turning to AUKUS, under which the United States and United Kingdom have agreed to assist Australia in acquiring a nuclear-powered submarine. You will recall that at the Board meeting in November I informed you that the Secretariat had reminded the three parties of their reporting obligations under their safeguards agreements and additional protocols that could be of relevance to their safeguards implementation in relation to their joint project.

During recent engagements the parties have informed the Secretariat that they understand those obligations and that they are fully committed to fulfilling them as the project materializes.

A first technical meeting was held between the three parties and the Secretariat's AUKUS team I established last September. All are committed to ensuring the highest non-proliferation and safeguards standards are met.

Mr Chairperson,

Since my report to the Board and General Conference in August last year we have continued to monitor the DPRK nuclear programme. There are ongoing indications consistent with the operation of the 5MW(e) reactor at the Yongbyon site. There have been no indications of operation of the Radiochemical Laboratory since early July 2021. We continue to observe construction activities at the Yongbyon site, including construction of an annex to the reported Centrifuge




Enrichment Facility, the purpose of which has yet to be determined. Near the light water reactor (LWR) under construction a new building is still being constructed, possibly to support the fabrication or maintenance of reactor components. There are ongoing indications of activities at the Kangson complex and the Pyongsan Mine and Concentration Plant. The continuation of the DPRK's nuclear programme is a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions and is deeply regrettable. I call upon the DPRK to comply fully with its obligations under relevant UN Security Council resolutions, to cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement and to resolve all outstanding issues, especially those that have arisen during the absence of Agency inspectors from the country. The Agency continues to maintain its enhanced readiness to play its essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme.

As far as implementation of safeguards in the Syrian Arab Republic is concerned, no new information has come to the knowledge of the Agency that would affect our assessment that it was very likely that the building destroyed at Dair Alzour was a nuclear reactor that should have been declared by Syria pursuant to its NPT Safeguards Agreement. This was more than ten years ago. I urge Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency in connection with all unresolved issues. I am ready to talk to Syria constructively and cooperatively. Let us engage to take concrete steps towards a mutually acceptable solution to this matter that has been on the Board's agenda for a very long time.

Mr Chairperson,

The first and second meetings of the Open-Ended Working Group on the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy 2024–2029 took place in February. We will continue to provide all necessary support for the successful conclusion of this work.

The Agency's Draft Budget Update for 2023, which adheres to zero real growth 

and contains no changes to the Agency's programme approved last year, was presented to Member States last month.

At the end of 2021 the Secretariate reached a milestone in its journey to gender parity, with its six DDG-level positions now equally split between men and women. Meanwhile, the overall representation of women in the Professional and higher categories climbed to 37%, a 4% increase in the year 2021.

In addition to our work on gender equity, the Secretariat continues to work closely with Member States to attract staff from developing countries and from those Member States unrepresented or under-represented.






In closing, let me assure you that my teams and I remain steadfast in our uninterrupted efforts to ensure the IAEA fulfils its singular and important role in all its endeavours. At this unprecedented moment in history, we are determined to use all the tools and expertise of this remarkable institution to make as large and lasting a contribution to the safety, security and safeguards of nuclear material in Ukraine and Iran as is possible under our unique mandate.

Thank you.

Related resources

- 🔗 Framework for the Safety and Security of Ukraine's Nuclear Power Plants must be Agreed, IAEA Director General Tells Board of Gov (<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/framework-for-the-safety-and-security-of-ukraines-nuclear-power-plants-must-be-agreed-iaea-director-general-tells-board-of-governors>)
- 🔗 The conflict in Ukraine (<https://www.iaea.org/ukraine-conflict>)
- 🔗 COVID-19 (<https://www.iaea.org/topics/covid-19>)
- 🔗 Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) (<https://www.iaea.org/services/key-programmes/zoonotic-disease-integrated-action-zodiac>)
- 🔗 Rays of Hope: Cancer care for all (<https://www.iaea.org/services/rays-of-hope>)
- 🔗 A Need for ReNuAL (<https://www.iaea.org/about/organizational-structure/departments-of-nuclear-sciences-and-applications/seibersdorf-laboratories/renewal>)
- 🔗 NUTEC Plastics (<https://www.iaea.org/services/key-programmes/nutec-plastics>)




-  [In Focus: Monitoring and Verification in Iran \(https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran\)](https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/iran)
-  [In Focus: Monitoring and Verification in DPRK \(https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk\)](https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk)
-  [Photo Gallery: Board of Governors, 7 March 2022 \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/iaea_imagebank/albums/72177720297182816\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/iaea_imagebank/albums/72177720297182816)
-  [IAEA Board of Governors \(https://www.iaea.org/about/governance/board-of-governors\)](https://www.iaea.org/about/governance/board-of-governors)
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International Atomic Energy Agency

Vienna International Centre, PO Box 100
A-1400 Vienna, Austria
Telephone: +43 (1) 2600-0, Facsimile +43 (1) 2600-7

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