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Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

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Note by the Secretary-General

Owing to exceptional circumstances, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency was unable to deliver his annual statement on the report of the Agency to the General Assembly, as indicated in the note by the Secretary-General ([A/77/308](#)). The Secretary-General hereby transmits the prepared statement by the Director General introducing the report.



Statement of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session

It is an honour to address the seventy-seventh regular session of the General Assembly and to have the opportunity to update you on the important work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the past year.

IAEA is not an agency for a handful of countries that use nuclear power. It is an institution with 175 member States that benefits every nation on Earth. The Agency is not only the world's indispensable nuclear weapons watchdog, it is also the institution that ensures that no one is left behind when it comes to the enormous benefits of nuclear science and technology.

The world is facing many challenges, and IAEA is assisting its member States in addressing them holistically and in the long term, whether in securing supplies of food, water and energy or fighting diseases and plastic pollution.

Before I turn to our work in partnering with member States to harness the power of nuclear science and technology in order to advance towards more than half of the Sustainable Development Goals, let me begin with one of the most urgent immediate challenges before us.

The war in Ukraine marks the first time that military conflict has threatened a major nuclear power programme. From the start, IAEA has worked tirelessly to assist Ukraine in ensuring the safety and security of its nuclear facilities and in keeping the world informed of their status.

I have reported to the IAEA Board of Governors and the Security Council and published more than 110 public updates.

Four IAEA missions have travelled to Ukraine, three of which I have led. Let me thank you, the international community, for the support that you have offered in making them happen and also the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, and the Secretariat for their crucial and expert security and logistical assistance.

Following our missions to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and its exclusion zone, the transfer of safeguards and radiation monitoring data to the Agency headquarters was re-established, and we were able to implement a comprehensive support programme.

The most recent mission established an ongoing IAEA presence at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant, the largest nuclear power plant in Ukraine and Europe and the one most endangered by the war.

Ever since, I have been working to implement a nuclear safety and security protection zone at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant to stop the shelling from damaging the plant or interrupting its crucial power supply. I have spoken personally with both the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. I will continue to deliberate with Ukraine and Russia to make it happen.

It is unacceptable that an accident could add to the already profound level of suffering. We must not let it happen.

Mother Nature is calling us ever more urgently to address the climate crisis, and at the same time, the world now also faces the worst energy crisis since the 1970s. This has led decision makers on all continents to turn their attention again to the proven and scalable option of nuclear power to diversify their energy sources and decarbonize the base fuel needed to enable wind and solar power. Projections call for nuclear capacity to more than double in the coming three decades if climate targets are to be met.

We have the toolkit to move the world to a more sustainable energy path, and we need to use it. This is also my message to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, happening right now in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The shift to more nuclear power brings to the fore the indispensable work of IAEA, especially in helping to ensure that safety and security come first and that safeguards continue to be implemented without interruption.

Today, more than 400 nuclear power reactors operating in more than 30 countries supply over 10 per cent of the world's electricity and more than a quarter of all low-carbon electricity. Without nuclear power, global carbon dioxide emissions would be considerably higher. Some 18 countries are constructing 56 new reactors, and 30 countries are either planning or considering the introduction of a nuclear power programme.

For nuclear power to fulfil its potential, including as a producer of heat and low-carbon hydrogen, it will need to be put on an even footing with other low-carbon sources when it comes to financing. The decisions that Governments make now will have a profound economic and environmental impact for generations. IAEA helps decision makers to base their policies on science and fact rather than fear and ideology. Small modular reactors offer new opportunities for many countries, including developing ones. To ensure that they come to market in a safe and timely manner, IAEA is engaging stakeholders, including industry and regulators, in an effort to harmonize and standardize regulatory and industrial approaches.

As new technologies create new opportunities and as nuclear science and technology support Sustainable Development Goals across the globe, IAEA is making sure that no one is left behind. At the same time, we are making sure that safety and security norms and international legal frameworks remain strong, flexible and forward-looking. The Agency's nuclear safety standards are considered international reference points for the protection of people and the environment from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation, while our security guidelines and codes of conduct play an equivalent role in helping the international community to prevent nuclear material falling into terrorists' hands.

To help countries to make sure that they are implemented effectively, our advisory services and peer reviews allow for ongoing safety and security improvements in all areas of the fuel cycle, including radioactive waste management.

As a science-based and impartial organization with global reach, IAEA has been asked by the Government of Japan to provide assistance before, during and after the discharge of the water treated by the Advanced Liquid Processing System and stored at the Daiichi nuclear power station in Fukushima. Together with a team of international experts, the Agency is assessing whether the releases conform to the Agency's consensus-based and universally applied safety standards.

Our safeguards teams have risen to the challenge of inspecting ever-greater quantities of nuclear material and increasing numbers of facilities, assuring the international community of their peaceful uses while remaining firm, objective and diligent at all times, most notably in challenging cases.

The world of nuclear proliferation and safeguards is evolving. With regard to naval nuclear propulsion, IAEA must provide the necessary technical answers for this development, which is foreseen in the existing legal framework.

In its work on this issue, the Agency has its verification and non-proliferation mandate as its guiding principle.

The Agency's verification and monitoring of the nuclear-related commitments of the Islamic Republic of Iran under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have been seriously affected by Iran's decision in February 2021 to stop the implementation of those commitments, including the Additional Protocol.

In the event of a full resumption of Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Plan of Action, the Agency will need to address the growing gap in its knowledge of what took place while its surveillance and monitoring equipment related to the Plan of Action was not in operation.

With regard to its safeguards agreement, Iran still needs to resolve some of our questions concerning traces of man-made uranium identified at three undeclared locations in the country. As a consequence, IAEA is not in a position to provide assurance that the country's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful.

IAEA remains ready to work with Iran without delay to resolve these matters.

The number of States with safeguards agreements in force now stands at 189, and 140 of these States have brought additional protocols into force. I call upon the remaining five States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty without comprehensive safeguards agreements to bring such agreements into force without delay. In addition, I encourage States that have not yet concluded additional protocols to do so as soon as possible. I reiterate my call for States with small quantities protocols based on the old standard text to amend or rescind them. The old-standard small quantities protocol is simply not adequate for our current safeguards system.

Since the General Conference of 2021, we have continued to monitor the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Among the activities that we have observed are indications that the nuclear test site has been reopened and that facilities have been operating and construction work has continued at the Yongbyon site.

The continuation of the country's nuclear programme is a clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions and is regrettable and deeply troubling. The Agency continues to maintain its enhanced readiness to play its essential role in verifying the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As the world faces the convergence of multiple challenges, including insecurity and climate change, the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology are becoming ever more important tools in many of society's most important areas. They contribute directly to more than half of the Sustainable Development Goals and indirectly to all of them.

IAEA is the premier vehicle by which these life-affirming tools are distributed more widely across all four continents to those who need them most, whether to cure diseases, to help feed the hungry, to protect the environment or to power progress without harming the planet.

In emergencies, IAEA has responded quickly and effectively. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, we did not stop for a single minute until we had delivered the biggest global emergency response programme in our near-seven-decade history.

To make sure that the world is better prepared next time, we have developed our Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC) initiative. In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IAEA is building a global network of laboratories that will be able to leverage the tools of nuclear science to trace and analyse viruses while working together and keeping each other informed. The first deliveries and training courses have already taken place.

As COVID-19 has shown, health challenges are deeply unjust in the burden that they present across the world. Cancer is a crisis threatening to overwhelm developing countries and erase many of their recent societal gains.

It is unacceptable that half of Africa countries lack even a single life-saving radiotherapy machine.

This year, in Addis Ababa, IAEA launched Rays of Hope, stepping up its commitment and galvanizing the international community to address this silent pandemic by providing radiotherapy and cancer care for all. Rays of Hope has the strong support of the World Health Organization and African Union leaders. The President of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union, Macky Sall, has been a steadfast champion, noting its importance in his speech to this distinguished body only a few weeks ago.

Our health and energy crises are being compounded by a food crisis. Food and agriculture remain a top priority for member States, accounting for almost a quarter of the Agency's technical cooperation programme in 2021.

Nuclear applications and techniques such as isotope hydrology help farmers to improve the management of their soil. Mutation breeding allows scientists to develop crops that produce higher and more reliable yields while saving water and reducing the need for harmful pesticides. From the banana plantations of the Andes to the plains of Africa, IAEA assists member States in improving their capacity to do this important work, often in collaboration with FAO.

Food security is not only a land-based matter. Many people also depend on the ocean for their food and to make a living.

Climate change and plastic pollution are putting this in peril. The Agency's Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEC Plastics) and our laboratories in Austria and Monaco help countries to harness environmentally friendly radiation techniques for recycling more plastic and to use isotopic tracing to better understand problems such as marine microplastic pollution and ocean acidification.

In all of our endeavours, it is vital that everyone, regardless of gender, be able to fully benefit and to fully contribute their talents. IAEA looks to empower women, both those whom it serves and those whom it employs.

This year, the share of women among our Professional and higher staff reached 40 per cent as the policies towards the goal of gender parity by 2025 make their mark.

Meanwhile, the Agency's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme is providing financial support to women studying towards a master's degree in nuclear subjects. In the past three years, it has grown from granting 100 annual fellowships to granting 150. I urge those who can to support the Fellowship so that it is able to continue to improve the gender balance in this crucial field.

It is no secret that we live in challenging times. However, the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology gives us the means to address many of our most pressing priorities, fulfilling the IAEA mission and contributing to the common agenda of the United Nations.

Peace and development can only be achieved when access to these precious resources and the knowledge of how to use them are widely shared among all countries and no one is left behind. Let me finish by promising you that IAEA will steadfastly continue to make sure that happens.