

Summit of the Future

The IAEA's vital support of development & international security

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IAEA

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REMARKS FOR PUBLICATION

President, Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

“The best way to predict the future is to build it”. It is a truth worth remembering, especially when political division, climate change, war, hunger, and disease seem to overshadow our effort.

We have the tools to deal with these challenges. We have the knowledge, the technology, the financial means, the diplomacy and the robust international institutions.

The IAEA serves its 180 Member States with the lifesaving and life-affirming tools of nuclear science and technology. These contribute directly to the SDGs.

Health comes first. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 we jumped into action, harnessing our equipment and knowledge for quick and reliable testing against COVID with the portable RT-PCR machines, or “labs in a suitcase”.

We launched what would become the largest emergency operation in the history of IAEA to nearly 130 States. In so doing, we reached tens of millions of people. For some countries these kits were the first, and sometimes the only equipment they had to conduct reliable testing against COVID-19.

Drawing on this and earlier experiences supporting the fight against Ebola, avian influenza and Zika, we launched – in that same year - the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC). Under ZODIAC we have trained people from more than 95 countries in dealing with zoonotic diseases. Laboratories in developing countries have received equipment for

serology and molecular diagnostic or genetic sequencing. Many of these labs are now being used to combat Mpox.

The IAEA has more than 6 decades of experience in radiotherapy and medical imaging. But today the cancer crisis is hitting low and middle-income countries particularly hard and I am determined to make a greater impact in partnership with our Member States. That is why we launched Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All at the African Union Summit in February 2022, with firm support from the World Health Organization (WHO). Africa is where the cancer care gap is the starkest: more than 20 African nations lack even a single radiotherapy machine. So far, 86 countries have reached out to the IAEA for support under Rays of Hope and concrete actions have been initiated in more than 30 States.

Under our new initiative, NUTEC: NUClear TEchnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution, 86 States around the world are participating in marine microplastic monitoring using nuclear and isotopic tracing techniques. This will help them to put in place better-informed policies that combat the plastic pollution threatening the ocean, its plants and creatures and therefore also the communities that rely on them for their livelihoods. Some 39 States are participating in plastic recycling using radiation technology, four of which are progressing towards establishing pilot-scale plants. This will allow them to reduce plastic waste and advance towards a circular economy. The Global Marine Monitoring Network continues to grow with 99 States now benefiting from capacity building efforts.

Atoms4Food was launched by the IAEA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in October 2023. It offers tailor-made approaches in

Food and Agriculture, which for years has been the number 1 area of support sought by our Member States. Atoms4Foods supports countries in using innovative nuclear techniques to enhance agricultural productivity, reduce food losses, ensure food safety, improve nutrition, and adapt to the challenges of climate change. This supports farmers as well as the fight against deadly malnutrition.

There is no development without energy. Nuclear power provides about a quarter of the world's low-carbon electricity. Much more is needed if we are to meet the climate goals set out on the Paris Agreement. In their historic first Global Stocktake, approved at COP28 in Dubai last year, the signatory countries to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change called for accelerating the deployment of low-emission energy technologies including nuclear power. The Pact for the Future adopted yesterday, in Action 26 reaffirmed the inalienable right of all countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination, in conformity with their respective obligations.

Today, in addition to the 415 nuclear power reactors operating in 31 countries there are 62 reactors under construction in 15 countries, most of them in Asia. The IAEA is assisting States, many of them developing countries, either with enlarging their civilian nuclear programs, or with safely embarking on them. We are working with industry and regulators on small modular reactors (SMRs) which will make more affordable the price of entry to the nuclear energy club.

The IAEA is also playing an important role in maintenance of

international peace and security.

Mandated by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we conduct nuclear safeguards, making sure the increased amount of nuclear material around the world does not result in the secret proliferation of nuclear weapons. There is material for thousands of nuclear warheads in the world. Thanks to the robust international safeguards regime and our inspection system, who never stopped even during the COVID pandemic, the number of nuclear weapon States around the world is far fewer than had been feared before the IAEA was established and the NPT came into force.

The IAEA assists States in the creation and implementation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which already cover vast regions of the world. These are important steps towards a world without nuclear weapons.

Our work in Iran, Syria, other countries of the Middle East, and on different continents, contributes to international stability through non-proliferation and through the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

Since February 2022 a large-scale conventional conflict has raged in a country with a large civilian nuclear program. Ukraine used to generate more than half its electricity from nuclear power plants. From the first months of the war, the IAEA has focused on assisting Ukraine in preventing a radiological or nuclear accident, which could have a serious transborder impact. Today, the IAEA has advisory and assistance missions stationed at all five of Ukraine's nuclear power plants, including Zaporizhzhia, which is located right at the front line. Following months

of negotiations and consultations, on 30 May 2023 at the UN Security Council I outlined five concrete principles to help ensure nuclear safety and security at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP. It received strong support from the Members of the Council.

The IAEA continues to monitor the safe discharge of water from the Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Station and engages in consultations with neighbouring and coastal countries with strong interest in the process. Our independent analysis and the data we publish relating to the discharge offer facts that dispel misunderstandings and fears about the process.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I firmly believe in supporting the ability of everyone, regardless of gender, to fully benefit and contribute to the IAEA's work.

Conviction requires action. When I began my tenure as the IAEA's Director General five years ago, one of my very first actions was to set a goal for gender parity by 2025 and to put in place the policies to achieve a more diverse workforce.

Five years ago, women represented less than 30% of the Agency. Today, they have surpassed 48%.

Mindful of the need to continue helping future generations, I also launched the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme (MSCFP) in 2020. It drives diversity as well as scientific and technological innovation by encouraging women to pursue a career in the nuclear field. Since its launch, hundreds of women from over 120 countries have been awarded fellowships with generous stipends. They have studied in more than 70

countries and have also benefited from internships in many areas of the field. Our follow-up program, named after the scientist Lisa Meitner, empowers early- and mid-career through career-enhancing opportunities like site visits.

The IAEA is a key multilateral player to make the Pact of the Future a reality. Thank you.