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Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency

Note by the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to circulate the text of the pre-recorded statement delivered by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (see annex) which was played at the 36th plenary meeting of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, held on 17 November 2021, pursuant to Assembly decision 76/503 of 17 September 2021.

In accordance with decision 76/503 of 17 September 2021, the official records of the General Assembly will be supplemented by annexes containing pre-recorded statements submitted by officials invited to make a statement or present a report, submitted to the President no later than the day on which such statements are delivered in the Assembly Hall. Submissions in this regard should be made to estatements@un.org.



Annex

Statement by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi

I am honoured to address the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth regular session, and I am grateful for the chance to update Member States on the important work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) towards our common goals.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is not over for us or for our 173 member States. Nevertheless, progress towards normalcy has been made. At the IAEA, we returned to our offices and laboratories in early July. Many of our activities, such as training scientists, doctors and engineers in developing countries in the use of relevant nuclear technology, are moving from online-only to hybrid formats, as are our conferences.

When it comes to our safeguards work, however, throughout the pandemic we have continued to implement in-field inspections across the world to prevent the diversion of nuclear material from peaceful activities. The Agency's largest-ever emergency operation supplied 129 countries with urgently needed consignments of equipment and related training for virus detection and diagnosis with which to confront COVID-19.

The IAEA Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action project, known as ZODIAC, builds on that, creating a network of countries and laboratories from all continents and partners from around the United Nations family to help us prepare for future outbreaks. Member States will have access to nuclear and related technology packages, expertise, guidance and training. Decision-makers will receive clear, timely information that will enable them to act quickly.

While COVID-19 has dominated health services, the situation has worsened for patients suffering from other severe diseases, such as cancer. The IAEA is redoubling its efforts to bring life-saving access to nuclear and radiation medicine to countries, many of them in Africa, that lack even a single radiotherapy machine. The theme of this year's Assembly calls on us to build resilience through hope, and that is what we are doing through the life-giving rays of the atom. We are strengthening our efforts on cancer in a decisive way and will soon announce an important initiative to address that ongoing crisis.

Before I talk about our important role in peace and security, I would like to update the Assembly on the equally critical work that we do assisting our member States to build their capacity for using nuclear science and technology to achieve more than half of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Last year, the IAEA assisted 147 countries and territories — 35 of which were least developed countries — through our Technical Cooperation Programme. Alongside our COVID-19 assistance, the main areas of support were health and nutrition and food and agriculture.

The Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* (A/75/982) calls on all of us to protect our most precious global commons. I would like to talk about just two of the many ways in which the IAEA is helping member States protect our environment: the air we breathe and our oceans.

Having just returned from the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26), let me begin with the challenge of climate change. Nuclear power plants emit no carbon. Nuclear power is a proven, scalable way to decarbonize our energy systems. It is, and will be, an important solution to the climate crisis that we face. I found that fact resonating with increasing numbers of people in the climate change community and beyond.

The 442 nuclear power reactors operating in 32 countries today provide approximately 394 gigawatts of installed capacity. They 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 19 countries are constructing 51 new reactors, which are expected to provide 54 gigawatts of additional capacity.

The latest IAEA projections show global nuclear electrical capacity doubling by 2050 if countries decide to take full benefit of nuclear power in their fight against climate change.

Solar and wind cannot do it alone. That is clear from the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, international energy economists, the IAEA's own experts and many of the young climate activists whom I met at COP26.

The acceptance of nuclear may be increasing, but the great benefits of nuclear technologies are sustainable only if they are used safely and securely. The IAEA helps to facilitate the use of nuclear power within a safety culture built on continuous learning and improvement and embedded in a robust and agile safety framework. The Agency's safety standards are considered international reference points for the protection of people and the environment from harmful effects of ionizing radiation. Member States also make extensive use of the Agency's growing menu of expert peer-review and advisory services to help them continuously enhance nuclear safety and security.

As a trusted science-based international organization, the 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. The purpose of that multi-year project will be for the IAEA, with the help of a team of international experts, to assess that the releases conform with the Agency's consensus-based safety standards.

Beyond climate change and air pollution, the plastic pollution in our oceans is another urgent transboundary challenge threatening one of our most crucial common assets. Some scientists predict that by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the sea. The IAEA's Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution initiative envisages building infrastructure in member States so that they can undertake research and monitor the litter and microplastics in the marine environment. That enables the authorities to take informed policy decisions.

The pandemic has disrupted many of our lives, but it did not inhibit the IAEA's indispensable safeguards tasks for a single minute. We continued to carry out all our most time-critical in-field verification work. That work has grown substantially in the past years.

The number of countries with safeguards agreements in force stands at 186, 138 of which have brought additional protocols into force. More than 1,300 facilities

and other locations are now under IAEA safeguards. More significantly, the amount of nuclear material for which the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear explosive device cannot be excluded grew by almost 30 per cent in the past decade, reaching more than 220,000 by the end of last year. Meanwhile, we continue to address new situations, including the need to ensure that we are able to provide safeguards when nuclear material is used for naval propulsion.

I report regularly to the IAEA Board of Governors on Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Agency's verification and monitoring activities have been adversely affected as a result of Iran's decision to stop the implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. In September, the IAEA reached an agreement with Iran that Agency inspectors would continue to service Agency monitoring and surveillance equipment and replace the storage media. However, the Agency has not been able to access one particular facility, which means that the Agency's confidence in maintaining continuity of knowledge, indispensable to the JCPOA, is declining.

During the past year I have continued to report on the Agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as there are still unresolved issues involving the presence of multiple uranium particles of anthropogenic origin at three locations in Iran not declared to the Agency, as well as issues related to another undeclared location regarding natural uranium in the form of a metal disc. I reiterate the requirement for Iran to clarify and resolve those issues without further delay.

The Agency continues to monitor the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, using open-source information, including satellite imagery. The country's nuclear activities remain a cause for serious concern. The continuation of the nuclear programme is a clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and is deeply regrettable. I call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its obligations under the Security Council resolutions, cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement and 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 nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Whether regarding safeguards, safety and security or in building Member States' capacity to use nuclear techniques to boost crop yields, reduce disease-carrying insect populations and manage precious fresh water sources, one constant remains: the importance of science and technical knowledge. That is why the modernization of the IAEA's nuclear applications laboratories is one of the most exciting and important projects that we have undertaken. Thanks to the generous support of Member States, we have come to the final phase. Its completion is essential to the IAEA being able to train thousands of scientists from Member States in the use of state-of-the-art nuclear technology on climate-smart agriculture, resource management and food security. Separately, this year we broke ground on a nuclear security centre, which will house our experts and the latest technology in security training and capacity-building.

Societies and economies will not meet their potential until women are able to fully contribute to them. The IAEA looks to empower women in all the work that it does. We are making steady progress towards my goal of reaching gender parity

in the professional and higher categories by 2025. That requires that we step up our efforts, not only within the Agency, but also that we boost the talent pipeline for the whole nuclear sector.

The IAEA Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme is now in its second year. So far, the programme has supported 100 women in their master's degree studies in nuclear subjects. This year 110 more women will join them. I would like to thank the generous donors of the Fellowship Programme.

Finally, I warmly thank Austria, our wonderfully supportive host country, for facilitating our work, especially during the challenges of COVID-19, and I am grateful to Agency staff for their hard work and commitment.
