

AUKUS: Tri-lateral statement to the IAEA Board of Governors

UK Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Corinne Kitsell said:

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In September 2021, our leaders announced the beginning of an 18-month consultation period to determine the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Integral to these consultations are our shared objectives of setting the highest possible non-proliferation standards, strengthening the integrity of the non-proliferation regime, and maintaining Australia's impeccable non-proliferation credentials.

Chair,

Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States remain fully committed to our respective non-proliferation obligations. Our cooperation under AUKUS will reflect our longstanding leadership in global non-proliferation.

Consistent with this, Australia has voluntarily committed to not domestically enrich or reprocess nuclear material in support of the nuclear-powered submarine program.

Chair,

Our goal is to enable verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material in our nuclear propulsion-related cooperation under AUKUS by proceeding under the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the IAEA.

We also seek to identify opportunities to advance the use of safeguards tools in ways beneficial to the Agency and the international non-proliferation regime.

At the beginning of this meeting, the Director General reported on our engagement with the IAEA to date. Our engagement with the IAEA is a critical element of our consultations. We have commenced technical consultations with the IAEA on verification-related issues. These discussions build on the direct engagement we have sought and maintained with the Agency since the announcement of our joint effort.

AUKUS partners, including at leader and ministerial level, have and will

continue to engage directly with the Director General, Board Members and other interested member states.

Chair, On 8 February, the AUKUS partners brought into force an agreement for the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information (ENNPPIA). This agreement is narrowly focused on providing for the exchange of naval nuclear propulsion information among the three parties during the 18-month consultation period. It does not allow for the transfer of nuclear material or equipment, but provides a basis for more detailed consultation between partners and will support our ongoing engagement with the IAEA.

Chair,

We continue to oppose calls for a standing agenda item, a 'special committee' or an 'inter-governmental process' on AUKUS.

As noted earlier, AUKUS cooperation is proceeding under the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol. Not only is it proper and appropriate, but there is a firm legal basis for the Director General and the Secretariat, to engage Australia, with the support of relevant partners, on these issues. The international non-proliferation regime relies on such engagement taking place.

We remain deeply concerned by continuing calls for the Director General to avoid engaging with us on these issues, and by suggestions that IAEA safeguards arrangements in relation to prospective naval nuclear propulsion in Australia lie outside Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and are not within the mandate of the Agency. These claims are absurd. In fact, some colleagues that have aligned with suggestions that the transfer of nuclear material to Australia goes beyond the mandate of the IAEA are the very same that have suggested we haven't engaged with the IAEA sufficiently. Such incorrect and contradictory statements undermine the role and authority of the Agency, and are purely politically motivated, and have no place in this Board.

Chair,

Transparency and open engagement have been central to our approach from the outset, especially in regard to issues of nuclear material, facilities, and activities relevant to the IAEA. We remain committed to keeping member states and partners informed, and we look forward to the opportunity to inform the Board of significant developments related to naval-nuclear propulsion under AUKUS under Any Other Business at future meetings of this Board.

Thank you, Chair.