

# AUKUS: Tri-lateral statement to the IAEA

Speaking on behalf on the UK, USA and Australia, H. E. Richard Sadleir, Resident Representative of Australia to the IAEA said:

Thank you Chair.

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

Chair, as we have previously advised the Board of Governors, and the General Conference, in September 2021 the leaders of our three countries announced a shared ambition to support Australia in acquiring conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. We have been clear that Australia is, and will remain, a non-nuclear weapon state party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. To reiterate, Australia does not and will not seek nuclear weapons.

Chair, this joint effort to identify, through an 18-month consultation period, the optimal approach to the acquisition by Australia, of nuclear-powered submarines is currently in its early stages. We emphasize today our willingness and intent to proceed in an open and consultative manner, especially regarding issues of nuclear material, facilities, and activities relevant to the IAEA. We also reiterate our assurance that the trilateral cooperation between Australia, the US and the UK will be fully consistent with the three parties' respective non-proliferation obligations – and that this cooperation will be pursued in a manner that preserves the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. Many of the programme specifics have yet to be determined. There are aspects that may be relevant to the implementation of respective safeguards and other obligations, but the full implications of these aspects are not clear at this stage. There are also a number of factors beyond the purview and scope of this Board that would be inappropriate for discussion in this body.

Chair, a Board agenda item addressing safeguards related to an Australian nuclear-powered submarine programme is premature. We believe that this Board must attend to more critical issues. As such, we have not sought to engage in a procedural debate on the agenda at this time. We view this as a one-off agenda item on this issue. When there are significant developments to report, and in the interests of transparency, we are happy to update the Board in the future under Any Other Business, as we had intended to do at this meeting. Engagement between the Director General of the IAEA, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States began prior to the September announcement. It has progressed since then and will continue. We will continue to update the Board as appropriate, noting again that we are very early in the consultation process.

Chair, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States are strongly

opposed to the establishment of a 'special committee' into this issue. Such a proposal is nothing more than an attempt to introduce issues that are extraneous to the IAEA's technical and legal mandate and appears intended to politicise this issue. I underline again that we are in the early stages of an 18 month consultative period. We are also deeply concerned by calls for the Director General to avoid engaging with us on these issues. 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 issues relevant to the prospective use of nuclear material by Australia for naval nuclear propulsion. The IAEA has a legal obligation to engage Australia on these issues under Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol. Any suggestion otherwise risks undermining the role of the Agency.

Chair, there have been some mischaracterisations of the AUKUS partnership and Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines, which we have clarified in a non-paper circulated earlier this week. We will not take up the Board's time by detailing them here, but we do wish to once again underscore that we are well aware of, and fully committed to upholding, the commitments, obligations, and authorities under our respective safeguards agreements. We have been clear that we will undertake this effort in a way that reflects our longstanding leadership in global non-proliferation and rigorous verification standards, in close consultation with the IAEA. Comments about political, geostrategic or national security implications of any activity are clearly beyond the scope of this Board's mandate.

Finally Chair, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States remain fully committed to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Discussions on those matters are more appropriately left to other forums. We will continue to approach this discussion in an open and transparent manner. We welcome the interest and questions of fellow Member States and will continue to engage with them through the appropriate channels and mechanisms.

Thank you, Chair