

Calling on Russia to return full control of all Ukraine's nuclear facilities to their rightful sovereign owner: UK statement at UN Security Council

Thank you Mr President and thank you to Under-Secretary-General Di Carlo for this briefing.

The United Kingdom remains gravely concerned about the implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's invasion has disrupted the operation of nuclear facilities across Ukraine, posed a grave threat to operational safety, and prevented Ukrainian authorities from carrying out routine safeguards tasks.

Instead of calling yet another meeting on the crisis at Zaporizhzhia, Russia could resolve it immediately by withdrawing its forces from the plant, and all of Ukraine, and ceasing its senseless aggression. As well as causing untold suffering to the Ukrainian people, the simple fact is that Russia's invasion – and its efforts to seize by force Ukraine's nuclear plants – has jeopardised the safety of millions in the region who would be affected by a nuclear incident in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, important nuclear safety and safeguards activities at the site are needed more than ever. We welcome progress towards an IAEA technical visit. Any visit should take place in a manner that respects Ukraine's sovereignty over its territory. The Secretary General has been clear that the UN can facilitate a visit from the Ukrainian side, and we welcome his and the UN's engagement. We also welcome the efforts of the Ukrainian administration, and of IAEA staff to plan and support a mission, and call upon Russia to provide appropriate security guarantees.

We commend the heroic efforts of Ukrainian staff operating the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, despite the great pressure they are under. They must be allowed to carry out their duties without threats or further disruption. Cutting off a major supply of electricity to the people of Ukraine would cause further immense suffering. As USG Di Carlo said today, the electricity at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant belongs to Ukraine.

Russia's war is reckless and irresponsible. A nuclear disaster should be unthinkable, and no member of the United Nations – let alone a permanent member of this Council – should bring about that threat by seeking to take another country's nuclear facilities by force. Russia's actions are contrary to the principles of the Convention of Nuclear Safety and other international

nuclear safety conventions. So we call once more upon Russia to return full control of all Ukraine's nuclear facilities to their rightful sovereign owner to ensure their safe and secure operation.