

Nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine: UK statement to the IAEA Board of Governors, November 2022

Thank you, Chair. The United Kingdom would like to thank the Director General for adding this important item to the agenda and for his report on Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards in Ukraine.

Chair, the United Kingdom continues to condemn in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's unprovoked, illegal and senseless invasion of Ukraine, which is an egregious violation of international law, including the UN Charter.

Within the last 48 hours, we have witnessed further barbaric missile attacks by Russia on Ukrainian cities and civilian infrastructure. Russia is solely responsible for the nuclear safety and security issues in Ukraine and for putting at risk the safety of millions who would be affected by a nuclear incident.

Chair, the Director General's report before us today is another stark, independent assessment of the severe nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

We are particularly concerned that since the last Board, only a few weeks ago, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility – and now Khemelnysky nuclear power plant – have lost external power and had to rely on backup generators. We are also seriously concerned that Russia has increased its campaign of coercion and intimidation of the Ukrainian operating staff at the Zaporizhzhia plant.

We agree with the Director General's assessment in the report that the pressures on the brave Ukrainian personnel – who have suffered so much already – could have “potentially severe consequences for nuclear safety and security”. This must stop immediately.

The United Kingdom fully supports the IAEA's work in Ukraine. We commend the bravery and the commitment of the IAEA staff working in Ukraine and we continue to support the Director General's efforts to secure a Nuclear Safety and Security Protection Zone around the Zaporizhzhia NPP in a way that respects Ukrainian sovereignty.

We also commend Ukraine, the Director General and his staff for the speed with which they transparently responded to Russia's spurious allegations that Ukraine was building so-called “dirty bombs”. Unfortunately, Russia has a long track record of making such baseless allegations in order to distract or disguise from its own negative actions.

We welcome the information in the DG's report that the Agency has not found "any indications of undeclared nuclear activities related to the development of radiological dispersal devices" in Ukraine.

That is why the United Kingdom fully supports the resolution before us today. It is right that this Board collectively deplores and rejects Russia's control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility and its attempted illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory.

The United Kingdom welcomes the recent UN General Assembly Resolution, where 143 member states were unequivocal that Russia's attempted illegal annexation has "no validity under international law and does not form the basis for any alteration of the status of these regions". We welcome the statements by the Director General and the Agency to that effect.

Chair, the United Kingdom would also like to put on record some of the actions we are taking at the IAEA to ensure that Russia is held accountable for its actions against nuclear safety in Ukraine.

To give a few examples, the United Kingdom will take steps to ensure that none of our extra budgetary funding will directly benefit the Russian Federation. We will also work to ensure that no UK government representatives will attend IAEA events in Russia or appear alongside the Russian Federation on panels for Agency events. We encourage other member states to adopt a similar approach.

Finally, Chair, the United Kingdom remains clear that there is only one way to ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. Russia must cease all actions against Ukraine's nuclear facilities, and withdraw all its forces and personnel so that the competent Ukrainian authorities can regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders.

Thank you, Chair.