

Statement by the AUKUS Partners to the IAEA Board of Governors

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States on our effort through the AUKUS partnership to determine the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

Chair,

We are now more than one year into our 18-month initial consultation period, and we are pleased with the progress made so far.

Since the September Board meeting, senior officials and technical experts have held further trilateral discussions in our capitals. We have also continued to hold productive technical consultations with the IAEA's AUKUS taskforce and the IAEA

Secretariat in Vienna as we work to formulate a safeguards approach that will meet the IAEA's technical objectives. These consultations are regular and ongoing, and they reflect the depth of the AUKUS partners' commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

We remain resolutely committed to setting the highest possible non-proliferation standards in relation to our co-operation on the AUKUS endeavour, and we will continue to keep Member States fully updated on our trilateral consultations with the IAEA.

Chair,

Sadly, there have been continued calls by some countries for the Agency to suspend engagement with us until a separate mechanism is established to discuss all aspects of AUKUS cooperation on nuclear-powered submarines.

All Member States have the right to confidential discussions with the IAEA Secretariat, and it is vital that the Agency remains the impartial and independent technical authority on the implementation of safeguards agreements. At the September Board, the Director General reiterated his satisfaction with AUKUS partners' level of engagement to date, and reaffirmed the mandate of the IAEA to engage with Member States on safeguards matters. To reconfirm what we have set out at the Board on previous occasions, Australia's proposed naval nuclear propulsion activities will occur within the framework of Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) and Additional Protocol, providing the firm legal basis on which the IAEA, through the Director General and the Secretariat, is engaging with Australia and AUKUS partners.

Chair,

We would like to briefly address the unfounded criticism that certain members continue to repeat at this Board. As an example, one distinguished delegate yesterday identified nine items on which they claim the Director General is required to – and has purportedly failed to – report with respect to AUKUS. In his September report, the Director General explicitly stated that Australia has “complied with its reporting obligations under its CSA and AP, including those required under Modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements to its CSA.”

The Director General also confirmed that further reporting by Australia at this time would be premature because Australia has “informed the Agency that...no activities listed in Annex I of the AP had either been conducted or were planned; no transfers of equipment/material listed in Annex II of the AP had either taken place or were planned; and no decision had been taken to construct or otherwise acquire any nuclear reactor or other nuclear facility in connection with AUKUS.”

Given we have repeatedly responded to these unfounded allegations in previous meetings, we will not again refute them line by line. However, we would like to make one point clear: Australia and the AUKUS partners are fully compliant with their respective safeguards obligations. Any assertions to the contrary are without any factual or legal foundation.

Chair,

We will continue our engagement with the Agency over the coming months, and we anticipate there will be further reports from the Director General in the future upon which we look forward to further discussions. We will continue to update the Board in future, as appropriate.

Thank you, Chair.