

UK national statement to the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It's a delight to be with you all, here today, at the first ICONS following our departure from the European Union, as we begin the next stage of our historic relationship with Europe.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – a cornerstone of global peace and security. And 4 years since the final Nuclear Security Summit where many countries committed to strengthen nuclear security.

This conference is therefore timely for taking stock of our progress. And to reflect on how nuclear security has contributed to the NPT's success in enabling peaceful nuclear technologies.

These technologies – from low-carbon energy generation, to scientific and medical applications – help tackle global issues such as climate change, and promote human health and sustainable development.

This relies on public confidence that nuclear is safe and secure. An attack against a nuclear facility, or using radioactive materials, could severely harm people, our prosperity and the environment. It would damage public acceptance of nuclear technologies with far-reaching consequences.

Although nuclear security is each nation's responsibility, it cannot be achieved unilaterally. Governments and international organisations must work together – to share expertise and practices, and to find solutions to common challenges.

Having left the EU, the UK remains entirely committed to the highest standards of nuclear security at home and around the world.

We strongly support the IAEA's role in coordinating global efforts and helping Member States implement effective nuclear security. We also welcome its promotion of gender diversity, mirrored in our own Nuclear Sector Deal.

We are a leading contributor to the Nuclear Security Fund (NSF), helping dozens of Member States to enhance their security.

I'm pleased to announce that we plan to contribute a further £1.6 million to the NSF and I urge other Member States to contribute too.

UK experts participate in peer review missions and in drafting IAEA guidance, sharing our approaches and always learning from others. I encourage Member States to use IAEA peer review services, as we have, to benefit from

collective global expertise.

Since the last ICONS in 2016, we have worked to enhance the UK's civil nuclear security regime and continue to meet our obligations and commitments.

In December 2018, we completed the transfer of around 700kg of highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Scotland to the USA for conversion to civil reactor fuel.

This fulfills our 2016 Nuclear Security Summit pledge, and makes the world safer. I urge other Member States to reduce their own civil stocks of HEU.

Our detection architecture prevents the trafficking of radioactive materials. This is key to UK nuclear security, so we are trialling and using the latest detection technologies at our borders and in-land.

In addition, we are looking to replace Caesium irradiators in our health and research sectors with alternatives which do not contain radioactive sources.

By working to dispose of, and reduce demand for, these materials, we aim to join a growing international movement towards alternative technologies. I encourage other Member States to take similar steps.

Nuclear security regimes are strongest when they are integrated with safety and operations, and underpinned by effective regulation. To achieve this, the UK is shifting to outcome-focused nuclear security regulation.

Through its Security Assessment Principles, our Office for Nuclear Regulation identifies security outcomes across physical, cyber and personnel security.

Site operators must propose measures they will take to achieve them. This helps to better integrate safety and security, and improves risk awareness and innovation by industry.

Finally ladies and gentlemen, the UK recognises that, to keep pace with evolving technologies, cyber security requires greater global attention.

In 2017, we published a Cyber Security Strategy for the civil nuclear sector. This set out measures to enable our nuclear sector to defend against, and recover from, cyber threats.

We have worked with industry, and through our National Cyber Security Centre, to conduct exercises, test for vulnerabilities and increase threat awareness throughout the supply chain.

Let me close by thanking the IAEA for organising this important conference.

Through the Ministerial Declaration we endorse today, and through sharing technical expertise and practices, together we commit to protecting the global public and to sustaining the peaceful use of nuclear technologies for future generations.

Thank you.