

Ukraine: UK statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors, June 2022

Thank you, Chair.

The United Kingdom would like to thank Poland for adding this important issue to the agenda.

Chair, the Russian Federation's assault on Ukraine is an unprovoked, premeditated and barbaric attack against a sovereign democratic state. The United Kingdom continues to utterly condemn the Russian government's actions in Ukraine, which are an egregious violation of international law and the UN Charter.

We remain gravely concerned about the implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Since the start of Russia's invasion, nuclear facilities in Ukraine have been struck by military ordnance on at least four occasions and at least five Ukrainian nuclear facilities have experienced significant disruptions to their normal operations.

On 3 March, at an extraordinary meeting of this Board we adopted a resolution on 'The safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine', which deplored the actions of the Russian Federation, which posed a serious threat to the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. The resolution called for the Russian Federation to cease all its actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine, so the competent Ukrainian authorities can ensure their safe and secure operation, and so that the Agency can resume its important safeguards verification activities.

On 4 March – one day after the resolution was adopted – Russia became the first State in the history of the use of nuclear energy to fire at a fully fuelled and functioning nuclear reactor at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

The United Kingdom convened an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council to condemn the Russian attack on Zaporizhzhia, and to call for Russia to act in line with its international obligations. As a permanent member of the Security Council, Russia has a particular responsibility to uphold international peace and security.

Unfortunately, since then, Russia has chosen to take control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear facility, thereby blatantly disregarding the will of this Board and the international community and putting at jeopardy the safety of millions who would be affected by a nuclear incident in Ukraine. This is not the action of a responsible nuclear State.

As the Director General said on Monday, of the seven pillars of nuclear safety and security, almost all have been violated by Russia's actions. Russia's continued control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, including the presence of officials from ROSATOM who have overseen the work of the Ukrainian regulator, is also contrary to the principles Russia has freely signed up to in the Convention of Nuclear Safety and in the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

We also remain seriously concerned that Russia's continued control of the Zaporizhzhia facility is preventing the competent Ukrainian authorities and Agency inspectors from carrying out their essential safeguards duties.

We welcome and fully support the Director General's efforts to ensure the safety, security and safeguarding of nuclear material and facilities in Ukraine and we praise the IAEA staff who have responded to the situation.

We urgently call on the Russian Federation to cease all unlawful activities in Ukraine. It must de-escalate, withdraw its troops and cease all use of force against, and in the vicinity of, Ukrainian nuclear facilities and allow the competent Ukrainian authorities unfettered access, with no conditions, to all nuclear facilities on Ukraine's sovereign territory.

Finally Chair, the United Kingdom would like to recognise and praise the heroic efforts of the Ukrainian staff at Ukrainian nuclear facilities, particularly at Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl, who continue to work tirelessly to ensure nuclear safety in Ukraine, despite working under immense pressure and dealing with unacceptable aggression from the Russian Federation.

Thank you, Chair.