European Union

Statement on Cluster III issues

By

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Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries Turkey, North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

2. As we approach the 2020 Review Conference, we encourage all States Parties to focus on seeking common ground. The EU will play a constructive and active role in ensuring the implementation of the obligations and commitments assumed under the NPT and undertaken during the previous Review Conferences. In our General Statement, we have outlined the EU’s balanced approach in support of the NPT and its three pillars which are equally important and mutually reinforcing and contribute to international peace, security and stability. We recall that all States Parties have committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. All States Parties have also committed to applying the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency in relation to the implementation of their Treaty obligations.

3. The European Union recognizes the inalienable right of States Parties to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with Article IV of the Treaty, and remains committed to ensuring the responsible development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions.

4. The European Union recalls that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has established a solid, rigorous and effective framework for the use of nuclear energy in support of social-economic development worldwide. Its thorough implementation is essential to facilitate the use of nuclear applications in a growing number of fields. The effective application of IAEA safety standards and security guidance is necessary to ensure the safe and secure use of nuclear energy. This contributes to building the public trust and confidence needed to widen the use of nuclear technology applications worldwide. Against this background, the EU and its Member States have mobilised significant funds over the past 20 years to ensure the safe and secure use of nuclear energy, science and technology for sustainable development.

5. Through dedicated financial instruments, the European Union works directly with countries in the European neighbourhood and beyond and supports the work of the IAEA in the field of peaceful uses. Our funding amounts to € 325 million over the period 2014-2020 in the field of nuclear safety, radiation protection and the application of efficient and effective safeguards in third countries.

6. The EU and its Member States commend the work of the Co-Chairs, the Republic of Costa Rica and Japan, on the successful organisation of the 2018 Ministerial Conference on nuclear science and technology. This event underscored the growing need and demand for the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology worldwide. The EU strongly supports the activities of the IAEA to develop radiation and nuclear related technologies and their application to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Conference clearly demonstrated the contribution the IAEA makes to the fulfilment of pillar three of the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The EU and its Member States continue to be strong supporters of the IAEA’s Technical Cooperation Programme, including through the TC Fund and extrabudgetary contributions such as the Peaceful Uses Initiative. We fully appreciate the Agency’s role in promoting the responsible development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology in areas such as human health, food and agriculture, water resources, environment, preservation of cultural heritage, nuclear and radiation safety, and nuclear energy and see this as one of the cornerstones of the IAEA mandate. We strongly support the activities of the Agency to develop radiation and nuclear related science and technologies and to promote their application in the service of the SDGs.

8. We positively note the Agency’s contribution to the achievement of the SDGs in energy, food and agriculture, industry, water and healthcare, as well as in other areas. We acknowledge the IAEA efforts to strengthen the fight against cancer through the application of nuclear techniques, by providing Member States with assistance in applying a comprehensive approach which covers areas such as diagnosis, radiation oncology and radiotherapy; and quality assurance. The Joint IAEA/FAO Programme through its laboratories adds value to global agricultural research and cooperation in the areas of animal production and health, climate smart agriculture, soil and water management amongst others.

9. We appreciate the role played by the IAEA in recent years in the international response to emerging threats, like the further development of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) for the control or eradication of malaria, dengue, Zika and disease-transmitting mosquitos, which remains an extremely severe threat to the health of millions of people worldwide. It is important that the Agency continues to develop its capacity in such areas. In this respect, the EU and its Member States fully support the IAEA’s activities at the Seibersdorf Nuclear Sciences and Applications Laboratories and we consider their modernisation under the ReNuAL and ReNuAL* project as a key priority. Up to now, we have contributed €6.6 million to the laboratory renovations, in addition to providing in-kind support. Furthermore, the EU is cooperating closely with the Central Asian countries in improving the life quality in regions impacted by uranium legacy contamination. The EU has thus spent more than €36 million since the 2012 in a regional Environmental Remediation Program for Central Asia in response to two UN General Assembly resolutions from November 2013 and December 2018 that are calling for the international community to work in a coordinated approach to address the radiation threat.

10. The EU strongly believes that continuous improvement in the implementation of nuclear safety, security and safeguards when developing technical co-operation projects should be constantly sought. Achieving and maintaining a solid national nuclear security regime based on IAEA recommendations and guidance, and including through TC projects that utilise nuclear or radioactive material, is in the interest of all countries.

11. The EU strongly supports nuclear energy, science and technology research and developments that can be beneficial for our societies. We are now defining the framework of the Euratom Research and Training Programme for 2021-25, which will set also new mechanisms facilitating participation of non-European countries and will give wider access to the Euratom facilities for researches from outside the European Union.
Mr. Chairman,

12. The European Union attaches utmost importance to the worldwide implementation and continuous improvement of nuclear safety. The Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) is a key international instrument in strengthening and expanding international nuclear safety cooperation and provides a legally binding framework for global overview and mutual assessment of safety work. We urge all countries, in particular those operating, considering or embarking on nuclear power programmes, to join the Convention on Nuclear Safety. The implementation of the CNS objectives, including the principles of the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety (VDNS), remains a priority for the EU. The EU stands ready to actively participate in the 8th Review meeting of the Contracting Parties for the CNS and encourages all Contracting Parties to do the same. It is in the interest of the international community to continuously improve nuclear safety. International collaboration provides clear benefits to nuclear safety by creating the opportunity to share experiences and best practices. We have made great progress over the last sixty years, but there is no room for complacency as we face the future.

13. All States Party to the NPT are entitled, under Article IV of the NPT, access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Given the growing use of radioactive materials and sources in these applications, and consequently the increasing challenges to their protection, it is essential that Member States adequately address the security implications of radioactive sources in their own nuclear security regimes.

14. The IAEA plays a central role in the global nuclear security architecture, and provides assistance to IAEA Member States in their efforts to ensure the security of nuclear and other radioactive materials and facilities. In this regard, the EU calls on NPT state parties to ensure that the IAEA has reliable and sufficient technical, financial and human resources to undertake its nuclear security-related activities, including through the allocation of additional resources to the IAEA’s nuclear security activities through the regular budget and the Nuclear Security Fund. Together with the bilateral contributions from its Member States, the European Union is among the largest donors to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund. While recognising that nuclear security remains the responsibility of each State, the EU and its Member States believe that strengthening nuclear security through international cooperation is essential to prevent unauthorised access to nuclear and radioactive material and consequently support the work of the Agency’s in implementing its Nuclear Security Programme. In this regard, IAEA assistance in effective nuclear security is also a crucial supporting element of Technical Cooperation projects in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as it can help ensure the benefits of those projects to recipient States are protected and sustained.

15. The EU strongly believes that peer reviews contribute to further strengthening nuclear safety and security and builds confidence. We encourage all IAEA Member States, especially those that have not done so recently, to request peer review missions which are relevant to their programmes and in particular in the areas not previously reviewed, to implement robust follow up arrangements in a timely manner and to publicize reports, as appropriate and while taking into account the confidentiality of information, from advisory missions to further best share practice.

16. The EU continues to promote multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle which facilitates access to nuclear fuel for many countries. For this purpose, the European Union has contributed with around €25 million to the establishment and the secure management of a Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank under the control of the IAEA. We note that the
IAEA signed contracts with two international companies in 2018 and aims to have the LEU delivered in the storage facility before the end of 2019.

17. The EU believes that one important element of nuclear security is preventing nuclear material falling into the wrong hands. The EU encourages all States to minimise Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) use in civilian applications, where technically and economically feasible and welcomes recent international collaboration to supplant HEU with LEU in Nigeria.

18. In the past 20 years, the CTBTO has also played a growing role in capacity building, supporting many National Data Centres in their ability to operate, understand and contribute to the International Monitoring System, including with the use of nuclear technologies. Moreover, the CTBTO’s International Monitoring System is at the disposal of the international community in case of a nuclear incident and emergency to monitor possible radioactive clouds such as it was the case during the Fukushima accident. In this context, we welcome the recently-signed Practical Arrangement between the CTBTO IDC and the IAEA Nuclear Safety and Security Department. Furthermore we would like to emphasize the role of the CTBT On-Site Inspection and the importance of the development and finalisation of its capabilities in order to ensure further strengthening of both the CTBTO’s and global verification regime.

Mr. Chairman,

19. The EU believes that strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime constitutes an important element in the further development of nuclear applications for peaceful purposes. The EU thus calls on all NPT States Parties to be united in ensuring the responsible development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions, by countries that wish to start or develop capacities in this field.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.