



## **Belgium**

### **Statement - Cluster III Peaceful Use**

#### **Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**

**Third session, New York, 29 April-10 May 2019**

Mr. President,

My delegation aligns itself with the declaration of the European Union. Allow me to add a few elements from a national point of view.

Belgium is keenly aware of the delicate balance that lies at the heart of the NPT. Cooperation on the peaceful use of the atom to the benefit of our societies is a core component of that balance.

A significant number of countries plan to introduce nuclear power in the coming decades, or expand existing programs. They understand nuclear power to be a viable instrument when shaping national policies for energy security or climate change mitigation.

Beyond power generation, the benefits of peaceful use of the atom are multiple, as my country can testify.

Belgium has a long tradition in the field of medical applications of ionizing radiation. It is one of the major producers of medical radioisotopes, which play a paramount role in cancer diagnosis and therapy.

*Expanding the benefits of nuclear applications for human health is a key objective for us. We therefore support dedicated programmes of organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Last year we contributed 600.000 EUR in targeted support for cancer control, including support to the Joint Global Programme on Cervical Cancer-Prevention and Control. We also work with the FAO/IAEA laboratories on climate-smart agriculture in Africa.*

*Complex challenges such as global health need to be tackled through a collective effort. Organizations like the IAEA, but also the WHO and UNODC, should explore and deepen partnerships on human health. In the field of food and agriculture, such partnerships already exist. The IAEA and the FAO have set a remarkable precedent in joint planning and research, and pooling resources.*

Mr. President,

The wheels of technological progress keep on turning. For instance, alternative sterilization technologies using X rays or proton therapy are developing at great speed and could contribute to minimize the use of highly radioactive sealed sources worldwide. Countries and organizations such as the IAEA do well to keep abreast of these new developments and to ensure a level playing field.

Despite its decision to phase out the use of fission energy to produce electricity, Belgium considers it a priority to maintain its knowledge and expertise in the nuclear field and, in particular, in the responsible management of radioactive waste and spent fuel to guarantee a high level of safety and security and to avoid leaving future generations with undue burdens.

Belgium also intends to remain a world-class player in nuclear R&D and innovation in key areas such as nuclear medicine and medical radioisotope production, research in new advanced materials for fission and fusion applications, in particle accelerator technology and in the study of highly radioactive waste transmutation. It has therefore decided to build a new major research infrastructure, called MYRRHA (Multipurpose Hybrid Research Reactor for High Tech Applications). To meet these ambitious goals the Belgian Federal Government took the commitment in September 2018 to finance the project for an amount of 558 million EUR, and it invites international partners to join the project. The new facility follows a safeguards by design approach in accordance with the highest standards.

*Our nuclear research centre also remains an active provider of training services to the IAEA, particularly in the field of safeguards. Additionally, it will actively explore cooperation under the scheme of "International Centre on Research Reactors" (ICERR), putting its research and other facilities at the disposal of researchers of IAEA member states for education, training and joint R&D projects.*

Mr. President,

A successful and responsible use of the atom is based on three crucial underpinnings: safety, security and safeguards. Strict adherence to international agreements, norms and guidance, such as those developed under the auspices of the IAEA, are essential for peaceful use.

*With respect to safety, we attach great importance to strict conformity with the appropriate Euratom directives. We have consistently signed up to IAEA peer exercises on safety and security and will continue to avail of them. Confidence in safety provisions should extend beyond our borders. Therefore, we will remain transparent in sharing information with our neighboring countries and we will continue implementing joint inspections in our nuclear installations. We believe this concept of joint inspections to be an innovative tool that can improve cross-border knowledge and foster mutual trust.*

Regarding nuclear security, Belgium continues its efforts to minimize the use of High Enriched Uranium (HEU) for civilian applications, when technically and economically feasible, by reducing its excess stocks of HEU, by converting its installations to LEU and by funding the development of alternative technologies for the production of radioisotopes. In 2018, Belgium decided to support a structural solution for the management of past, present and future irradiated HEU and LEU stemming from the production of radioactive isotopes for medical purposes. This will contribute to the security of supply of medical radioisotopes in a context of increasing global demand, while guaranteeing sustainable, long-term management of the irradiated HEU and LEU. Belgium also decided to fund the development of an alternative technology for the production of radioisotopes that will not use fissile uranium. This project has been funded for 52 million EUR for the period 2019-2020.

I thank you Mr. President.