

**IAEA Board of Governors Meeting  
September 12-16, 2022**

**Agenda Item 9**

**Nuclear Safety, Security and Safeguards in Ukraine**

**U.S. Statement as Delivered by Ambassador Laura S.H. Holgate**

Chair,

Once again, we confront the unprecedented nuclear safety and security risks and the effects on safeguards implementation of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. Once again, matters of war and peace have important implications for the Agency’s technical work. And once again the Agency’s Statutory mission to contribute to “peace, health, and prosperity” has been jeopardized by the actions of one Member State.

Chair,

Let’s recall how we find ourselves in this grave situation. Over six months ago, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and immediately seized the still-contaminated site of the 1986 Chornobyl disaster, using it as a staging area for its intended assault on Kyiv. From the very start, Russia’s actions have put Ukraine’s nuclear facilities at risk, heedlessly endangering their safe operations, their staff, surrounding populations, and potentially even neighboring countries.

This Board took up the issue in March and adopted a resolution that deplored Russia's violent actions and called upon Russia to immediately cease all actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine and return control of them to the competent Ukrainian authorities. The very next day, Russia spurned that call by seizing the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). Russia is treating Ukraine's civilian infrastructure as a military prize, seeking to deprive Ukraine of control over its own energy resources and to use the plant as a base for military action against Ukraine.

It is Russia's wanton actions that have put the issue on our agenda. These actions have brought us to the brink of – to quote the Director General's Second Summary Report – “a severe nuclear accident with potentially grave radiological consequences.” Russia has repeatedly failed to take necessary and prudent steps to minimize these risks. Indeed, at every turn, Russia's actions eightened them. Russian forces have been in active combat operations in and around the facility and immediate area, stationed weapons there, and built defensive emplacements. The plant's connections to the electrical grid and to offsite power have been damaged repeatedly. As the Director General said in his report to the Board, “events at the ZNPP site have significantly compromised the Seven Pillars” of nuclear safety and

security. This body must continue to speak clearly on the need for Russia to turn back from the brink.

Chair,

The United States applauds the Director General's persistent efforts supporting the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, particularly the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. We welcome his second summary report and support his work to focus international attention on this problem and provide the needed assistance and expertise to forestall a potential disaster. In particular, we applaud the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and the courageous work of IAEA experts and inspectors to assess and support safety and security and apply safeguards at the plant. The Agency's continued presence at the plant not only helps improve its safety and security but is also an important contribution to transparency. We note, however, the exceedingly dangerous and stressful conditions at and around the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant and call on all parties to guarantee the continued safety and well-being of the Agency's staff and the plant's operators, and all Ukrainian personnel.

We support Ukraine's proposal for the "demilitarization" for the areas surrounding the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant and we repeat our call for the

immediate withdrawal of Russian forces—national guard or otherwise—from those facilities. We note with appreciation the similar objectives that underlie the Director General’s proposal for a “nuclear safety and security protection zone” around the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. We look forward to further elaboration of proposals that fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Chair,

The Director General has highlighted the need to uphold the “seven pillars” of nuclear safety and security during the war in Ukraine. Both Ukraine and the Agency have asked for help in keeping those pillars strong, in particular through the Assistance Convention and by activating the Agency’s Response and Assistance Network. I thank Deputy Director General Evrard and the Incident and Emergency Center for their work to coordinate that assistance. I also thank those Member States who have responded to Ukraine’s requests and urge those a position to do so to consider providing further assistance that may be needed and requested. The United States has already provided assistance both through the IAEA and bilaterally, and we stand ready to further respond to identified needs.

Chair,

The United States welcomes that the IAEA has been able to conduct essential safeguards activities in Ukraine and most recently at the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. The Agency continues to find “no indication of the diversion of declared nuclear material or any indication that would give rise to a proliferation concern.” The Agency can only apply safeguards at Zaporizhzhya – or at any other facility in Ukraine – in accordance with Ukraine’s comprehensive safeguards agreement and Additional Protocol. My government is pleased that the Agency has taken pains to fully respect Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Chair,

The United States takes note of the Director General’s report to the Board contained in document GOV/2022/52. In addition, we have before us a draft resolution (GOV/2022/57) to respond to the pressing challenges at Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant. The United States supports this resolution and urges other Board members to do the same. This body has a responsibility to show its continued support for the Agency’s efforts to provide and coordinate international assistance to maintain the safety and security of Ukraine’s nuclear facilities, and for the Agency’s work to fulfill its essential safeguards responsibilities.

Colleagues, we have all listened the Russian delegation spin a self-serving narrative about events in Ukraine, all of which ignore one central fact: Russia has no business being in Ukraine. But for Russia's unprovoked invasion, we would not have to deal with the nuclear safety and security dangers of military actions around Ukraine's nuclear facilities. Russia alone will be responsible for any resulting nuclear hazards, and Russia alone can prevent them by heeding international calls to remove its forces from those facilities and withdraw from Ukraine altogether.

The only solution to these problems created by Russia's invasion is for Russia to withdraw and return control of Ukraine's facilities to the competent Ukrainian authorities, which are their rightful owners and remain best equipped to provide for their ongoing safety and security, as they have for decades.

Colleagues, let us rise to this moment and stand by Ukraine. Thank you, Chair.