



**G-77 and China statement during the IAEA Board of Governors,
1-5 March 2021 delivered by
H. E. Ambassador Solano Ortiz, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica**

Agenda Item 3: The IAEA and the COVID-19 pandemic

Madam Chair,

1. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China wishes to express its solidarity with all Member States of the Agency who continue to be affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Group appreciates the leadership provided by the Director General and the efforts of the Secretariat in ensuring that the activities of the Agency continue to be carried out as much as possible, in spite of the current difficult situation pertinent to the pandemic.

2. Madam Chair, the Group also appreciates the initiative of the Director General in providing timeous assistance to Member States in their efforts to tackle the effects of the pandemic, including through the delivery of nuclear derived techniques and related equipment. The Group further appreciates the extrabudgetary and in-kind support provided through the Interregional Technical Cooperation Project INT0098, which has raised over €26 million. These contributions have allowed for the timely provision and delivery of necessary diagnostic and protection equipment, training and informational webinars as well as one-on-one laboratory support and technical guidance to 127 countries.

3. The Group is also pleased to note that the Agency has undertaken a study on the impact of the support provided and welcomes the preliminary survey result that Member State laboratories have gained long-term value from the initial support provided. We encourage the Agency to continue supporting Member States in their efforts to combat COVID-19.

Madam Chair,

4. The Group welcomes the Agency's collaboration with relevant international organizations and encourages the Agency to continue working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) so to provide efficient and coordinated responses to requests for assistance (from Member States), which are in alignment with the COVID-19 United Nations (UN) Management Team response. The Group reiterates the need to maintain strong international solidarity and multilateral cooperation in the fight against COVID-19 and other zoonotic diseases and assures the Agency of its support in this regard.

5. With regard to the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), the Group appreciates all the efforts taken by the Agency to ensure the successful implementation of the TCP under the current and challenging circumstances. The maintenance and delivery of regular technical cooperation activities throughout 2020 in close consultation with Member States has resulted in the high implementation rate of 80.4% for the TCP. In this regard, the Group requests the Agency to find alternative ways to implement the postponed or re-prioritized TC activities during this TC cycle.

6. With these remarks, the Group of 77 and China takes note of the progress update report on the IAEA's Support to Member State Efforts in Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic as contained in document GOV/INF/2021/4.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Agenda item 4: Nuclear and Radiation Safety: Nuclear Safety Review 2021

Madam Chair,

1. The Group expresses its gratitude to the Secretariat for preparing the Nuclear Safety Review 2021, as contained in document GOV/2021/3. The Group thanks the Director General for his introductory statement, as well as Deputy Director General Juan Carlos Lentijo for his remarks and for the technical briefing offered to Member States on 9 February 2021.

2. The Group expresses its appreciation the changes in the structure of this year's report, which compiled the activities developed by the Agency in 2020 in Annex A, allowing the visualization of all the IAEA activities in a structured and objective manner.

3. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under this agenda item.

Madam Chair,

4. The Group is pleased to note the Agency's continued assistance to Member States resulted in some progress in the area of nuclear safety in 2020, despite the difficult conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. While the Group reaffirms that the responsibility for nuclear safety within a State rests entirely with that Member State we reiterate our belief that the Agency has a central role in coordinating international efforts to strengthen Nuclear Safety globally, by providing assistance through expertise and advice to Member States, upon request and through promoting Nuclear Safety standards globally.

6. The Group recalls the adoption, in February 2015, of the "Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety", which aims to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide through agreed principles to guide the Contracting Parties, as appropriate, in the implementation of the objective of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) with the focus on preventing accidents with radiological consequences and by mitigating such consequences should they occur. We call on the Agency to continue to assist Member States, upon request, in the implementation of the principles of the Vienna Declaration.

7. The Group recognizes the Agency's important role in developing Safety Standards and welcomes the issuance of one General Safety Guide, nine Specific Safety Guides, the endorsement of nine draft Safety Guides and the approval of five Safety Guides document preparation profiles for Safety guides in 2020.

8. The Group reiterates the need for the Agency to uphold the principles of equitable geographical representation, workforce diversity and gender mainstreaming in all its activities. In this regard, the Group emphasizes the importance of the Agency continuing to support the participation of experts from developing countries, with a special focus on gender mainstreaming

especially in the Safety Standards Committees, the Nuclear Security Guidance Committee, as well as the Interface Group.

9. The Group takes note that the report covers trends and priorities for all the nuclear safety related topics. In this regard, the Group would like the Secretariat to clarify their methodology in identifying the trends and determining the priorities in future Nuclear Safety Reviews. The Group welcomes the Agency's flexibility in implementing its statutory mandate and priorities during the current pandemic and welcomes the priority given to ensuring the continued implementation of safety standards globally, despite the limitations brought on by the pandemic. In this regard, the Group notes the report issued on the results of the survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on regulatory activities for the safety of radiation sources. We have also taken note of the discussion by INSAG and CSS on the impact of the pandemic on nuclear safety and the GAP analysis made in this regard, and we look forward to receiving the outcome of the deeper analysis of nuclear safety standards currently underway.

10. The Group expresses its appreciation for the ongoing work on the development of guidance on the management of radionuclides in food and drinking water in non-emergency situations, requests the Secretariat to continue work to develop a technical document to set out radionuclide activity concentration values for non-food commodities, in consultation with Member States and relevant international organizations. We also welcome the growing awareness created through Agency webinars.

11. The Group recognizes the importance of and appreciates the assistance provided by the Agency to its Member States, upon request, in strengthening their national nuclear safety architecture, for both power and non-power application including regulatory infrastructure for nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, and in the field of emergency preparedness and response.

12. Recognizing that around twenty-nine Member States, many of which are members of the Group, are at different stages of initiating new nuclear power programmes, we encourage the Agency to increase support to such embarking Member States and recognise the importance of strengthening and expanding nuclear safety standards in this regard.

13. The Group wishes to emphasize that capacity-building, including the development of human resources, expert training and the up-scaling of knowledge and capabilities are key to the establishment, safety and sustainability of any nuclear program. The Group has also noted that Member States continue to request support regarding their knowledge management programmes, as well as in the development and strengthening of national capacity-building programmes. Therefore, it is essential that the IAEA continue to provide such assistance, upon request, on regional and national levels, to developing countries in building their expertise in the relevant technical areas.

14. The Group highlights the importance it attaches to the development of a safety culture. In this regard, we note that an increasing number of Member States are requesting assistance in further developing their leadership and management programmes for safety and continuous improvement, including safety culture assessments and that the Agency will assist Member States in their efforts to develop, foster and sustain safety culture.

15. In view of the increasing interest of Member States in small and medium sized or modular reactors (SMRs), the Group notes that over 70 SMR designs are in various stages of development and requests the Agency to further interrogate the deployment of SMRs in the

efforts to mitigate climate change, as highlighted during the Scientific Forum held on the margins of the 64th Session of the General Conference. The Group urges the Agency to continue to work on and expand the studies in that area, to make publications and more information on this issue available and to engage with Member States, which are building or intend to use SMRs in their many forms and contexts.

16. In view of the increasing use of radiation and nuclear material and technologies, in Member States, the Group notes that there is a growing need for assistance in strengthening regulatory oversight, education and training programmes, guidance documents, peer reviews and advisory services from the Agency for the entire lifecycle management. The Group encourages the Agency to continue to provide the requisite assistance, upon request, to Member States in these important areas. We also welcome the fact that the Agency has been able to adapt its support during the pandemic by moving many of these events online and we encourage the Agency to continue with this practice as and where feasible.

17. The Group appreciates that in 2020 the Agency conducted 15 peer review and advisory services across all safety areas including safety of nuclear installations, research reactors, fuel cycle facilities as well as regulatory effectiveness, infrastructure development programmes, and ageing management, among others. The Group also encourages the Agency to enhance the participation of experts from the developing countries in conducting such peer reviews and advisory services. The Group also welcomes the regular organization by the Agency of national, regional, and international workshops, webinars and training courses for Member States on all relevant issues.

18. On the Radiation Protection of Patients, Workers and the Public, the Group welcomes the outcomes of the International Conference on Radiation Safety: Improving Radiation Protection in Practice that was held in November 2020 and further notes that the Agency will assist Member States in their efforts to apply the principles of justification and optimization in circumstances where actions are being considered to reduce radiation exposure, such as in medical exposure and protection of patients. The Group urges the Agency to continue to assist Member States in providing guidance, as well as in strengthening their processes for communicating of radiation risk to the public in planned and existing exposure situations and during an emergency.

Madam Chair,

19. The Group notes that Member States continue to show interest in the Global Nuclear Safety and Security Network and IAEA CONNECT platforms, which allow for the exchange of information and various materials and publications among Member States. The Group reiterates that knowledge networks should always remain a core component of the nuclear safety capacity-building initiatives with the support of the Agency. The Group appreciates the Agency's continued support to regional networks, which include the Arab Network of Nuclear Regulators, the Asian Nuclear Safety Network, the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa, and the Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies, as well as to thematic networks such as the Small Modular Reactor Regulator's Forum.

20. The Group is of the view that strengthening global nuclear safety depends on the full cooperation among and participation of Member States and relevant stakeholders. Vendors of nuclear technologies also have a responsibility to provide to users access to all information, know-how and tools necessary for safe operation.

21. The Group expresses its support for the Agency's work in continuing to build upon the 2011 Action Plan and Member States' experience in its implementation, as well as the IAEA Report on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, and the principles in the Vienna Declaration and take them into consideration for defining its programme of work in close consultations with Member States. The Group requests the Secretariat to report periodically to the Board of Governors, in accordance with section 1 of Resolution GC. (62)/RES/6.

22. The Group looks forward to the planned International Conference on a Decade of Progress after Fukushima-Daiichi: Building on the Lessons Learned to Further Strengthen Nuclear Safety scheduled to take place in November this year. We appreciate that the conference will look at the lessons learned from Fukushima, provide an opportunity to share experiences among Member States and evaluate the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, with the aim of strengthening our collective efforts in strengthening nuclear safety globally.

23. The Group welcomes the updated websites of the Agency's Unified System for Information Exchange in Incidents and Emergencies (USIE) and the International Radiation Monitoring Information System (IRMIS) with enhanced user-friendly features, tools and functionalities, as well as their increased usage. The Group notes that the number of published Emergency Preparedness and Response Information Management System (EPRIMS) self-assessment modules increased in 2020 and that the regular analysis of the new information uploaded on EPRIMS allowed the Agency to review the progress made in technical cooperation projects. Despite the meaningful work done by the Agency in the field of emergency preparedness and response, the Group notes that more work needs to be done. It, therefore, encourages continued cooperation and coordination between the Secretariat and interested Member States, in this regard.

24. The Group welcomes the organization of a technical meeting on Managing Regulatory Experience for the Oversight of a First NPP and looks forward to an initial report on this issue.

25. The Group attaches high importance to transport safety, and appreciates the involvement of the Secretariat in international efforts to discuss issues related to the transport of radioactive material. The Group supports continued efforts by the Agency to address problems related to denials of and delays in the shipment of radioactive material, particularly shipment by air and urges Member States to facilitate the transport of radioactive material, and to identify, if they have not done so, a national focal point on denials on shipment of radioactive materials to achieve a satisfactory and timely resolution of this issue.

26. The Group welcomes the growth in the number of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety and to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management (Joint Convention). In this regard, the Group encourages the Agency to prepare for the hosting in Vienna of the postponed 7th Review Meeting of the Joint Convention as well as the 8th and 9th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, with the physical presence and active participation of Contracting Parties.

Madam Chair,

27. With these remarks, the Group takes note of the Nuclear Safety Review 2021, as contained in document GOV/2021/3.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Agenda item 5: Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications: Nuclear Technology Review 2021

Madam Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Secretariat for preparing the Nuclear Technology Review 2021, contained in document GOV/2021/2 and appreciates changes effected on the structure and content of this report in line with previous requests. The Group also wishes to thank DDG Dr. Najat Mokhtar and DDG Dr. Mikhail Chudakov for introducing this agenda item and for the technical briefing provided to delegations on 9 February 2021.
2. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under this agenda item. The full statement will be available online.
3. The Group attaches great importance to the significant contributions that nuclear technologies can make towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and their role in food security and safety; nutrition and human health, including disease prevention and control; animal health and production; environmental protection; water resources management; as well as in other fields related to the use of radioisotopes and radiation. These, among others, are areas where nuclear, nuclear-derived and isotopic techniques are beneficial in supporting sustainable socio- economic development in many countries
4. The Group reaffirms that the Agency, in accordance with Article II of the Statute, has a leading role to play in the promotion of these techniques among interested Member States, and encourages it to continue to provide its valuable support, including further promoting active roles of developing countries in contributing towards the development of equipment and techniques that can meet the needs of many Member States, while taking into account equitable geographical distribution and gender balance.
5. The work done by the Agency in nuclear power and nuclear applications highlights the need to increase the transfer of nuclear technology and the sharing of nuclear knowledge, expertise and lessons learned to developing countries, including embarking and newcomer countries, to enhance their capabilities and thus contribute to maximize the benefit of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
6. In terms of Nuclear Power Technology, the group takes note with appreciation of the evolving global trends in this field as highlighted in details in the report, including inter alia the development of Small and Medium Modular Reactors, advanced large Water Cooled Reactors, New Generations of Nuclear Power Plants, as well as various research reactors and the other aspects the nuclear fuel cycle. These developments are yet another important testament to the need to increase the transfer of nuclear technology and the sharing of nuclear knowledge, expertise and lessons learned to developing countries, including embarking and newcomer countries, to enhance their capabilities and thus contribute to maximize the benefit of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Group urges the Agency to continue to provide training and education, and to support national capacity-building efforts and to further support coordinated research activities, in this regard.
7. The Group acknowledges the positive contribution of nuclear power in climate change mitigation, energy security and its non-climatic environmental and socio-economic benefits. These are some of the important reasons why many countries, particularly developing countries, intend to introduce nuclear power in the coming decades, or to expand existing programmes The Group thus urges the Agency to continue to assist interested Member States to analyse energy options and to support their capabilities to introduce nuclear power, while maintaining its leading role in the promotion of the transfer and development of technology and knowledge related to peaceful nuclear applications, including nuclear power and the nuclear fuel cycle.
8. The Group commends the Agency for establishing the COVID-19 Nuclear Power Plant Operating Experience Network (COVID – 19 NPP OPEX) to facilitate the sharing of information on measures taken

to mitigate the pandemic and its impact on Nuclear Power Plants. The Group also notes that due to the limitations posed by the pandemic, one Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review (INIR) mission was hosted and four were postponed to 2021. INIR and related missions provide a useful service in extending cooperation to Member States and the Group encourages the Agency to utilize experts from developing countries in these missions.

9. The Group reiterates its expression of interest in the work of various technical working groups under the auspices of the Agency in the development of nuclear technology and in the dissemination of knowledge to Member States, inter alia, through Coordinated Research Projects, Collaborating Centres and regional cooperative agreements and requests the Secretariat to continue its support.

10. With regard to the IAEA LEU Bank, the Group reiterates that any arrangement for assurance of supply shall be in full accordance with the IAEA Statute and take into account the respective legal obligations of Member States, as well as the principle of non-discrimination, whereby the inalienable right of Member States to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including national nuclear fuel cycles, is duly respected. In this regard, the Group notes the signing of a transport and equipment contract that will provide a second route of transportation of LEU to and from the Bank.

Madam Chair,

11. Accelerators and research reactors continue to play an important role in building strong basic capabilities in the nuclear field, and in supporting related education, training and research activities in Member States. The Group appreciates the support provided by the Secretariat in its coordination of projects supporting research, hands-on training and experimental work in the field of accelerators, and encourages it to continue to provide such support, especially by making use of built-in capacity in many developing countries.

12. The Group highlights the importance of research reactors to interested Member States and their utilization for research and various applications, including education, training, research and isotope production, and calls for enhanced international cooperation to maximize their efficient use while noting that the efforts in this direction continue to grow. The Group urges the Agency to assist interested Member States that are building or planning to build new research reactors as they have shown that they remain indispensable for providing radioisotopes for medicine and industry, services for cultural heritage and environmental studies all whilst making a strategic contribution to education and training.

13. The Group welcomes the continued international collaboration, supported by the IAEA, to promote and enhance the utilization of research reactors for nuclear capacity building, including education and training, among other areas. The Group encourages the Agency to continue its work of facilitation of regional networks and coalitions to help foster international cooperation and enable research reactors to expand their stakeholder and user communities.

Madam Chair,

14. The Group attaches great value to the role of the Agency's Nuclear Applications laboratories at Seibersdorf, which have assisted Member States in enhancing their access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies since 1962. The ability of the laboratories to provide timely assistance to Member States in the early-detection and diagnosis of COVID-19 is a testament to the invaluable work that these laboratories continue to do. The Group appreciates the support already given by Member States to the ReNuAL and ReNuAL Plus projects, and as the project enters its final phase, ReNuAL 2, the Group calls on all Member States, in a position to do so, to contribute.

Madam Chair,

15. The Group values the Agency's assistance to Member States, especially to developing countries, in the field of medical applications, including through the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy

(PACT). The Group is appreciative of the Agency's contribution to improving the overall cancer management worldwide, including, the diagnosis, treatment and control of cancer through, inter alia, the development and application of nuclear techniques. The Group notes that these nuclear techniques play an important role in fighting the global cancer epidemic. The Group also takes note of advances in the application of machine learning based approaches in cancer staging and cancer treatment through radiotherapy, as well as the use of monoclonal antibodies in cancer diagnosis. The Group appreciates the convening of the International Conference on Advances in Radiation Oncology held from 16 to 19 February 2021.

16. The Group notes with interest, developments in the use of radiolabelling approaches to trace and measure chemical residues in food; microdosimetry and nanodosimetry; the use of radiopharmaceuticals in the detection, diagnosis and management of infectious diseases; and the use of radiolabelling techniques to determine carbon sequestration for climate studies and to study the impact of microplastic pollution on marine life.

17. The Group also welcomes the work of the Joint IAEA-FAO Programme in strengthening the capacity of Member States in the detection, characterization, surveillance and control of transboundary animal and zoonotic diseases such as African Swine Fever, Foot-and-Mouth Disease, Ebola, Zika, Avian Influenza, MERS, SARS and COVID-19, through the use of radioisotopes and radiation technology.

Madam Chair,

18. The Group also welcomes the work undertaken by the Agency in environmental protection, specifically with regards to blue carbon. The Group welcomes the on-going research on nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques in advancing the knowledge on Global Blue Carbon. The ocean is a vital resource and its role in regulating the global climate system is important. In this regard, the Group notes the IAEA's participation in the innovative project coordinated by Oceans 2050 and looks forward to receiving an outcomes report in future NTR reports. The Group encourages the IAEA to continue its work in this regard.

19. The Group recalls the successful International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology, co-chaired by Costa Rica and Japan, in November 2018 and its Ministerial Declaration. The Group looks forward to the commencement of consultations on the follow up International Ministerial Conference in 2023.

20. With these remarks, the Group of 77 and China takes note of the Nuclear Technology Review 2021, as contained in document GOV/2021/2.

Thank you, Madam Chair.