

Video message by Minister of Foreign Affairs Caspar Veldkamp for the opening ceremony of the 68th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna on 16 September 2024

Chairperson,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm grateful for the opportunity to address you by video message.

This General Conference comes at a crucial time.

I hope we'll use it wisely to advance the promise and potential that nuclear technology holds for us all.

We are living in troubling times.

Just look at the war in Ukraine.

While nuclear power plants are caught in the crossfire of conflict,

Russia's grim and irresponsible threats of nuclear violence are escalating that very conflict.

This behaviour is unacceptable and should be universally condemned.

All the states gathered here today,

especially those who possess nuclear weapons,

must act responsibly in the nuclear domain.

And if any of us needs guidance, assistance or expertise in this regard, we can always turn to Vienna.

Because even in these times of turmoil and polarisation,

the IAEA and its Director General, Mr Grossi,

continue to do impressive and meaningful work to ensure nuclear safety and security, including their vital role in providing safeguards.

As I'm sure we all know, this work can only succeed with our unwavering trust, support and collaboration.

There can be no ifs or buts:

- when it comes to the seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security;
- when it comes to ensuring nuclear safety and security in conflict situations;

- and when it comes to safeguards.

Nuclear technology has the potential to cause catastrophe in a split second.

Yet, at the same time, it has the power to fight cancer, hunger and climate change – and many other urgent problems we are facing.

That's why the Netherlands is investing in the construction of a new PALLAS reactor, to supply innovative nuclear materials to treat patients in Europe and worldwide.

And it's why we're also investing in nuclear energy to help achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

In fact, we can harness nuclear technology to help achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals.

There are still many opportunities to further unlock the potential of the atom for the benefit of humankind.

I believe we can and should seize those opportunities. A strong, independent and universally respected IAEA is indispensable in this effort.

So let me close by again thanking the Agency and its Director General for their tremendous work.

And by calling on this General Conference to ensure that all member states continue to support that work.

Because that's the only way to make sure that nuclear technology harms no one and benefits everyone.

Thank you.