April 9, 2020

Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi  
Director General  
International Atomic Energy Agency  
Vienna International Centre  
P.O. Box 100  
1400 Vienna  
Austria

Dear Mr. Grossi,

The situation the world is facing with COVID-19 and the global pandemic has quickly altered our reality and is having real implications on our countries and our communities. This global situation has presented challenges to Member States at all level: governments, regulators, operators, and their readiness for pandemic response. While challenging, it also presents an opportunity for the international nuclear community to draw lessons learned and share knowledge with each other on how to effectively handle special circumstances like this one.

I strongly believe that the IAEA’s Commission on Safety Standards (CSS) has a role to play in ensuring that strong guidance is in place to assist Member States in preparing for pandemic situations. To date, international guidance for nuclear safety addresses radiological emergencies. Situations like the one we are seeing today with the COVID-19 pandemic does not have a dedicated international standard.

As the incoming chair of the CSS, I would like to submit a recommendation for the Agency to conduct a gap analysis of its existing safety and security documents to determine how the current standards could better reflect the readiness of Member States to respond to future pandemics, and report to the CSS on the path for establishing a Document Preparation Profile (DPP) dedicated to pandemic response or any other similar COVID-19 response. This issue could be added as an extraordinary item on the agenda of the next CSS meeting.

Separately, I have written to Ms. Dana Drábová, President of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), expressing Canada’s suggestion that Contracting Parties (CPs) should add information on their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic to their country presentations, and for the CPs to submit a supplementary report on their response at the 8th Review Meeting. I have inquired about the possibility of dedicating a part of each country review session to specific questions on the consequences of and responses to COVID-19.
I have had discussions with my colleagues in the International Nuclear Regulators Association (INRA), who are also CPs under the CNS, and they are supportive of the above initiatives.

I would be delighted to discuss, via teleconference, this proposal with you as well as how to best address the COVID-19 pandemic within CSS more broadly. I would also welcome your thoughts on my proposal for CNS. In the meantime, I hope you, your family, and the IAEA staff in Vienna are safe and healthy.

Yours sincerely,

Velshi, Rumina

Rumina Velshi
President and CEO, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

c.c.: Heidi Hulan, Ambassador of Canada to Austria and Slovakia and Permanent Representative to the UN in Vienna, Embassy of Canada to Austria

Juan Carlos Lentijo, Deputy Director General, Department of Safeguards and Security, International Atomic Energy Agency

Ramzi Jammal, Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer, Regulatory Operations Branch, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Jason Cameron, Vice-President, Regulatory Affairs Branch, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission