Belgium
CLUSTER III Statement
Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference of
the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons (NPT)
First session, Vienna, 2-12 May 2017

Mr Chairman,

This statement is fully aligned with that of the European Union.

Belgium is one of the countries with an extensive nuclear sector: there are 7 nuclear power reactors, in addition to research institutions and waste treatment facilities. The production of various types of medical isotopes meets 20% of world demand.

We therefore have a full understanding of the benefits which splitting the atom can bring to all of us. They exceed the production of nuclear power, and are engrained in our countries’ pathways towards development.

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. Without them, no nuclear program will earn, nor deserve the trust of our citizenry.

With respect to safety, Belgium’s nuclear sector is operated in full conformity with the appropriate Euratom directives and it is regularly reviewed by the IAEA through peer exercises. Even as we move towards the progressive phase out of our seven power reactors by 2025, safety remains our top priority.

Moving to security, let me recall we were participated to the Nuclear Security Summit process from 2010 to 2016. Our involvement in this process helped strengthen our national security framework. This work, as in many countries, is a continuous process. It is now incumbent upon the IAEA to further develop its role in strengthening the global nuclear security architecture. Belgium has supported this important work with a yearly voluntary contribution to the Nuclear Security Fund of 300.000 USD since 2010.

Mr Chairman,

My country is one of the major producers of medical radioisotopes, which play a paramount role in cancer diagnosis and therapy. We will continue this production, adding new applications and increasing safety.
Complex challenges such as global health need to be tackled through a collective effort. We therefore believe it is important for organizations like the IAEA, but also the WHO and UNODC to explore and deepen partnerships on human health. The fight against cancer is a case in point.

In the field of Food and Agriculture the IAEA and the FAO have a set a remarkable precedent in joint planning and pooling resources.

Mr Chairman

Technological advances in the nuclear field and beyond do not cease.

The Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK-CEN) continues to develop the innovative research infrastructure called MYRRHA with the main objective of providing the research community with a highly performing and versatile installation to carry out material and fuel testing. Particular attention will be given to the transmutation of long-lived radioactive waste. Our research centre also remains an active provider of training services to the IAEA. Before the end of this year it will be in a position to put its research rand other facilities at the disposal of researchers of IAEA members states for education, training and joint R&D projects, under the International Centre on Research reactors (ICERR) [M2].

On another note, alternative sterilization technologies using X rays [M3] or protontherapy are developing at great speed. Countries and organizations such as the IAEA do well to keep abreast of these new developments and ensure a level playing field.

Mr Chairman, in all these fields Belgium will seek to contribute to the responsible development of the peaceful use of nuclear technology in the best safety, security and non-proliferation conditions.