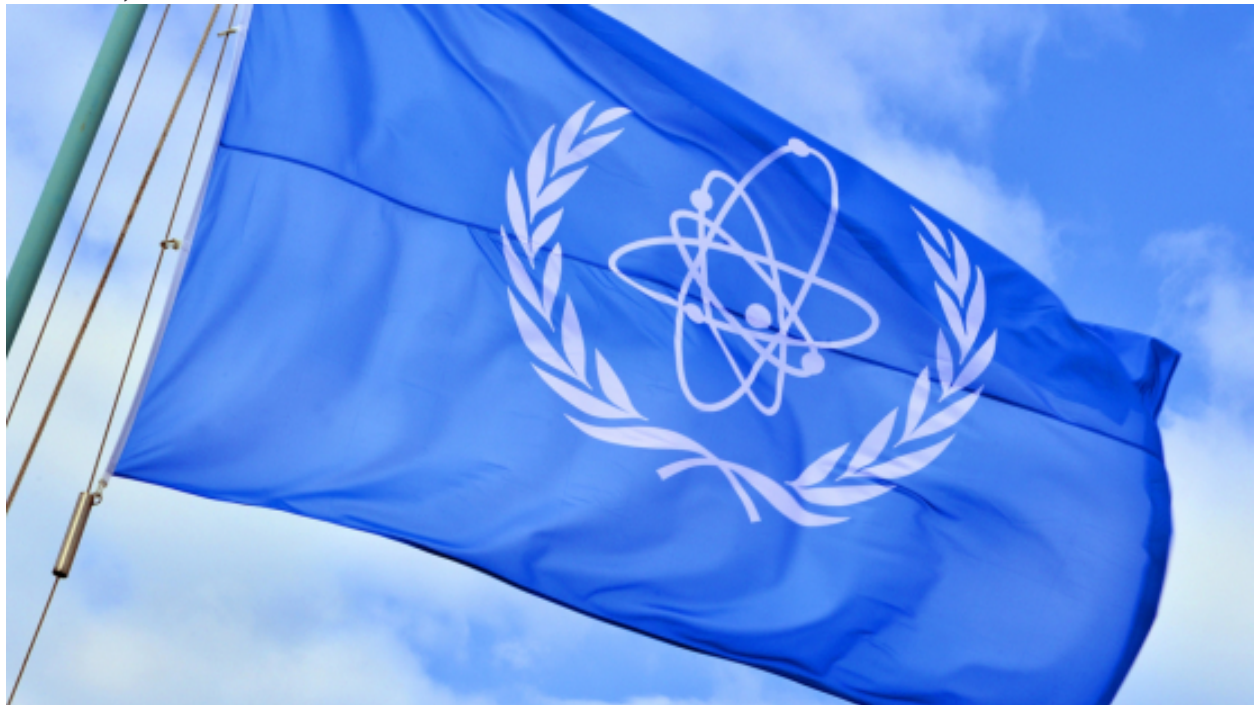


Update 13 – IAEA Director General Statement on Situation in Ukraine

06 Mar 2022

22/2022

Vienna, Austria



Ukraine informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today that although regular staff continued to operate the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), the plant management is now under orders from the commander of the Russian forces that took control of the site last week, Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said.

Furthermore, Ukraine reports that any action of plant management – including measures related to the technical operation of the six reactor units – requires prior approval by the Russian commander.

The Director General expressed grave concern about this development as it contravenes one of the [seven indispensable pillars](#) of nuclear safety and security that he outlined at the meeting of the IAEA's Board of Governors on 2 March, convened to address the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine.

Pillar 3 states: “The operating staff must be able to fulfil their safety and security duties and have the capacity to make decisions free of undue pressure”.

In a second serious development, Ukraine has reported that the Russian forces at the site have switched off some mobile networks and the internet so that reliable information from the site cannot be obtained through the normal channels of communication.

This has been confirmed by Ukraine's nuclear regulator which informed the IAEA today that it had started having major problems in communicating with staff operating the Zaporizhzhya NPP. Less than 24 hours after Ukraine's regulatory authority said it had been able to maintain communications with Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant, it today said the phone lines, as well as e-mails and fax, were not functioning anymore. Mobile phone communication was still possible, but with poor quality.

The contravenes another of the seven indispensable pillars, number 7: “There must be reliable communications with the regulator and others.”

“I’m extremely concerned about these developments that were reported to me today. Just a few days after I presented the seven main elements of nuclear safety and security to the IAEA Board, several of them are already being compromised. In order to be able to operate the plant safely and securely, management and staff must be allowed to carry out their vital duties in stable conditions without undue external interference or pressure,” Director General Grossi said.

“The deteriorating situation regarding vital communications between the regulator and the Zaporizhzhya NPP is also a source of deep concern, especially during an armed conflict that may jeopardize the country’s nuclear facilities at any time. Reliable communications between the regulator and the operator are a critical part of overall nuclear safety and security,” he said.

Despite the communication issues, the regulator was able to provide updated information about the operational status of the Zaporizhzhya NPP and to confirm that radiation levels there remained normal. Of the six reactors, Unit 1 is in planned maintenance until mid-2022, Unit 2 now operates at full capacity, Unit 3 is in a cold shutdown state, Unit 4 is operating at near full capacity, Unit 5 is cooling down for a cold reserve state, and Unit 6 is in cold shutdown.

In one positive development, operational teams at the plant were now rotating in three shifts. But there were problems with availability and supply of food, which was having a negative impact on staff morale, the regulator said.

The regulator also reported that it was facing problems communicating with personnel at the Chornobyl NPP, which at the moment was only possible with e-mails.

Russian forces took control of the site of the 1986 accident on 24 February. At the Chornobyl NPP, the staff of more than 200 technical personnel and guards have still not been able to rotate since 23 February, it said.

Director General Grossi has repeatedly stressed the importance of operating staff being able to rest to carry out their important jobs safely and securely.

“I call on those in effective control of the Chornobyl NPP to immediately allow staff there to rotate for the sake of safety and security,” he said.

In another concerning development, communications have also been lost with all enterprises and institutions in the port city of Mariupol that use Category 1-3 radiation sources and there was no information about their status, the regulator said. Such radioactive material can cause serious harm to people if not secured and managed properly.

The Director General reiterated his readiness to travel to the Chornobyl NPP to secure the commitment to the safety and security of all Ukraine’s nuclear power plants from the parties of the conflict in the country.