International Atomic Energy Agency

Statement

148th Session of the Executive Board

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Read by: Mr Luis Longoria-Gandara, Director of the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean, Department of Technical Cooperation

Agenda Item 14.1 Covid-19 Response

Dear Chair,

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of international cooperation during a global crisis. Since March 2020, the IAEA has contributed to strengthening the global response to Covid-19 by providing diagnostic equipment and training.

We have a longstanding record of developing and deploying nuclear and related techniques for the rapid and accurate detection of animal and zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19, Avian influenza, Ebola and Zika.

The IAEA has built Member State capacities in using real-time RT-PCR diagnostic machines. To date, the IAEA is delivering support to 285 designated national laboratories in 127 countries and territories around the world to help tackle the pandemic. In addition to these machines, our assistance includes providing kits and consumables, biosafety cabinets and equipment for sampling, testing and quality control, as well as personal protection equipment.

Moreover, to complement our assistance, webinars were delivered in 5 official UN languages, and educational videos were published online in several languages, in
conjunction with one-on-one laboratory support. Technical guidance and expert assistance have also been provided to support these labs. Collaboration with WHO has been essential to reach more than 4000 professionals in laboratories around the world.

Documentation regarding the IAEA’s assistance on Covid-19 response has been submitted to the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

Our Director General, Rafael Mariano Grossi, emphasized the IAEA’s response as: “the biggest operation of assistance in the history of the IAEA”. He also assured Member States that “the effort is going to continue, as it is an absolute priority for us”. To that end, support mobilized for this effort amounts to over €27 million in extra-budgetary funding from donor countries and the private sector.

As a member of the WHO-led COVID-19 UN Crisis Management Team, the IAEA continues to cooperate with FAO and WHO. We look forward to continuing our close collaboration.

Thank you Chair.