Nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine: UK Statement to the IAEA Board of Governors, March 2026

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Chair,

The Director General's report describes an increasingly bleak nuclear safety situation in Ukraine. Russia's ongoing attacks on Ukraine's energy system remain the driving cause for this deterioration.

As a direct result, Ukraine's nuclear facilities now face an unprecedented level of risk far beyond anything foreseen in their original design or safety planning.

These are not abstract dangers. The report documents repeated damage to the grid infrastructure nuclear plants rely on to remain safe — power lines, switching systems, and substations.

Agency teams reported grid instability, the disconnection of multiple power lines, automatic reactor shutdowns, and forced power reductions across all of Ukraine's operating nuclear power plants (NPPs).

These attacks strike at the heart of nuclear safety. Electrical substations and transmission nodes are not peripheral assets; they are the critical interface that keeps cooling, monitoring and safety systems powered.

Between October and February alone, Ukraine endured 21 waves of air attacks on its substations.

The DG's report sets out the cumulative effect: destroyed transformers, crippled switching systems, and substations operating at the bare minimum of transit capacity. Repairs are not keeping up with the pace of Russian destruction, despite the heroic efforts of Ukraine's energy workers.

Every Russian strike against the grid chips away at nuclear safety. The grid becomes a patchwork, unstable, and far more likely to fail when reactors need it most. The situation is so fragile that a single event — as seen on 31 January — can simultaneously disconnect multiple power lines and trigger automatic reactor protections across the country. Pretending this is insignificant is simply not credible.

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia NPP (ZNPP) illustrates the consequences. Two more losses of off-site power occurred during the reporting period, bringing the total since the conflict to twelve. Emergency diesel generators were forced to take over – machines designed for short-term backup, not repeated front line use.

At times Russia appears to understand this is an issue. As the IAEA reports, Russia's so-called "licenses" require ZNPP's Units 1 and 2 to remain shut down until off-site power is stabilised. Yet Russia continues to create the conditions that destabilise off-site power. Even its own illegitimate documents contradict its actions.

This Board's repeated calls for Russian restraint – including most recently in January this year have

not been heeded. Instead, Russia has continued to display its contempt and allowed these serious risks to increase - risks which Russia could remove by ceasing its attacks.

We are now more than four years into Russia's invasion and four years since its illegal seizure of ZNPP. It is imperative that this Board strengthens its collective resolve and acts decisively to uphold nuclear safety and security. We support the resolution introduced by Canada and the Netherlands and urge all Board members to vote in favour.

Thank you, Chair.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nuclear-safety-security-and-safeguards-in-ukraine-uk-statement-to-the-iaea-board-of-governors-march-2026