# COUNTERING RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR (RN) DISINFORMATION:

BUILDING RESILIENCE AT THE 2026 IAEA SAFEGUARDS SYMPOSIUM

## PRIMER | NOVEMBER 2026

*Disinformation[*] by State-sponsored and State-adjacent actors has been observed across multilateral fora and may also feature at or around the 15th IAEA Symposium on International Safeguards. For further information: www.GPWMDCounterDisinfo.com.*

## WHY IS RN DISINFORMATION A RISK?

RN disinformation refers to **deliberately false or manipulated information concerning radiological or nuclear technologies, materials and weapons**. The IAEA Safeguards Symposium may be targeted by disinformation intended to undermine confidence in safeguards findings and activities and to fuel tensions between the IAEA and Member States, and among Member States themselves. Technical information and discussions from the Symposium may be misrepresented or manipulated to support false allegations and misleading narratives. This primer helps relevant IAEA staff, State and regional safeguards authorities, Member State Support Programme representatives and other safeguards and nonproliferation practitioners recognise recurring disinformation narratives and tactics to **pre-emptively debunk falsehoods, alert others to emerging patterns and build State and institutional resilience**.

## WHAT NARRATIVES MIGHT APPEAR?

### UNDERMINING VERIFICATION

**CAUTION AS CONCEALMENT**
Narratives portraying cautious language, evidentiary limits or verification timelines as incompetence, bias or a cover-up.

**DIFFERENTIATED SAFEGUARDS AS DOUBLE STANDARDS**
Differences arising from safeguards agreements, access or available evidence are portrayed as selective treatment.

**MANDATE LIMITS AS INACTION**
Narratives presenting activities beyond the IAEA's legal authority, access or safeguards coverage as matters it refuses or fails to investigate.

**MEASUREMENTS AS FALSE PROOF OF DIVERSION**
Inventory differences, measurement uncertainties, losses of continuity of knowledge or sampling results may be taken out of context to allege diversion or to deny findings.

### UNDERMINING INDEPENDENCE

**AFFILIATION AS BIAS**
Narratives portraying staff nationality or affiliations, extrabudgetary funding, Member State Support Programmes or industry partnerships as giving States or companies control over findings.

**VERIFICATION AS SURVEILLANCE**
Narratives portraying legitimate inspector access, safeguards information and new monitoring technologies used within agreed mandates as intelligence collection, sovereignty violations or pretexts for military action.

### MANUFACTURING SUSPICION

**NUCLEAR ACTIVITY AS IMMINENT USE**
Unsubstantiated narratives alleging that a State is preparing to produce nuclear weapons or stage a nuclear/radiological incident, preloading justification for escalation or preemptive action before any event occurs.

**PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES AS PROLIFERATION**
Narratives recasting civilian research, technical cooperation or dual-use activities as evidence of a weapons programme.

**TREATY OBLIGATIONS AS POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION**
Narratives selectively interpreting NPT provisions or safeguards obligations, portraying a State in breach as the defender of the nonproliferation regime.

[*] *Definitively identifying disinformation can be challenging, as deceptive intent and attribution are often unclear. This work therefore considers a broader range of narratives containing false, misleading or manipulated information that can distort perceptions and influence behaviour.*

## WHERE MIGHT RN DISINFORMATION FEATURE?

Each setting below carries a different risk for disinformation to spread. Claims made in formal settings may acquire unwarranted credibility through the setting itself, whereas claims shared informally may spread before their source or evidence can be checked.



### Plenaries & High-Level Statements

False claims in statements may gain credibility from the venue. Accurate ones may be selectively quoted to imply institutional failure or State non-compliance.



### Side Events & Oral Sessions

A speaker's technical expertise may lend credibility to selectively presented or poorly sourced claims.



### Exhibition Floor

Handouts and displayed material may later be circulated without original context, explanations and limitations.



### Corridors & Informal Exchanges

Claims and materials passed on in informal conversation may propagate without an identifiable source.



### Press Interviews & Reporting

Terminology, legal distinctions and confidence levels may be oversimplified or a claim reported before verification.



### Digital Media

Slides, quotations and video clips may be selectively edited, miscaptioned or amplified far beyond the venue.

## HOW TO RESPOND TO RN DISINFORMATION?



### 1. Prepare

Identify foreseeable narratives and topics vulnerable to manipulation. Prepare clear, pre-approved explanations. Designate focal points and internal reporting channels.



### 2. Spot & Check

Monitor relevant narratives during and after the Symposium. Check the source, evidence, context and reach. Distinguish disinformation from error, legitimate disagreement or criticism.



### 3. Evaluate

Assess the narrative's target audience and potential harm. Consider whether a public response could amplify an otherwise marginal claim.



### 4. Coordinate

Cooperate with and consult trusted technical, communication and policy experts. Keep message consistent across different stakeholders and channels.



### 5. Debunk

Respond promptly, clearly and through channels that reach the affected audience. Lead with verified facts and state what is known, uncertain and outside mandate.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

*Scan the QR codes below to explore more on countering RN disinformation:*

**RN DISINFORMATION: IAEA SECRETARIAT**

**DISINFO TACTICS BINGO**

**BEST PRACTICES FOR COUNTERING RN DISINFO**



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