

OPENING REMARKS
by Mr. Sungat Yessimkhanov,
Vice Minister of Energy of Kazakhstan
at the Ministerial Segment of ICONS-2024
(Vienna, 20 May 2024)

***Mr Co-President, Mr Director General,
Distinguished Excellencies and colleagues,***

It is my privilege and honour to welcome you all today as we open **the International Conference on Nuclear Security, symbolically entitled "Shaping the Future"**.

This is indeed the forum of ministers, policy makers and nuclear security experts from around the world, who are committed to shaping our better future in such an important field as nuclear security.

In this regard, **I am pleased to co-chair this important event with Mr. Tim Watts**, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, and to thank both the Permanent Missions of Australia and Kazakhstan for their joint efforts in preparing the Ministerial Segment of the Conference.

My sincere gratitude also goes to the Co-Chairs of the Program Committee for their skilful leadership in preparing the scientific and technical program of ICONS-2024.

I also appreciate **the personal efforts of Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi** and his professional team.

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

This ICONS comes at a critical time for international nuclear security. The international community today faces many different challenges. At the same time, **products of artificial intelligence**

and advanced computing technologies offer new opportunities to strengthen national nuclear security regimes.

As new technologies continue to evolve, we must adapt our nuclear security measures to mitigate potential risks and reap the benefits of these technologies. In this regard, the establishment of **robust national nuclear security regimes and the universalization of core legal instruments** will ensure a guaranteed nuclear energy chain for humanity.

Kazakhstan is a party to the main legal instruments in nuclear security and we call upon Member States to adhere to them.

We also commend **the IAEA's role** in preventing and responding to acts and threats of nuclear terrorism, in developing nuclear security requirements and guidelines, and in providing advisory services and capacity building to Member States.

Dear friends,

Since its independence, **Kazakhstan has pursued an effective national model to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.** By voluntarily renouncing nuclear weapons in 1991, the concept of disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy has become an essential part of Kazakhstan's national identity.

Ensuring the nuclear security of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was the first major challenge for newly Independent Kazakhstan. Together with our international partners, we have sealed all nuclear test tunnels and shafts, removed weapons-usable material, and secured the vast area of the test site against unauthorized access and illegal transfers. All other nuclear facilities used for peaceful purposes have been properly secured and protected from potential threats.

Kazakhstan fully supports the UN's urgent call for concrete action to protect our environment for future generations. **As the world's leading exporter of uranium, providing 43% of the global supply, Kazakhstan plays a crucial role in carbon-free power generation on a global scale.**

Kazakhstan made a bold leap forward by adopting **the Strategy on Achieving Carbon Neutrality by 2060**. Under the Strategy, we pay special attention to developing nuclear and hydrogen energy, renewable energy, and converting coal-fuelled facilities to gas.

As **Kazakhstan embarks on its first nuclear power program**, we are committed to strictly following IAEA guidelines and recommendations to build a robust nuclear safety and security environment around the future nuclear power plant.

Kazakhstan has contributed to the non-proliferation regime and sustainable development of nuclear energy by hosting the unique **IAEA Low-Enriched Uranium Bank**.

Moreover, **we continue to implement research reactor conversion projects aimed at converting highly enriched uranium fuel to low-enriched uranium fuel**, thereby helping to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation. Just last year, we successfully completed the conversion of another research reactor at the National Nuclear Center of Kazakhstan, which is now fully operating on low-enriched fuel.

Excellencies,

The ICONS-2024 platform, under the auspices of the IAEA, provides a unique opportunity to reaffirm, **at the Ministerial level, our commitments** to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to meet all necessary international obligations in the field of nuclear security.

Through our collective efforts, we can ensure that nuclear technologies are used safely for the benefit of humankind and shape better future for generations to come.

I thank you!