



International Conference on Fast Reactors and Related Fuel Cycles: Safe Technologies and Sustainable Scenarios (FR13)

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Opening Session

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I am pleased to address this opening session of the *International Conference on Fast Reactors and Related Fuel Cycles: Safe Technologies and Sustainable Scenarios*, organized by the IAEA and hosted by the Government of France through the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives).

This event follows the successful conference in Kyoto, Japan, in 2009, which I also had the honour to address. Since then, the nuclear world has been shaken by the serious accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan, two years ago this month. Despite some predictions to the contrary, global use of nuclear power will continue to grow in the next few decades. Major existing users such as China and India have significant expansion plans. Nearly a dozen countries, both developed and developing, plan to build their first power reactors. The United Arab Emirates last year became the first new country for 27 years to start construction work on a reactor.

But the Fukushima Daiichi accident has left an important legacy, which is a much stronger global focus on safety. I am therefore pleased to see that this conference addresses the issues of safety and sustainability. Public confidence in nuclear power was greatly shaken by the Fukushima Daiichi accident. It will take time to rebuild that confidence. This will only be possible if everyone involved in nuclear power has a total commitment to safety and if the sector is open and transparent. The public need to be reassured that nuclear energy is

efficient and safe, can mitigate the effects of climate change and can play a key role in meeting the growing global demand for energy. Fast reactors and related fuel cycles will be important for the long-term sustainability of nuclear power. This innovative technology has the potential to ensure that energy resources which would run out in a few hundred years, using today's technology, will actually last several thousand years.

Fast reactors also reduce the volume and toxicity of the final waste. China's Experimental Fast Reactor has been connected to the grid. Work is at an advanced stage on construction of India's 500 MW(e) Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor and of the large BN-800 reactor in the Russian Federation. Interest in fast reactors with closed fuel cycles is increasing steadily. A number of emerging economies are joining the existing fast reactor technology-holders.

Considerable R & D work is being done on advanced designs with enhanced safety characteristics. It is important to gather the operational experience of countries with operating fast reactors and related fuel cycle facilities. This can help to achieve higher levels of safety. Events such as the Joint GIF-IAEA Workshop on the safety of sodium-cooled fast reactors last week are a useful way of doing this. They also help to ensure that relevant lessons from the Fukushima Daiichi accident are learned.

The IAEA remains the unique collaboration forum for ensuring continued progress in fast reactor technology. We provide an umbrella for knowledge preservation, information exchange and collaborative R&D in which resources and expertise are pooled.

Let me conclude by thanking all of the experts in the International Advisory Committee, the International Scientific Programme Committee and the Local Organizing Committee – as well as my IAEA colleagues – who have worked so hard in the last year to organize this conference.

I wish you every success with this important event.

Thank you.