

**Mr. Director General of IAEA,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I would like to thank the IAEA and Mr. Amano - Director General, for the initiative to organize this conference as well as Ambassador Antonio Guereiro, under whose presidency the preparations for the conference have been made. I would also like to ensure the Japanese people that in Bulgaria you have good friends and you can count on our cooperation and support.

Nuclear energy has a key role for providing base load power to the Bulgarian economy with a share of 35% of the total energy mix. In view of the policies for sustainable development and development of low-carbon economy our Government has declared its institutional support for the development of nuclear energy whereby fully respecting the internationally approved principles for nuclear safety and radiation protection while making sure there is sound economic feasibility. Therefore we must know the true cost of nuclear power. The world has to know it.

Bulgaria supports the position that each member state of the EU has the right to define its own energy mix, taking into account the highest safety requirements. Bulgaria has been developing its nuclear energy program for peaceful purposes since the early 1960-ies and is a founding member of the IAEA.

We have almost 40 year years of impeccable safety record of operation, which has also been confirmed by numerous missions of the IAEA, WANO and WENRA peer reviews.

Bulgaria has already given an example of responding to perceptions for the need of increased safety requirements by closing in 2006 four out of our six reactors way before the expiration of their projected life.

The safety must be an absolute condition both for power plants already in operation and for the new-builds. Investments in high technologies have to

be done in order to improve the safety of the power plants. In this aspect Bulgaria is an active participant in the serious steps undertaken by the EU for stress tests both in the EU and in neighboring countries..

We have been among the first to undertake specific steps for organization and implementation of stress-tests after the accident in Fukushima.

For each country that develops nuclear energy program the issue of qualified human resources is of a crucial importance, therefore we are ready to share our experience as well as learn from others. Through the establishment of international consortia among universities, R&D institutes and industry for joint use of resources which will help both for the development of the human resources for the nuclear energy sector and the advancement of technologies.

We are convinced that the transparency is a significant aspect of the international cooperation, as well as for achieving public acceptability. We believe that the established cooperation mechanisms must be further developed and we welcome IAEA's initiatives in this direction.

Thank you for your attention!