

**S P E E C H Delivered by European Commissioner Energy,
Günther Oettinger at Nuclear Safety Conference June 20th**

Mr Director General, Mr President, Dear Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to address Government representatives of the IAEA Member States and observers at this crucial moment, when we aim to learn from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, caused by unprecedented events.

The IAEA has been playing a key role in the aftermath of these tragic events. I hope that this Conference will give a major push towards further enhancing nuclear safety worldwide in the light of the Fukushima accident.

Immediately after the disaster of 11 March in Japan, the European Union expressed sympathy and solidarity and mobilised support to the people and the authorities of Japan. Alongside immediate support, we considered it important to continuously improve nuclear safety governance in the EU and elsewhere in the world.

Already on 15 March, on behalf of the European Commission, I convened a high level conference with the participation of energy ministers, national nuclear safety authorities, nuclear power plant vendors and operators from all EU Member States. On 25 March the European Council invited the European Commission and European nuclear safety authorities (ENSREG) to carry out EU-wide comprehensive safety and risk assessment of nuclear facilities with a high degree of transparency.

These assessments are now under way in all EU countries with nuclear installations. The first results will become available by the end of the year, when the European Council will make an initial evaluation of the findings on the basis of a report from the Commission. The process will continue beyond the end of the year with the aim to have a complete picture of the situation by mid-2012 on the basis of which decisions on further policy and legislative initiatives can be taken.

A parallel process – in close collaboration with the EU Member States – will be followed for assessing security threats, including terrorist attacks.

The European Council has also called on the Commission to review the EU nuclear safety framework by the end of the year and to propose improvements. The Commission's proposals will take full account of the progress of the safety and risk assessment.

International cooperation on nuclear safety, which will strengthen the safety culture and emergency preparedness worldwide, is more important than ever. Nuclear safety issues warrant a discussion at a global level and the EU is supportive and willing to participate in any international assessment on the causes of the Fukushima accident and process of learning from this, including in the field of standards on safety of nuclear reactors. The EU-Japan Summit of 28 May 2011 has underlined the shared commitment to enhance collaboration to promote the highest levels of nuclear safety around the world.

Building also on the statement by the G8 Leaders in Deauville, the EU considers that all countries operating nuclear power plants should carry out similar assessments as soon as possible in order to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide.

In fact, the European Commission has invited third countries in the neighbourhood of the EU which operate or own nuclear installations, like Switzerland, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Armenia, and Croatia, as well as those countries that have plans for the development of nuclear power, like Turkey and Belarus. I have invited Ministers from these countries to participate in the assessment process and a ministerial meeting will take place on Wednesday in Brussels. The participation of these countries would create a very large regional space for coherent action on nuclear safety and would set a good example for the global community contributing to the ambition of this ministerial conference.

The IAEA can play a key role in involving both the EU neighbours and other countries worldwide in a common approach to nuclear safety. It could build on the EU safety and risk assessment process helping to determine concrete global action in light of the Fukushima accident.

In the framework of its cooperation with the IAEA, the EU has called for the review of the international legal framework on nuclear safety. The 5th Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety on 13 April 2011 confirmed the need for revising the Convention with a view to strengthening this instrument. In this process, we should:

- update its safety objectives so that they are in line with the latest IAEA safety standards;
- enhance the global nuclear safety governance, particularly by strengthening regulatory independence;
- extend the scope of the definition of "nuclear installation" beyond nuclear power plants;

- supplement the provisions on nuclear accident prevention and management to ensure a more effective and coherent response in case of an emergency;
- move beyond the incentive character of the Convention by strengthening its general enforcement mechanism and by adding a binding peer-review requirement.

I believe that the recent events and the lessons we will draw from them should give impetus towards a common comprehensive approach to nuclear safety and enhanced cooperation between the EU and the IAEA.

Nuclear and radiological risks do not stop at national or regional borders; As it has been expressed so well already “an accident anywhere is an accident everywhere”. Ensuring and continuously improving nuclear safety is our paramount common responsibility. This is an objective, which is in the interest of all countries, regardless of whether they actually use nuclear energy or not. In this regard you can count on the full support of the European Commission.

Thank you.