

Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety

Mr. President Guerreiro, Mr Chairman
Mr. Director General
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen -

On behalf of the Polish delegation, I have a great pleasure in *joining previous distinguished speakers and* congratulating Mr. President on the undertaking of this important and not easy task to chair the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety.

I am fully confident that under this guidance we shall be able to proceed smoothly through the items on the agenda and conclude this session successfully. I would like also to compliment Director General, Mr. Yukiya Amano and his staff on the very professional way they manage the Agency and have organized this session of the Conference.

Even though three months have passed since the day when the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami hit Japan and led to the breakdown in the Fukushima nuclear power plant - it's hard **not to** start any statement without referring to that fact. And though the date of March 11th may be regarded as a call to reflect on the future of nuclear energy, it's still too early to draw conclusions on further development of the nuclear energy

sector worldwide. Public attitude towards the nuclear energy fluctuates today between the understanding of the necessity to mitigate climate change on the one hand and elevating sometimes irrational fears on the other hand, not losing sight of the need to maintain the competitiveness of electricity production.

Poland attaches the utmost importance to the high level of the nuclear safety and emergency preparedness worldwide. Although safety is a national responsibility, it may have implications beyond national borders and the international cooperation on this issue is indispensable. That's why authorities should support any action aiming at the increasing the nuclear safety of facilities, resulting finally in the enhanced safety of workers, population and the environment.

Poland supports the idea to review safety procedures of the existing EU nuclear power plants on the basis of comprehensive and transparent risk and safety assessment. But, the so called „Stress tests” are not and cannot become a silver bullet for assuring nuclear safety. In fact it should be considered only as an important element of the continuous, present process of enhancing the safety of nuclear installation which finally could allow to reconvince people of the viability and credibility of the most advanced nuclear technologies. While nuclear risks do not respect borders between states and

territories it is extremely vital that such safety reviews are conducted not only by members of the EU, but also by other states operating nuclear power plants. But still one of the main responsibilities of each state operating NPPs remains **the enforcing of already existing safety requirements** related to the operators and investors of NPPs as well as to all parties involved in the suppliers' chain. In order to protect the public against any risk connected with the nuclear technology.

The need to fully draw the lesson from the events in Japan has been recognized widely. The case of Fukushima NPP has confirmed that priority of nuclear safety is and should remain our **common and permanent goal**. The highest standards of the nuclear safety and the safety culture should be: implemented, continuously revised, improved and promoted internationally.

While mentioning Japan and Fukushima NPP, let me express the solidarity of my country and deep respect for the Japanese people for their attitude in the face of danger but at the same time the great admiration for efforts aiming at the restoration of the damaged infrastructure. Learning information from Japan we are impressed how the **responsible authorities and the society** are addressing this critical situation. I truly believe that despite severe damages that hit economy, especially nuclear power sector, Japan will overcome

this crisis and that people will rebuild their lives and communities.

Despite the very painful effects in the human dimension, caused by the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the **further development of the nuclear power should not be inhibited**. Having in mind the growing demand for electricity, the role of the nuclear energy in the fuel mix worldwide and its ecological impact, we simply can not afford to slow down the whole process.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen -

Recognizing the value of global revival of nuclear energy, and main challenges defined for the Polish power sector - the Government of Poland decided in January 2009 to launch a national nuclear power program based on the approved "*National Energy Policy up to 2030*". Objective of this decision is to construct two nuclear plants of total capacity of 6000 MW and to have the first one in operation at the beginning of the third decade of this century.

This determination is a result of the challenging situation in the Polish power sector -highly dependent on coal, with generation assets aging and with the obligation to meet targets set out in the EU climate - energy package. Other objectives are

to maintain electricity prices at the level acceptable to the society and the national economy, to reduce greenhouse gases emission and to increase share of renewable energy sources in the energy mix.

It must be stressed that the construction of the first nuclear power plant is being considered as the greatest challenge in the history of the Polish energy market and entire national economy. Especially, having in mind starting this project from scratch. Thus, to be on a winning side, this project is also being considered a nation-wide, multi-dimensional and long-term one, conducive to the growth of the innovative economy, with the proactive participation of the domestic industry.

Economic advantages of nuclear option in electricity production, more than fifty years of successful operation of nuclear power reactors, the worldwide experience in improving the nuclear safety and safeguards, the continuous development of the safety culture and responsibility for any single process in the nuclear energy value chain, especially the spent fuel and radioactive waste management - lead us to the conclusion that nuclear energy is the reasonable choice.

The Government of Poland has undertaken intensive efforts to develop the necessary institutional and legal

framework, including the long-term vision of the nuclear power sector. Having in mind the importance of the preparatory stage, the action has been focused on two main blocks of the preparatory activities:

1. Since the mid of 2009 the work on the complex and fundamental document - the **Nuclear Power Program for Poland** - is pending. The initial stage of the nuclear sector development, not present today in the country's economy, calls for the specific individual approach in terms of organization and legislation. Already now, all activities must be conducted with respect to the highest possible technical, managerial and communication standards, having invariably in mind, that no single aspect of the energy generation is left to dominate over the primacy of the safe and secure operation of the nuclear facilities.
2. The legal and institutional infrastructure, necessary to provide a coherence and stability of the nuclear power sector development is in preparation. Work on the new laws has reached its final phase. The amended Atomic Law and Law on preparation and realization of investments in nuclear power facilities have been adopted by the parliament and will enter into force at the beginning of July 2011.

It should be stressed that all preparatory works aimed at the implementation of the Nuclear Power Program are being conducted in a full observance of the international and EU law, and in accordance with relevant recommendations and guidelines of the IAEA assuring the highest achievable standards of the nuclear safety and emergency preparedness and response. We highly appreciate the assistance offered by the Agency as well as by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, a member of which Poland became in November 2010. I strongly believe that cooperation with these organizations will strengthen and optimize the cost of implementation of nuclear power in Poland, giving a good example for other countries wishing to embark on nuclear power programs.

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen –

At the end I would like to thank the Government of Japan for preparing and delivering the Report on the accident at Fukushima nuclear power plant. This document is very useful in understanding what exactly happened and how to avoid such situation in future. In the chapter with lessons learned by the responsible authorities the Report stresses the importance of safety culture. Please let me end with their words: *“All those involved with nuclear energy should be equipped with a safety culture. ‘Nuclear safety culture ‘ is stated as ‘A safety culture*

that governs the attitudes and behavior in relation to safety of all organizations and individuals concerned must be integrated in the management system.' Learning this message and putting it into practice is the starting point, duty and responsibility of those who are involved with nuclear energy. Without a safety culture, there will be no constant improvement of nuclear safety."