

**Secretary of State's Statement at the IAEA High
Level Conference**

Vienna – 20th June 2011

Thank you Mr President.

I would like to start by joining the esteemed speakers before me in expressing sympathy for, and solidarity with, Japan following the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011.

My thoughts, and the thoughts of the British people, are with the people of Japan. The sheer scale of the devastation and the courage and skill shown by those who are dealing with the aftermath of that day will not be forgotten.

The accident at Fukushima Daiichi gives us an opportunity to take stock of the assumptions we have made in the past.

Internationally, and nationally, we need to ensure that the lessons are learned. We must understand the full facts and their implications, both for existing nuclear reactors and any new programme.

One thing is clear: safety is, and will always be, our number one concern.

Communicating that message will be critical.

Around the world, people seek reassurance. They want to know that what happened in Japan will not happen again. Nuclear power plants, old and new, are under the spotlight.

If nuclear energy has a future in our low-carbon world – and I believe it does – we must work together to provide that reassurance.

Every energy choice has its consequences. And we cannot eliminate risk entirely.

But as guardians of the most potent energy source humankind has ever harnessed, we must be relentless in our pursuit of safety.

Our nuclear safety regimes, international and national, must be continuously improved.

I encourage the IAEA and Member States to redouble efforts to increase the number of Contacting Parties to the relevant Conventions to help achieve these aims.

The UK welcomes the proposals of the G8 and G20 to review, and where necessary amend, the international Conventions and standards for nuclear safety.

We particularly welcome the proposal to ensure an Integrated Regulatory Review Service mission is undertaken in each Member State every 10 years. No-one can afford to shy away from the peer review of our nuclear safety regimes.

The UK also welcomes the EU 'Stress Test'. We are applying the stress test to ensure our nuclear plants are equipped to deal with extraordinary triggering events.

I have also asked our Chief Nuclear Inspector, Dr Mike Weightman, to report on the lessons Fukushima holds for safety at nuclear facilities in the UK – including nuclear power plants, and sites such as the Sellafield reprocessing plant.

I am aware that other States plan to undertake similar tests to those taking place in the European Union. I am sure you will join me in encouraging all those who have not already put such measures in place to do so as a matter of priority.

It is equally important that we increase international cooperation on nuclear safety and emergency response measures. The IAEA will remain central to achieving true co-operation, and we should, where appropriate, seek to strengthen their role.

Clearly, there is much to be done. It will not be easy to establish a clear plan for delivering improvements. That is why this Conference is so important. It is a welcome step towards a safer future.

Thank you very much.