

# International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Energy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

St. Petersburg, June 27 to 29, 2013

Statement by ITALY

Director Kirienko,

Director General Amano,

Secretary-General Gurria,

Distinguished Guests,

- The energy problem is of the utmost importance for the future development of our communities. The availability of cheap and environmentally sustainable energy systems in all our Countries is the basis for sustained economic growth and, hence, for satisfying all kinds of human needs.
- Being a founding member of the European Union, Italy has strongly supported the EC stress tests initiative which, complemented with a transparent peer review process, provided a unique opportunity to develop a common understanding on the status of nuclear safety in Europe, to promote its improvement following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant, and to offer an important contribution to the harmonization of safety standards and approaches, based upon the work done by the Western European Nuclear Regulators Association (WENRA).
- Albeit Italy remains a non-nuclear Country, it participated through its Safety Authority in the peer review activities both in the topical review meeting and in the country visits. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Italian Government is committed to ensuring resources and legislative provisions to update national competences and capabilities in the safety and in the technology of nuclear installations.
- The new Italian Energy Strategy, which was recently approved by inter-ministerial decree and whose relevance has been reaffirmed by the present Government, recognizes that there is no space for nuclear energy within the Italian energy mix. Yet, Italy is endowed with a great competence and expertise on nuclear technologies. Italy has great universities, well renowned research and development centers as well as a series of important private companies focusing on nuclear energy. In a way, the Italian Energy Strategy acknowledges this important asset of ours and makes references to nuclear power. For instance, it stresses the importance to keep furthering nuclear decommissioning. It also mentions the Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan), which was approved at the EU level and which sets out the strategic priorities necessary to tackle the energetic and climate challenges of the future. The SET Plan emphasizes the importance to keep putting efforts into research and development towards, for instance, generation IV reactors.
- It is, therefore, important to find ways to make the Italian expertise available for Italy itself but also for the International Community. As research and development efforts on nuclear power go on at all levels, new opportunities could unfold. As Enrico Fermi, one of the founding fathers of nuclear

energy, once said, "it is no good to try to stop knowledge from going forward, for ignorance is never better than knowledge."

- Sustainability is going to be the word of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, for it is key to facing ever increasing energy needs of our planet. The rapid development of half of the humanity will result in a massive increase in energy demand. Therefore, all Nations should try and tackle this challenge by setting forth a sound and environmentally sustainable energy system. Innovative nuclear technologies can play a role to this end in all Countries that have decided to include nuclear power in their energy mix.
- Nuclear energy is, intrinsically, a carbon-free technology and is one of the means which are available to mitigate the various consequences stemming from the use of fossil fuels, such as carbon dioxide generation, greenhouse effects, air pollution, as well as waste resulting from ashes. Again, in Countries that have accepted the development of nuclear power, Innovative nuclear technologies could improve energy efficiency in the industrial, transportation and civil sectors. Together with renewable energy resources, they may contribute to the resolution of the various environmental issues, which today affect all Countries committed to the development of their economies.
- A more concrete approach needs to be adopted. We should start facing problems through a step-by-step approach aimed at solving them within common frameworks. This could be applied, for instance, to the problem of nuclear safety, an issue to which Italy attaches the utmost importance. In fact, even though Italy does not have its own nuclear power plants, its territory is exposed to the potential risks stemming from nuclear power stations operating in neighboring Countries. This is why Italy commends the IAEA role in this field and constantly advocates in favor of enhanced international cooperation on nuclear safety among governments, regulatory bodies and research institutions. It is essential that all States set high standards of safety and cooperate in decommissioning and waste management activities, for instance through regional and international repositories.
- Research and development programs should be encouraged and funded. In fact, they could unfold positive opportunities for the improvement of nuclear safety. Italy also follows with interest the research efforts for the development of generation IV nuclear facilities. It suffices to recall that generation IV reactors operate on closed cycle basis, have a more robust operation guarantee, and have longer periods for fuel reloading. They also produce less waste, increase efficiency in fuel consumption, and may be safer as far as capital investment is concerned. Therefore, they are of peculiar importance for developed and developing Countries.
- Another aspect of great importance is the improved harmonization of different laws and regulations as far as the problem of waste is concerned. This could help decrease costs and improve social acceptance if countries with small inventories were to choose the way of a deep regional repository, taking into account the possibilities offered by the recent European Directive.
- In a densely populated area like the EU, in which nuclear energy remains the first source of electric generation with 31 % of electric power, cooperation among regulatory bodies of the various Countries is of paramount relevance. All Institutions should be encouraged to cooperate, since the environment has no borders and the risk of migration of contamination should be under constant control.

- In conclusion, It should be recognized that nuclear safety is not only a scientific or technological issue. Every country should try and achieve a more robust governance through effective laws and regulations underpinning the creation and function of the Institutions involved in nuclear safety. Responsibilities should be clearly set forth and socio-political aspects not overlooked.
- Even Countries like Italy, which have decided to dismiss the production of nuclear energy, need to find ways to value innovative nuclear technologies in the future. The Italian expertise on nuclear power, stemming from a longstanding interest rooted in universities, research and development centers as well as in important private companies, is too precious to be wasted. The International Community should therefore make good use of it.

Thank you very much for your attention.