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**INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON  
NUCLEAR POWER IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

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Thank you, and good morning. I am honored to have this opportunity to address you and to join this panel of very distinguished experts. I will address the important topic of nuclear safety and reliability through international cooperation by sharing some insights and observations.

As a nuclear regulator, it is not my role to advocate for the commercial uses of nuclear energy. My agency, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or NRC, is an independent regulatory body that is responsible for regulating the safe and secure use of nuclear technology and materials; a role very separate from that of the United States Department of Energy, which is responsible for developing and promoting nuclear technologies.

Our national law, the Atomic Energy Act, directs the NRC to establish requirements for the use of nuclear and radioactive materials that will provide reasonable assurance of adequate protection of the public health and safety and common defense and security of the United States. The specific measures that the NRC chooses to use to meet this obligation are left principally to the agency's discretion.

The reasonable assurance standard acknowledges that the use of nuclear technology will always involve some degree of risk, and that the regulator must consider the degree of risk associated with each activity – with particularity – and recognize that its regulatory standards cannot be designed to eliminate risk entirely from those activities. Applying the reasonable assurance standard to both safety and security ensures that the inherent connection that exists between these two areas will work to maintain adequate protection in the most efficient and effective way.

For the United States, nuclear regulation is the public's business, and it must be transacted publicly and candidly. The public must be informed about, and have the opportunity to participate in, the regulatory process. Open channels of communication must be maintained with Congress, other

government agencies, the regulated community, and the public, as well as with the international nuclear community. Through open communications, the NRC seeks to build public confidence in how the agency carries out its safety and security mission.

The response of regulatory agencies to the nuclear accident in Japan remains under close scrutiny by citizens around the world. For the NRC's part, in the months following the accident, the Commission chartered a small, internal panel of its own staff – termed the Near-Term Task Force – to review NRC processes and regulations to determine whether the agency should make additional improvements to its regulatory system and to make recommendations to the Commission for its policy direction.

The task force concluded that “a sequence of events like the Fukushima accident is unlikely to occur in the United States and some appropriate mitigation measures have been implemented, reducing the likelihood of core damage and radiological releases. Therefore, continued operation and continued licensing activities do not pose an imminent risk to public health and safety.” At the same time, however, the NRC's assessment of insights from the events at Fukushima led us to conclude that additional requirements should be imposed on operators to increase the capability of nuclear power plants to mitigate the effects of beyond-design-basis extreme natural phenomena.

We expect to continue learning from the Fukushima accident as additional information becomes available in the coming years. Part of this expanded knowledge base will result from the agency's extensive engagement in international lessons-learned activities. As Director General Amano noted during the recent biennial meeting of the World Association of Nuclear Operators, held in Moscow, the industry is “beginning to put the accident behind [them] and is looking forward to the future.” In recognition of this, there is a need to normalize Japan lessons-learned activities at the national, bilateral, and multinational levels into existing regulatory frameworks and practices to better utilize resources and ensure that new insights are sustainable. The NRC is taking steps to achieve this integration, and to prioritize lessons-learned responses with other, ongoing matters no less important to safety, and in some cases, more so. As we learn more from the Fukushima accident and engage with the international community, we will continue to adapt our response to any new information.

The NRC also continues its international interactions in the area of new reactor development. Our Commission's Chairman serves as the chair of the Multinational Design Evaluation Program, an organization that strives to leverage the knowledge and resources of national regulatory authorities to improve the regulatory design reviews of new commercial power reactors. In addition, the NRC remains actively involved in multilateral initiatives through the International Atomic Energy Agency to assist new entrant nations in establishing the framework for and building the capacity of their regulatory systems. This is in addition to our continued bilateral assistance initiatives to promote a strong, independent regulatory structure in all countries that use nuclear power and radioactive materials.

Domestically, we continue to advance on all aspects of licensing reviews of several potential new nuclear power plants. Our construction oversight activities are now being carried out at two sites in the southeastern United States -- each site having two reactors under construction. We are also reviewing four applications for nuclear power reactor design certifications, as well as continuing reviews of requests for license renewal and requests to increase the power output of some operating nuclear power plants.

In addition, there is sustained interest in the United States in the potential to deploy small modular reactors. The United States Department of Energy has selected one small modular reactor design for which it is providing developmental funding. In recent years, the NRC has worked to put in place a regulatory infrastructure which will support licensing reviews of these unique small modular reactor designs. We expect to receive a request for certification of an SMR design, and begin review, as soon as next year.

In conclusion, the NRC continues to evaluate proposed further enhancements to our regulations where appropriate and in response to any new lessons-learned arising from the Fukushima accident, as well as other operating experience. We also continue to strengthen our close cooperation with international partners, in this and other areas. Through these efforts, we will share our knowledge regarding the most effective ways to ensure the continued safety and security of the general public while harnessing the benefits of nuclear technologies.

Thank you.