

Thank you Mr President and good morning

I am honoured to address this ENSREG Conference on Nuclear Safety. The IAEA and ENSREG share the common goal enhancing nuclear and radiation safety. The protection of people, society and the environment from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation is at the heart of the IAEA Department of Nuclear Safety and Security's work – this is very similar to ENSREG's goals.

While the prime responsibility for safety rests with licensees, regulators have a key role in ensuring nuclear and radiation safety. The roles of and dynamics between regulators and licensees are emphasised again and again in the IAEA safety standards and in our other publications. In addition, the IAEA Director General's 2015 report on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station accident highlighted that effective regulatory oversight of nuclear installation safety requires regulatory bodies that are **independent**, and possess **legal authority**, **technical competence** and a **strong safety culture**.

Regulators have a challenging but very important role. From my experience in Spain's regulatory body – el Consejo de Seguridad Nuclear - I know that working as a regulator is not always easy, but it is rewarding as it has a concrete outcome: the safe use of nuclear and radiation technologies to the benefit of our societies.

Let me call your attention to a document recently prepared by the IAEA; the Nuclear Safety Review 2017. A draft has been shared with IAEA Member States and the final version will become public through the IAEA website ahead of our General Conference in September. The document builds on lessons from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident and includes our priorities for strengthening nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, as well as

emergency preparedness and response for 2017 and beyond. I encourage you to read this review when it becomes available.

Now I would like to highlight some IAEA activities that are related to several sessions of the conference. I will first discuss radioactive waste management and then talk about IAEA work to support Member States in the safe long-term operation of their nuclear power plants.

Last month, the IAEA hosted an Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the *Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management*, or for short, the Joint Convention. The active participation in the meeting reflects the Joint Convention's contribution to the safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. The number of Contracting Parties has now reached 75, and to build on this momentum, the IAEA is acting to promote the Joint Convention as well as the Convention on Nuclear Safety. We recently met with several countries to promote adherence to both Conventions, and we are conducting further related activities.

In this context, let me also mention the 7th Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the *Convention on Nuclear Safety*, held in March and April in Vienna. I was encouraged that almost all Contracting Parties submitted country reports, and by the robust and active peer review process that took place at the meeting. This, combined with the meeting's detailed technical discussions and exchanges of information, made it an important event for nuclear safety.

Many of you and your colleagues have participated in IAEA peer reviews, either as review team members or as host country representatives. Peer reviews can be hard work and often require long hours with intense discussions -- but the

outcome makes up for any lost sleep: the independent and objective expert opinions and advice help improve safety, locally and globally. In this context, I want to highlight a new service that we call ARTEMIS – the full name is ‘Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation’. We have already received several requests for this service and the first mission is expected to be conducted in July in Italy. I encourage Member States to make use of this new type of review. The comprehensive nature of this review service makes it a suitable tool for IAEA Member States seeking to meet the obligations of the EU’s 2011 Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management Directive, which among other things requires that countries carry out self-assessments and invite international peer reviews at least every ten years.

Uranium legacy sites remain an issue for countries in Central Asia, but we are making good progress in developing strategic plans for their remediation. Together with experts from the countries concerned, we have developed a strategic master plan that shows a way forward in work needed to protect the public and the environment from the risks related to the legacy of uranium mining carried out from the 1950s to the 1990s. Through the IAEA’s Coordination Group for Uranium Legacy Sites, we cooperate closely with Central Asian countries, the State Atomic Energy Corporation ROSATOM of the Russian Federation, the European Commission and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Such cooperation is necessary for managing complex matters of this kind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

More than half of the world’s operating nuclear power plants are more than 30 years old. This has made long-term operation of these plants a topic of

increasing importance globally. Safe operation beyond the period of time that was originally planned is possible – there are many examples of this around the world. However, many challenges have to be overcome. The IAEA has supported its Member States in managing the ageing of nuclear power plants since the 1990s, and we have responded to growing demand by expanding our services in this field. Next year, we expect to release an updated safety guide on ageing management and long-term operation of nuclear power plants. This update of our 2009 guide complements our other resources on the topic.

Earlier this month, an IAEA-led team of experts concluded a peer review on the Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation at Unit 1 of China's Qinshan Nuclear Power Plant. This was the 31st review of this kind, known by its abbreviation SALTO. These reviews help operators check whether their safety preparations for entering into long-term operation are in line with the IAEA safety standards, and they help regulators deal with the unique challenges associated with long-term operation. SALTO is a significant contributor to nuclear power plant safety and I encourage Member States to make use of it.

Our database and documents on International Generic Ageing Lessons Learned complements the SALTO missions. The public database, launched in 2013, collects practices that have been proven to work in ageing management of nuclear power plants. It provides a searchable knowledge-base for ageing management with respect to different designs of new nuclear power plants, and the information it contains can serve as a technical basis for ageing management planning. Next year, we expect to publish a second Safety Report to provide an overview of ageing management lessons collected from the database – the first report of this kind was published in 2015.

At this point, I would like to note that we are glad to see increasing demand among Member States for our peer review services. To illustrate, we have received 25 requests for Integrated Regulatory Review Services, 15 for SALTO missions and 13 for Operational Safety Review Team services for the coming two years. This is a welcome development, and I would like to encourage your countries to contribute to these and our other peer review services by nominating experts to the review teams. Peer reviews are valuable not only for the institution reviewed, but also for the reviewers, as team members and hosts alike gain insights and knowledge. Our Peer Review and Advisory Services Committee is working to assess the overall structure, effectiveness and efficiency of these services, and we look forward to interacting with Member States at a technical meeting on the topic in late August.

To conclude, the IAEA can provide substantive support on a wide range of nuclear safety topics. We do this through our safety standards and other publications that are available online as well as through peer review and other services delivered upon request. Our conferences and meetings also foster cooperation and information exchange that contribute to nuclear safety. Let me mention just two examples: last year's International Conference on Effective Nuclear Regulatory Systems, and the International Conference on Topical Issues in Nuclear Installation Safety, which was held earlier this month and focused on the safety demonstration of advanced water-cooled nuclear power plants.

I encourage you to make active use of our support – the IAEA's safety work can only be effective when applied in practice, so you are crucial partners for us.

Thank you.