

**IAEA-UNECE-ECLAC-CYTED Workshop on UNFC 2009 Applications in Uranium
and Thorium Resources: Focus on Comprehensive Extraction
Santiago, Chile – 9-12 July 2013**

Statement by Dr. Jaime Salas Kurte, Executive Director of the
Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission

Distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission I would like to welcome you to Santiago, in occasion of this important workshop on UNFC 2009, applications in uranium and thorium resources: Focus on Comprehensive Extraction.

There is a greater consciousness today of the relevance of maintaining links and strengthening interactions in the area of atomic materials and, particularly, in the topic of resources and nuclear fuel, considering their relevant and many implications.

Almost 50 years ago, the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission was created, with the mission of addressing the challenges associated with the production, acquisition, transfer, transport and peaceful use of nuclear energy and of radioactive fissile and fertile materials.

One of the aims of CCHEN is to promote research and development of technologies in the field of peaceful applications of nuclear energy. As a country, within a global context, we understand the importance of implementing and expanding the beneficial uses of nuclear science and technologies, as part of our contribution to the Chilean society, in order to produce both social and economic impacts.

In these 50 years, the nuclear field in Chile has been very active and now we can see its impact in many areas of the society, in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, complemented by a wide range of isotopic techniques to address problems of water, mining, agriculture, environment and health throughout the human life cycle.

In order to accomplish this purpose, one of the most significant fields of action deals with our nuclear research

reactors, fuel development, and facilities utilization. Each of them plays an important role.

Our reactors have effectively responded to the challenge of creating and expanding the applications, operating for more than 30 years, showing the capabilities and motivation of our professionals and technicians involved in this effort.

In this context, one of our objectives is to conduct research and development on the characterization, procurement, processing and uses of natural atomic materials of nuclear interest and contribute to the evaluation of the technical and economic feasibility of their benefit.

For a long time, CCHEN has been involved in developing capabilities in fuel materials for research reactors. That is how at present, one of our research reactors, La Reina RECH-1, is loaded with LEU fuel fabricated at the nuclear fuel facility of CCHEN. This has even qualified us as a fuel exporter for research reactors.

Our R&D activities have included uranium mining, with hydrometallurgical processes and elemental chemical analysis, along with certain front stages of the fuel cycle of experimental reactors such as conversion of enriched uranium and fuel fabrication based on LEU.

Furthermore, Chile already has a legal cover for the exploitation of uranium. In fact, national law explicitly recognizes the importance of the mineral and gives it a strategic character. Under this quality, it is the state, represented by CCHEN, which has the first option, but at market prices and terms.

On the other hand, the applications on energy are one of the main contributions to society at a global scale.

We can understand that the accident of Fukushima Daiichi accident produced intense apprehension in the public and affected confidence in nuclear power. Although some had prophesied that nuclear power would go into decline, we can see that, as shown by the evidence, it will not occur.

On the contrary, nuclear power trend reflects a steady growth, although at a slower pace than the one we expected before the Fukushima Daiichi accident.

We know that some European countries have announced plans to move away from nuclear power. However, according to IAEA projections, with a current number of 437 operating nuclear power reactors in the world today, nuclear power would be increased significantly in the following two decades, considering the 66 new reactors under construction, mainly in India, China and Russia, countries that maintain significant expansion plans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This audience, related to uranium as a strategic resource, understands quite well the many benefits which nuclear power offers.

Nuclear power is a relevant actor on enhancing energy security. It can also decrease the influence of volatile fossil fuel prices and contribute significantly to mitigate the harmful effects of climate change. Its role on the development of economies is clear and therefore it can make a crucially important contribution to growth. Although a decision in our country has not been made, it is also true that the nuclear option has not been discarded as a potential contributor to our energy mix.

In this context, having the necessary knowledge and the actual resources are critical to the sustainability of nuclear industry.

In this workshop we will have discussions on UNFC–2009, addressed to the effective management of uranium and thorium resources, reporting and managing unconventional uranium resources and comprehensive extraction, exploration strategies for undiscovered resources of uranium, its use as a medium for social licensing and stakeholder communications and life-cycle management of uranium projects, amongst other topics. The integration of these discussions will constitute an excellent contribution to potential development.

I reiterate our welcome to our country. I would also like to wish you a very pleasant stay here in Chile and a productive and successful meeting.

Thank you very much.