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Statement

by

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Executive Secretary

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at

**IAEA Ministerial Segment: Nuclear Innovation for a Net Zero World
"Nuclear and Renewables for a Carbon-Neutral Future"**

Thursday, 4 November

16:00 to 18:00

IAEA Pavilion, Blue Zone, Hall 4

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Colleagues,

I am pleased to join you to discuss the role of nuclear energy in the transition to a net zero world. The question is both simple and complicated.
Let me start with simple.

We have been working with member States to explore how they can achieve their commitments under the Paris Agreement and their objectives with respect to the 2030 Agenda. The work we have done at UNECE has explored different scenarios of the future and the full spectrum of technology options. The results show clearly that we are not going to achieve the Paris Agreement and we will not deliver on the 2030 Agenda if nuclear power is excluded.
But let me continue with complicated.

Many countries consider nuclear energy to be a reliable, affordable and clean source of electricity that will help meet the global energy and climate challenge. Other countries have decided not to depend on nuclear energy because of various considerations. Either it's expensive, or they are worried about operational safety, or long-term radioactive waste management and disposal is a barrier, or some combination of those concerns.

Where does that leave us?

Nuclear energy makes an important contribution today. Interest in nuclear power is growing and several countries are progressing to construct their first nuclear plants. Other countries do not consider nuclear power to be part of a sustainable energy mix, and that is unlikely to change.

Interest is growing in new smaller-scale reactor technologies that can enable deeper decarbonization by making nuclear suitable for smaller financing structures as well as cogeneration and non-electric applications.

Responses to possible questions:

What is UNECE's views on the role that nuclear power can play alongside other low C technologies, to meet both the 2030 Agenda and the objectives of the Paris Agreement?

Each country has its own endowment of natural resources and its own cultural, legislative, and regulatory heritage. As a result, there is not one pathway that works for every country. Each will have to pursue the choices that make sense for their own people in their own context.

It is not up to UNECE to take a position on nuclear power since some countries pursue nuclear power while others choose not to use it. We can say that shutting down reactors or stopping development of new ones will make it harder to get to sustainability, whether you define sustainability as achieving environmental objectives or as achieving quality of life.

What are the main barriers to be addressed for nuclear energy to be able to fully contribute to these goals?

The keys to success can be found in the objections to nuclear power. First is cost. The world needs affordable, low carbon energy services. If the capital and operating costs of future generations of nuclear power are competitive, then nuclear power will have a role to play. Small modular reactors may well fit the bill and certainly merit consideration.

The second objection is in the risks of incidents or accidents. We consider that human and institutional factors have played an important role in nuclear power's performance, and those need to be addressed comprehensively. Ensuring safety and obtaining a social license to operate from the relevant communities is critical.

The third objection is management of long-term waste. Waste repositories must be identified, developed, and managed properly, and waste volumes need to be minimized.

Nuclear power has an important role to play in the future energy mix, but those countries who choose to pursue nuclear power must do so with these objections in mind and with workable solutions at hand.
