

ENSREG 28/06/17

VP Speech

Dear Conference President,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you today.

The fourth ENSREG conference is an important occasion for us to gather and discuss the opportunities and challenges related to nuclear energy.

I would like to thank in particular (the Conference President Mr) Petteri Tiippuna, and (ENSREG President Mr) Pierre-Franck Chevet for organising it.

This is an important milestone for our conference as we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Euratom Treaty.

Euratom has been an essential pillar for nuclear energy developments and, more broadly, for energy security in Europe.

This anniversary is an opportunity for celebration but also for an open and frank debate looking back at the past 60 years and ahead at the challenges we are facing.

Speaking of which, I am pleased to see that in recent years we have managed to widen the participation to this conference, also to non-EU countries representatives. This is crucial to have an open debate and more transparency on global safety standards and a level playing field.

A lot has happened since the previous ENSREG conference two years ago.

First we succeeded in the ratification of the Paris Agreement. And President Trump's decision to pull out of the Agreement has, if anything, comforted us in the resolve to lead the fight against global warming.

I was in China two weeks ago for Mission Innovation – an initiative of the world's major economies to invest in clean energy innovation – and I can tell you that the determination is unwavering. Under EU and China's leadership, we sent a strong signal that governments will continue to

take their responsibility towards future generations, and take decisive action.

In that spirit, the Commission also proposed an ambitious Clean Energy for all European Package at the end of last year.

(i) Today I will first say a few words on this package;

(ii) I will then outline the Commission's approach to nuclear energy, insisting on recent developments and future challenges.

[Clean Energy for All Europeans Package]

The signal is clear. With this and prior packages –which represent 90% of what we had announced two years ago, the EU is converting our political commitments (40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, 30% EE target, increase of RES consumption to at least 27%) into binding legislation.

With this package, the European Union is building a more efficient, decarbonised and integrated energy system.

This package includes a range of measures which are relevant for the nuclear sector.

First of all, we will ensure that the market provides clear investment signals and we bring more flexibility to the market. Therefore, prices should reflect the actual value of electricity at each point of time and location, setting price-signals for investments rather than subsidy-signals. By moving towards a more market based system we want to make it easier for investors to put their money where it makes economic sense.

In addition, we are establishing a common European framework for capacity remuneration mechanisms to back-up variable capacity generation from renewables. This will ensure investments towards the necessary capacity, while taking into account the capacities of neighbouring countries. Such mechanisms

should be in line with our long-term decarbonisation objectives.

This package of proposals is now being discussed by the co-legislators – the European Parliament and the EU Ministers. We agreed with the co-legislators that the Energy Union packages should be treated as a matter of priority (in line with the Joint Declaration signed last December by the three Presidents) and we are working hard to that end.

[Commission's approach to nuclear energy, recent developments]

Now, more specifically on nuclear security, safety, radioactive waste / spent fuels and investment needs.

[Nuclear and energy security]

As you know, and this is also reflected in our package, energy **security** is a key dimension of the Energy Union. Nuclear energy also has a role to play in this respect. And for Member States which

choose to make use of it, it represents a reliable source of low-carbon emissions energy.

[Nuclear safety]

As you very well know, public perceptions and national preferences regarding nuclear energy vary greatly across EU countries.

The Commission's role is of course not to intervene in the Member States' energy mix. Our priority is to ensure that nuclear energy is used only with the highest standards of safety, (radiation protection for workers and citizens, a responsible management of radioactive waste and a reliable safeguards regime that ensures that nuclear material is not diverted from its intended use).

In the aftermath of Fukushima in March 2011, major steps were taken at EU level to improve our legally binding framework on nuclear safety. Our stress tests recommendations were and continue to be monitored by ENSREG for their implementation. The amended Nuclear

Safety Directive adopted by the Council in July 2014 is expected to be transposed into national laws by August this year.

This Directive introduces a high-level EU-wide safety objective to prevent accidents and avoid radioactive releases; (it sets up a European system of peer reviews on safety issues; it further strengthens the independence of national regulatory authorities; it increases transparency on nuclear safety; it regulates on-site emergency preparedness and response; and it promotes an effective nuclear safety culture.)

I know ENSREG will play a crucial role in the implementation of the Nuclear Safety Directive, in particular by providing guidance on achieving the practical improvements called for by the nuclear safety objective.

ENSREG is also fully involved in the on-going first topical peer review exercise, carried out under the Directive, covering the 'Ageing management of nuclear power plants'.

I am very pleased to note the pro-active approach taken by the Member States in this regard and I would like to thank ENSREG and WENRA¹ for their work on the Terms of Reference and Technical Specifications.

This makes the peer review process fully transparent to reinforce citizens' confidence.

I would also like to praise the advice provided by ENSREG over the recent years and its active role in cooperating with neighbourhood country regulators.

The cooperation is excellent.

On [Investment needs]

These investments are needed in the relevant Member States to i) to keep the EU nuclear power plants fleet safe in particular in the context of the long term operation and ii) to gradually replace the current nuclear generation capacity.

¹ WENRA: The Association of Regulators of Western Europe

The Nuclear Illustrative Programme (or PINC) published on 12 May gives a transparent overview of the magnitude of these investments.

The Commission has estimated that, on the basis of Member State plans, between 660 and 770 billion euros will need to be invested in the nuclear sector by 2050. To improve safety, ensure Long Term Operations when necessary and appropriate and finance new investments when so decided.

260 billion euros alone will be needed for financing the back-end activities of the nuclear fuel cycle, such as decommissioning, radioactive waste and spent fuel management as well as the construction of deep geological disposal facilities.

The Commission will closely follow those investments and deliver its opinion in line with the Euratom Article 41 notification procedure.

These investments represent an important economic and industrial opportunity for

Europe. To seize this opportunity we propose to work more closely on licensing and standardisation.

While the licensing process falls under the competence of each national safety regulator, ENSREG should be able to develop a shared view on when specific designs or equipment are considered to be safe except for site specific factors.

By standardising elements of our supply chain, efficiencies and cost-saving opportunities can also be explored. Supply bottlenecks that could affect safety could be reduced and overall safety levels could be increased.

[Radioactive waste and spent fuel management]

With its advanced regulatory framework and technological leadership, the EU is seen as a world leader in the field of responsible management of radioactive waste and spent fuel.

The first Commission report on the implementation of the Radioactive Waste Directive (adopted on 15 May 2017) provides a clear picture and highlights important areas where further attention is required.

We must not compromise - the safe and responsible management of spent fuel and radioactive waste is of utmost importance, especially now that many nuclear power reactors are reaching the end of their operational life and will need to be decommissioned.

We are at a crossroads.

Decisions are needed now so as not to transfer the burden to future generations. We must in particular incorporate waste management considerations more closely into the design of the fuel cycle and support this with a strong R&D program to enable full integration of fuel cycle and waste management decisions.

I expect this issue to be discussed in detail in the next session where Gerassimos Thomas should provide the Commission's

overall assessment and outline the next steps.

[Conclusion]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me close now by repeating that the EU remains firmly committed to the clean energy transition and to reinforcing energy security. But also to enhancing the competitiveness of our industry and SMEs.

Some Member States have chosen to make nuclear energy part of their strategy and energy mix, others have not, and we in the Commission respect both approaches.

Our ambition is to ensure the highest possible level of nuclear safety, cooperation, and transparency among the members of the nuclear community. Today's conference is key to support the open approach that is at the heart of our nuclear policy, all the more so as we celebrate Euratom treaty 60th anniversary.

Let me wish you a full success in your discussions in the next two days.

Thank you.