

## **BRIEFING FOR COMMISSIONER KADRI SIMSON**

### **OPENING VIDEO MESSAGE AT THE ENSREG CONFERENCE**

**20 JUNE 2022**

#### **OPENING SPEECH**

- Ladies and gentlemen,
- Thank you very much for the invitation to speak at this opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> European Nuclear Safety Conference.
- Since ENSREG's creation in 2007, the biennial conferences have become an essential event in the international nuclear safety landscape. Even though this edition has been postponed since last year due to the pandemic, we all know very well how much nuclear safety has been in the spotlight – in the EU and beyond.

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- Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine has led to many changes in our perception of the world. Not only about our relations with Russia, but also with regard to our energy security and – equally importantly – nuclear safety.
- We have witnessed unthinkable attacks on nuclear facilities in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, and even on an operating nuclear power plant, the one in Zaporizhzhya, also the largest in Europe.
- This has raised severe public concerns about nuclear safety and security, at an unprecedented level.
- The situation in Ukraine is a central topic also for this conference. And I would like to warmly welcome the Ukrainian regulator and its staff here today. It allows me to personally thank them for their

dedication to their work, despite the difficulties they are facing as a result of the war.

- In this context, I must also express my sincere thanks to all ENSREG members who have held several emergency meetings after the Russian attacks and occupation of Chornobyl and Zaporizhzhya sites. This work has been true to your commitment to the highest level of nuclear safety, and will continue over the months to come.
- The Commission has already provided significant immediate assistance to Ukraine in the field of nuclear safety in the past two months – through our dedicated instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation, and Commission's civil protection and humanitarian aid services (DG ECHO). And we will continue to strongly support Ukraine.
- We are also working closely with ENSREG, providing regulatory and practical support to the Ukrainian regulator. Nuclear safety in times of military conflict is a new subject for ENSREG and national regulators in all countries, and one that deserves our full attention.
- I also welcome the relentless efforts of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its Director General Rafael Grossi, seeking to re-establish full control over the safety, security and safeguards of all facilities in Ukraine. I thank him for leading IAEA expert missions to Ukraine, and continue to support the IAEA in all these efforts.

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- In these turbulent times, we have also radically redefined our approach towards the security of energy supply. In May, the Commission has made a proposal to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030, starting with gas. The

REPowerEU Plan acknowledges the role of nuclear energy, while also flagging the importance of security of supply for nuclear fuel.

- Today, our effort to ensure alternative fuel supplies must also end the dependency on Russian fuel for Russian-design reactors.

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- In this complex situation, coupled with rising energy prices, we have seen some renewed interest in some Member States in nuclear energy while others are planning to phase out. It is very important to continue exchanges on the critical role of nuclear safety, as this is a truly shared interest and priority.
- We have enshrined in our legislation the principle of continuous improvement of nuclear safety, and called for significant safety enhancements in the design of new reactors in line with the latest international standards. In other words, we have a common Nuclear Safety Objective.

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- But nuclear safety does not stop at the EU borders. We must ensure that the highest possible safety standards are followed globally, in particular by our neighbours.
- ENSREG has been doing this by supporting their participation in the EU stress tests and peer reviews. Already six non-EU countries have engaged – the Turkish nuclear power plant under construction being the most recent case where the cooperation of regulators gives us an extra assurance.
- The Commission will also continue to support many third countries through our dedicated EU instrument (for nuclear safety cooperation).

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- Last, but definitely not the least, the Commission and ENSREG are working towards safe nuclear technology for the future. We rely on research and innovation, aiming at safer and cleaner nuclear technologies, such as Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- One key element of the successful deployment of SMRs in or outside of the EU would be the possibility for a uniform design, guaranteeing safe deployment in a variety of local conditions.
- Licensing will therefore be a key issue for the rollout of SMRs. ENSREG has a clear role looking at these issues and participating in the preparation of the EU SMR Partnership.
- The Commission is following closely this workstream and we look forward to all suggestions on how to support the development of SMRs.

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- Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we live in uncertain times. But we have the benefit of each other's support to face the current and future challenges.
- Nuclear safety and security are paramount – today more so than ever. I am certain that your exchanges in the coming two days will consolidate our efforts.
- Thank you.