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Opening Remarks
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and
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Director General Yukiya Amano,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, may I welcome you all to the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security. I am particularly honored to serve as President of this Conference at this critical juncture in nuclear security, which coincides with the 60th anniversary of the establishment of this great organization.

Let me also express my gratitude to the Co-Chairs of the Open-ended Working Group on the Ministerial Declaration, Ambassador Song Young-wan of the Republic of Korea and Ambassador Abel Ayoko of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for their dedicated work.

This Conference marks a new beginning following four Nuclear Security Summits in three capitals - Washington D.C., Seoul and the Hague - which brought the issue into the limelight. Through concerted efforts and commitments at the highest level, the Nuclear Security Summits brought significant progress in strengthening nuclear security. Now it is up to us, IAEA Member States, to lead the way. Entrusted with a mission to “accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world,” the IAEA should take the helm of global nuclear security efforts based on its decades of experience.

Certainly, the challenges before us are daunting. Starting from Al Qaeda's plans to attack nuclear power plants in the U.S. to the arrest of smugglers attempting to sell cesium to ISIS last year in Moldova, to the latest attempt by ISIS to breach a nuclear facility in Brussels this March, the threat of nuclear terrorism is more palpable than ever before. That is not all. In Korea two years ago, we experienced intense cyber attacks on our nuclear facilities from North Korea. Under these circumstances, this Conference could not have come at a better moment. I hope we will seize this opportunity to contribute to nuclear security in three different ways.

First, we must come together to forge a global partnership on nuclear security among all IAEA Member States. This may be a challenge in view of the differences among Member States in terms of the amount of nuclear material as well as relevant capacities each possesses. Yet this Conference is well-poised to provide an inclusive venue for bringing on board diverse experiences and perspectives. For example, the consultation process on the Ministerial Declaration over the past year gave Member States an excellent opportunity for sustained interactions with each other. As such, this triennial Conference should serve as the highest platform for strengthening nuclear security in keeping with the spirit of Vienna: the sense of innovation, creativity and consensus.

Second, we should make every effort to deliver timely and concrete outcomes. Given the many daunting challenges facing us, this is no time for complacency. We are fortunate to be living in a world that has not yet known the nightmare of nuclear terrorism. But it would be ill-advised for us to wait until such an incident occurs. We must take proactive steps today to avoid a catastrophe tomorrow. In this regard, the title of this year's Conference - "Commitments and Actions" – could not be more appropriate. I believe our shared commitments to strengthen nuclear security, as expressed in the Ministerial Declaration to be formally adopted later this afternoon, will be translated into actions.

For one, our discussions here at this Conference will provide a good reference for the IAEA's 2018-2021 Nuclear Security Plan. We could also build upon the many achievements of various international organizations and initiatives, such as

the UN, INTERPOL, GICNT, the Global Partnership and, among others, the Nuclear Security Summit process. In this connection, in supporting the IAEA, I believe relevant Member States may wish to introduce “gift baskets” that were announced at the Nuclear Security Summits and invite others to join them.

Third, this Conference should lay the groundwork for an enduring nuclear security architecture based on international norms. The Amended CPPNM which entered into force this May, along with ICSANT, are key building blocks. UN Security Council resolution 1540 is another milestone in nuclear security. At its tenth anniversary in 2014, I presided over the Security Council open debate which emphasized the importance of better implementation of the resolution.

Such high-level conferences, including this IAEA Conference, are important venues to promote universal adherence to and implementation of these instruments. I would call on all Member States to consider joining the Amended CPPNM and ICSANT at an early date and to fully implement resolution 1540. The IAEA, for its part, could support relevant capacity building for Member States.

Distinguished delegates,

Since 9/11, a possible nexus between terrorism and WMD has been viewed as one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. In recent years, the threat has become all the more pressing with the rise of a new breed of terrorists like ISIS. Imagine terrorist groups and violent extremists joining hands with proliferators. It could annul decades of efforts to strengthen global nuclear security.

Determined terrorists will stop at nothing to acquire nuclear materials and technology. And from my standpoint as the head of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I imagine that a desperate, cash-stripped country like North Korea could well be a willing supplier. Given its track record in illicit arms trade and smuggling, the possibility of illicit transfer of nuclear materials or technology cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, while countries around the world are working to confront, reduce and eliminate nuclear material, North Korea has adamantly insisted on taking the opposite course. Worse still, as North Korea has refused all IAEA safeguards and inspection since 2009, the quantity and state of management of its nuclear materials remain in obscurity.

As such, North Korea's nuclear program is a source of grave concern not only in terms of nonproliferation but also nuclear security. The denuclearization of North Korea is therefore a quintessential task for enhancing nuclear security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

Unfortunately, decades of global efforts to build a peaceful nuclear governance based on the NPT, CTBT, UN Security Council resolutions and international norms have been shattered repeatedly by North Korea.

It is with this sense of urgency and gravity that the UN Security Council unanimously adopted another milestone resolution 2321 just last Wednesday in addition to resolution 2270 adopted in March. This reflects the international community's unwavering resolve that it will not tolerate North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear program. In this regard, I welcome the strongest-ever IAEA resolution on North Korea that was adopted at this year's General Conference, condemning North Korea's nuclear tests "in the strongest terms."

Distinguished delegates,

Finally, I would like to emphasize that we must sustain efforts and ambition to build a more robust and comprehensive nuclear security architecture. The vast potential of nuclear technology to enhance human life will not be realized unless we work tirelessly to stop its malicious use.

Fortunately, we do not have to start from scratch. The IAEA is uniquely situated to assist States in their efforts to establish effective and sustainable national nuclear security frameworks, including through the development of guidelines, advisory services and capacity building.

The Republic of Korea will remain steadfast in its support of the IAEA and its core activities through the Nuclear Security Fund and other contributions. I hope that other Member States will join these efforts as well.

As the saying goes, “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.” International cooperation is therefore key to strengthening nuclear security. This is why your insight and input into today’s discussion will be instrumental. I count on your vision and wisdom. Thank you very much. With these remarks, I now open the IAEA’s International Conference on Nuclear Security. /END/