

Statement by Tae-Seog Oh

The 1st Vice Minister of Ministry of Science and ICT
Korea, Republic of
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Madam President,
Director-General, Excellencies,
and Distinguished Delegates of Member States,

I am pleased that the Ministerial Conference is being held today, in an endeavor to continue our discussions on the role of nuclear power in the 21st century, despite the prolonged pandemic situation.

It is also a great honor to present the Republic of Korea's policy on nuclear energy on behalf of the Korean government at today's conference.

Following the crisis caused by the pandemic and climate change, there has been growing instability in the global energy supply chain due to the protracted crisis in Ukraine. In response, many countries are redefining the role of nuclear energy not only as a means of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 but also as a realistic solution to energy independence.

Given the current situation where nuclear energy is an integral part of energy supply and demand planning for the future, it is necessary to expand the use of nuclear power as a safer and cleaner energy source through close international cooperation.

Against this backdrop, we are confident that this Ministerial Conference is being held at a very opportune time.

With its inauguration in May 2022, the new government of Korea presented a new vision and policy on nuclear energy.

The new government recognizes the importance of nuclear power generation, and will actively utilize nuclear power plants as a means of achieving energy security and carbon neutrality, while harmonizing them with renewable energy sources.

First, we will promptly resume the construction of new nuclear power plants and continue to operate existing ones while ensuring their safety, thereby increasing the share of nuclear power in the energy mix from 27.4% last year to over 30% by 2030.

To this end, the Korean government is focusing on establishing a comprehensive support system, encompassing finance, R&D funding, and fostering of professionals, to help businesses as key players in the nuclear power supply chain.

The Korean government will continue to share with the international community its experience in commercializing APR-1400, the country's advanced nuclear reactor model, which has been proven to be successful through the Barakah project in the UAE.

Korea is capable of successfully constructing nuclear power plants wherever needed around the world based on its APR-1400 technology, expertise in safety management, and “On-time, On-budget” construction and operation capabilities.

These efforts by the Korean government will contribute not only to achieving Korea's NDC goals but also to guiding the international community toward clean and sustainable growth.

Korea is also dedicated to developing innovative nuclear technology for the future while achieving the uttermost level of safety, a top priority for nuclear power to coexist with other clean energy sources.

In an effort to meet the increased public demand for safety and respond to the growing risk of climate change impacts, the Korean government commenced a project this year to advance the safety-related technologies of nuclear power plants in operation with ICT solutions.

We have also included nuclear energy activities in the K-Taxonomy and will promote investment for a cleaner future and sustainable growth. Based on our experience of developing SMART, the first SMR in Korea, we are developing a new SMR called i-SMR with an innovative technology as well as focusing on securing Generation IV reactor technologies, such as VHTR, SFR, and MSR.

We have also been engaging in the development of Accident Tolerant Fuel (ATF) for use in commercial nuclear power plants.

For nuclear energy to serve as a sustainable energy source, radioactive waste issues need to be addressed. To this end, the Korean government has been devising various measures based on the lessons learned from the long-standing conflicts related to high-level radioactive waste.

First, the social consensus-building process has been greatly strengthened to reflect the diverse interests of different stakeholders and secure public trust, including by requiring a referendum for selecting a site for a high-level radioactive waste repository.

By the end of this year, we will also develop and establish an R&D technology roadmap for high-level radioactive waste to speed up the acquisition of core technologies.

We are also planning to enact special laws and establish dedicated organizations to achieve progress in this area.

In the process, we will cooperate more closely with the leading countries and international organizations.

The recent situation in Ukraine proves how important the IAEA's role and international cooperation are, for the peaceful use of nuclear power. North Korea's growing nuclear and missile threats are posing a significant threat to peace and security on the Korean peninsula and around the world. The Korean government will further strengthen cooperation with the IAEA and the international community for the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

The Korean government will participate in the efforts of the international community to lay the groundwork for peaceful use of nuclear energy, including nuclear safety, non-proliferation, and energy security.

At the same time, I hope that more opportunities will be created for Korea to cooperate with the IAEA, Member States, and the international community, thereby creating a safer, cleaner, and better future for all.

Once again, I sincerely welcome the successful hosting of the Ministerial Conference, and I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the officials of the U.S. Government and the IAEA Secretariat for their hard work in making this conference a success.