

52nd JAIF Annual Conference

Opening Remarks by Chairman Imai

April 3, 2019

(Introduction)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. As Chairman of the Japan Atomic Industrial Forum, it is my sincere pleasure to make a few remarks at the outset of this year's annual conference, our 52nd.

(Current status of Fukushima Daiichi, and the revival of Fukushima)

A good eight years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. At Unit-3 of the station, preparatory work is proceeding, toward removing fuel assemblies from the spent fuel pool in the safest possible manner. At Unit-2, a specially developed robot recently made direct physical contact with debris. This, too, was significant progress. We are confident that decommissioning will continue smoothly and safely.

Concerning the revival of Fukushima Prefecture, decontamination and infrastructure development are proceeding in special reconstruction and revitalization areas. This is all toward the ultimate goal of helping victims of the disaster to rebuild their lives. Tomorrow, on April 10, an evacuation order will be lifted in part of Okuma Town. I think everyone involved shares the joy of this development. Yet many issues remain. One is the need to eliminate prejudice against products from Fukushima as a result of fears of radiation and groundless harmful rumors.

The nuclear industry must continue its concerted efforts toward the full recovery and revival of Fukushima Prefecture.

(Combating climate change, Nuclear roles, Enhancing social acceptability)

Last year the world saw a stunning range of unusual weather, changes in weather patterns, and climate effects. In Japan, we experienced natural disasters due to localized torrential rain, typhoons and other phenomena. A large-scale blackout was also caused. There is no time left if we are to successfully tackle global warming and climate change.

Japan is committed to an energy mix by the year 2030 in which sources emitting *zero* greenhouse gases make up at least 44% of the total. Japan has pledged to cut its own greenhouse-gas emissions by 26% from the 2013 level, by 2030. By 2050, its goal is an 80% reduction. Efficient deployment of

nuclear power is essential in order for Japan to meet each of these international commitments.

For Japan to achieve its target of a 20 to 22% nuclear share in generated electricity by 2030, about 30 nuclear power plants will have to be in operation. Since the shutdowns after the accident, only nine reactors—all PWRs—have returned to the grid. No BWRs have yet been restarted. Both strongly need to be restarted at the earliest possible times. Lifetime extensions for existing units should also be put on the agenda toward 2030. Toward the targets for 2050, early initiatives on new builds and replacements are hoped for, given the long lead times from planning to operation that nuclear construction entails.

Nuclear generation is a powerful tool for combatting global warming. Employing it efficiently means rising to additional challenges as well. Early establishment of the nuclear fuel cycle is a must for efficient use of resources. This in turn requires reducing the volumes and toxicity of radioactive waste. To that end, steady preparations for the scheduled commissioning of the Rokkasho nuclear fuel reprocessing plant are necessary. Meanwhile, the international community has been communicating its concerns about Japan's plutonium holdings. Steady plutonium burning in thermal reactors—Pu-thermal—through expedited restarts of existing nuclear units is a good approach to eliminating such concerns by reducing plutonium amounts on hand.

The siting issue for high level radioactive waste disposal is another challenge, and one for the current generation to resolve—we who have enjoyed the benefits of nuclear power for so long. I can only hope for deepened collaboration among the nuclear industries and progress in the activities of the government and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NUMO).

Ladies and gentlemen, public understanding, especially the understanding of local people in siting areas, is crucial for the nuclear power industry. The unfortunate truth is that public trust—despite our best efforts since the accident to regain it—has recovered little if at all. Multiple surveys and people themselves tell us this. What is important is that we persevere — continue our efforts, step by step—*explaining* backend issues; *explaining* the long-term value of nuclear power. Diligently. Patiently.

(Nuclear safety improvement)

It goes without saying that in building public trust, nothing comes before safety. Last year, the Atomic Energy Association (ATENA) was established with the mission of raising the level of nuclear safety. The Association aims

at autonomous, sustained efforts integrated by the nuclear industry. Let me strongly hope the Association effectively utilizes the knowledge and resources of the entire nuclear industry, *and* executes strong leadership to ensure even higher levels of safety. Let me also hope the Association engages in continuing dialogue with the regulators toward formulating effective safety measures. The nuclear industry should support the Association's activities in every respect.

(Human resource development, All aboard for international collaboration)
High quality supply chain and human resource development—on-going development—is another area critical to the survival of the nuclear industry. Without it, there could be no assurances of high quality products in the supply chain or continued safe operations over the long term. How, then, do we make nuclear careers appealing to young people? To that end, collaboration among the industry, government and academia is called for. Clear identification of a positive nuclear vision; opportunities to innovate and participate in inspiring projects; the chance fulfill one's own potential – *to make a difference* – and other attractive messages, are needed.

Globally, international collaboration is fast becoming a focus for innovation, including work on next generation reactors. Japan cannot afford to miss this boat. “All aboard!” for international collaboration.

(Towards the future)

Finally, nuclear energy is more than power generation. In September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the world. In it, applications for radiation were deemed indispensable technologies.

“Tapping the full potential of nuclear energy” is the theme of this Annual Conference. I hope vigorous, fruitful discussions will follow on a range of topics, beyond and certainly not limited to electricity generation.

Let me express my heartfelt gratitude to all the distinguished speakers who will be taking the podium later, and to all participants from Japan and abroad for taking the time to assemble here for these discussions.

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