



MINISTRE DELEGUE À L'INDUSTRIE

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## **Nuclear Power for the 21st Century Conference**

### **Press conference**

**by Mr. Patrick Devedjian,  
Minister Delegate for Industry  
Monday, 21 March 2005**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here, together with Mr. Mohammed El Baradei, Director General of the **International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA**, and Mr. Luis Echavarri, Director General of the **Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the OECD**.

This is an opportunity for us to present the conference on Nuclear Power for the 21st Century. After the talks by Messrs El Baradei and Echavarri, we will be at your disposal to answer questions.

This conference - entitled " Nuclear Power for the 21st Century" - was organized at the initiative of the **IAEA** with the support of the **OECD** and its **Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA)**.

It is no accident that France was asked and agreed to host this conference, since it **opted** many years ago **for nuclear power**.

Looking beyond the French borders, however, energy issues are obviously a **critical concern** for the well-being of the entire world population, as witness the presence here today of 28 ministers, 74 delegations from countries representing **every region of the world** and 10 international organizations.

At a time when many countries want **adequate, inexpensive** energy production sources, I consider it essential for us to be able to **exchange our views** and concerns and of course to express the sentiment of our fellow citizens.

The idea here is not to promote nuclear energy for all needs in all area of the world but rather to **review the role of this source of energy**.

The comparison of experiences and discussions between experts from different countries can **help** us accomplish our mission.

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This is the objective of the international conference held today and tomorrow, during which country **presentations** on national solutions alternate with **roundtables of international experts**, whose debates are intended to enrich our analysis.

We shoulder a **heavy** responsibility and the issue is **complex**. It is our duty to make sure our countries have **enough** energy for the next 10 to 20 or even 50 years. We want this energy to be **accessible for everyone** at a price which does not hamper economic growth.

But our responsibility **does not stop** at our borders, particularly because the externalities connected with energy production, particularly **greenhouse gas emissions**, transcend our borders.

Certain energies – known as renewable energies - are **inexhaustible** and need to be exploited to their maximum potential. We must also **continue research** in all areas permitting the production of energy, particularly electricity, without greenhouse gas emissions.

Lastly, we need to develop the most appropriate framework for the use of nuclear power. **Safety** and **security** are vital issues and need to be controlled. I am not forgetting key decommissioning and **radioactive waste management** issues.

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In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about **France's energy policy and the role of nuclear power in France**. France has limited natural energy sources. Its vulnerability became acutely obvious during the oil shocks in the seventies, which prompted it to launch a major nuclear program. Thanks to this initiative, **nuclear power now accounts for the lion's share of power production (78%)**, followed by hydro power, which accounts for a significant 12%.

This program has given us an **energy independence rate of 50%**, up from 26% in 1973. In 2004, the use of nuclear power allowed France to save 36 million tonnes of carbon, or **one-third** of annual carbon emissions.

France's installed base of reactors is still young (on average 19 years old). However, **we are already preparing for the future**.

Following the **national energy debate** in 2003, which concluded inter alia that nuclear power plays a key role in the French energy mix, the French government proposed an energy bill based upon four indissociable priorities:

- **Rekindling energy control efforts;**
- **Keeping the nuclear option open** with the launch of the European Pressurized water Reactor (EPR), a joint French-German project;
- **Developing renewable energies** such as wind energy and biofuels;
- **Breathing new life** in research into new energy technologies.

In addition to this bill the **Climate Plan** published in July 2004 contains measures for all economic sectors and for households in order to save almost **15 million tonnes of carbon equivalent** a year out to 2010.

France has therefore decided to build a **3rd-generation demonstration reactor**, the EPR, in order to obtain the data needed to base preparations for the 2020 deadline on an informed choice. In 2004, the Board of Directors of EDF, France's electricity utility, approved the construction of this reactor in Flamanville. Presented to the National Commission for Public Debates (*Commission Nationale du Débat Public* - CNDP) in late-2004, the construction of this reactor will be the subject of a **national debate**.

But we need to prepare for an even remoter future. France is therefore a member of **Generation IV**, an international forum organized to develop future nuclear systems which could be available by 2040, and participates in ITER, a project with an even further horizon set up to explore controlled thermonuclear fusion.

France further supports its nuclear energy choices with a **broader analysis of the conditions under which nuclear power must be developed**.

France is moreover committed to finding **management solutions for high-level long-lived radioactive waste**. France is reviewing its entire nuclear strategy under the so-called Bataille Act, adopted in 1991. As part of this process, the government will present Parliament in 2006 with the combined results of fifteen years of scientific research and democratic dialogue.

Our will to make the most of our experience, particularly in the area of nuclear safety, has prompted us to forge **bilateral cooperation programs** with many countries wishing to develop a civilian nuclear industry.

France wishes to **discuss the global energy challenges** ahead with anyone who wants to do so in a spirit of **frank and open exchange**. I hope that this conference will set an example and will allow all of us to improve our understanding of the role of nuclear power in the 21st century.

I would now like to give the floor to Mr. Mohammed El Baradei, Director General of the IAEA.

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