

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you and deliver the opening address on the occasion of the 4th OECD/NEA International Information Exchange Meeting on Actinide and Fission Product Partitioning and Transmutation.

Nowadays, nuclear power has become a very important energy source and accounts for about 17 % of gross electric power in the world. From the view point of stable energy supply in the future, it is strongly expected that nuclear energy could play a more important role as a reliable energy source on a large scale, once we overcome the basic problems, such as technical and economical difficulties.

Because of plentiful oil production and of low oil prices thereof, people have tended to use oil as if it is an inexhaustible resource. But oil and other fossil fuels are not only for energy but are also as raw materials for various essential products of daily uses. Increase in consumption of fossil fuels is believed to cause global warming, which is one of those global environmental problems to be resolved urgently. Nuclear energy is able to cope with these global problems. The success of nuclear energy use will greatly influence global society in the 21st Century.

For these reasons, Japan intends to guarantee its energy security by carrying forward research and development efforts for commercial implementation of nuclear fuel cycle which includes secure supply of uranium resources, Pu utilization and radioactive waste disposal. For the matured nuclear fuel cycle, the establishment of ways of appropriate management and disposal of radioactive waste, especially high-level radioactive waste, is one of the most important tasks.

Therefore, Japan is implementing significant research and development efforts for realization of consistent high-level radioactive waste disposal measures. In 1995, in order to proceed systematically with high-level radioactive waste management and to promote understanding on the part of Japanese Public for implementing the high-level radioactive waste disposal, the Atomic Energy Commission set up a round table conference for

discussing social and economic aspects of disposal. In the same year, the Advisory Committee on fuel cycle backed management was also set up for reviewing and deliberating on planning and technical issues of research and development of high-level radioactive waste disposal.

At the same time, Partitioning and Transmutation is deemed in Japan to be quite an interesting subject from the perspectives of potential utilization of resources and possible alleviation of environmental burden caused by long-lived radioactive waste. The R&D program is jointly carried out by the collaborative efforts of relevant organizations.

Partitioning and Transmutation is one of the options for processing high-level radioactive waste before final disposal. Significant efforts are needed to implement this concept. I believe this information exchange meeting is very useful for international collaboration in pursuing efficient R&D.

I am also a strong supporter of basic research. This type of work must continue at all times because policy changes can occur in the future and basic research has a long lead time. It is not inconceivable that our study of, for instance, star formation and nucleosynthesis can give us insight into better and novel methods of transmutation which can, in turn, help solve the problems of high-level radioactive wastes.

Therefore, it is a great pleasure and pride for us to host the 4-th OECD/NEA Information Exchange Meeting in Japan.

I would like to conclude the opening address hoping fruitful discussions and also for the promotion of nuclear energy developments in each country of the participants.