# WELCOME ADDRESS

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you at our Belgian nuclear research centre in Mol for the Fifth International Information Exchange Meeting on Actinide and Fission Product Partitioning and Transmutation organised by the Nuclear Energy Agency of OECD and the European Commission.

The concept of partitioning and transmutation is emerging since some years as a logical result of the application of a commonly accepted ethical principle.

Those who enjoyed the benefits of nuclear energy have to ensure that no risk will be transferred to future generations. In addition, a more developed fuel cycle might extract more energy per unit of initial mass of fuel, preserving as much as possible natural resources.

Each alternative that might help to optimise energy production and its associated waste management deserves to be fully considered by our research programmes.

Research on partitioning and transmutation is rather seductive to all of us. It requires new reprocessing techniques, new fuel developments, additional nuclear data, new reactors and irradiation facilities, new waste treatment and disposal concepts, and specific safety studies. The global nuclear scientific and engineering community is challenged by this opportunity.

Here at SCK•CEN we are also looking forward to fuel and materials testing in the BR2-reactor, code validations in VENUS and last but not least, to the design and the construction of a pilot Accelerator Driven System.

Everybody realises however that this voyage to the promised land will pass a desert with a lot of mountains and that we are not so sure that the horizon will be as bright as one can hope. On one hand, investments in reprocessing plants and fast reactors are going against the current of today's nuclear policies in many countries. Moreover the return of those investments will only become apparent within several decades, by a reduction of an already small potential impact of disposed long-living waste. On the other hand, the demonstration of the technical feasibility of several theoretical options will still require important research activities and technological developments.

Successes of the P&T technology will only be possible, if the associated research will be supported by a systematic optimisation of the use of resources. National decisions on future fuel cycles will also require an international consensus on comparative risk assessments, allowing for instance an objective trade-off between potential climate changes and waste disposal risks.

In this context I want to congratulate the work of the P&T working group steering committee of NEA for the status and assessment report that will be presented at this information exchange meeting. Those international review activities will allow to consolidate gradually the conclusions of research and to draft a new menu of relevant work for the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that your discussions here in Mol will allow you to make the point of the present status of actinide and fission product partitioning and transmutation and give the onset for the next step to internationally concerted actions.

I want to thank the organisers and all who will contribute to this challenging workshop.

I wish you a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Mol.