

**Speech by Mr. Eric LEBEDEL , Ambassador of France to
Bulgaria**

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Your Excellency Iliana YOTOVA (Vice president of the R of BG),
Honorable Temenuzhka PETKOVA, minister for Energy, Mr.
Lachezar KOSTOV, Chairman of the Bulgarian Nuclear regulation
Agency,
Excellencies, Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in such a beautiful place to attend this conference dedicated to nuclear energy. I would like to thank Mr. *Bogomil Manchev*, the chairman of the Bulgarian Atomic Forum, for having invited me.

Today, worldwide energy supply is based up to more than 80% on fossil fuels¹. The massive use of these fuels, which in Europe are mainly imported, represents both a financial burden and a source of insecurity. Moreover, fossil fuels, which represent globally over two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions², also constitute a threat to the environment, climate and health.

May I remind you that in 2013 France initiated a national debate on its energy strategy and adopted a law in August 2015, called the "Energy Transition Act", which is clearly in line with the conclusions of the COP21 and with the "Paris Agreement". This law, which aims at maximizing decarbonization of the French energy mix, sets medium and long-term targets, articulating global challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, and local issues such as employment and quality of life. As a consequence, in order to achieve these goals, this law has also fixed a set of measures with respects to energy.

¹ "Energy Climate and Change" World Energy Outlook special report 2015

² "Climate Change" IPCC Synthesis Report 2014

The main objectives are a significant reduction in the consumption of fossil fuels and respectively, a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030. To this end, the share of renewable resources should increase up to 32% of final energy consumption by 2030 and to 40% of electricity generation at that time.

- **Nevertheless, the role of nuclear energy for base-load production of electricity is confirmed.**

The French nuclear power plant fleet is composed of 58 units located on 19 sites with a new EPR unit of 1600 MW under construction in Flamanville.

The French nuclear sector is currently a world leader in the fuel cycle (manufacturing, processing and recycling), nuclear power plant construction and maintenance, with 2,500 companies and some 40,000 direct, indirect and related jobs. In terms of investment in research and development, it ranks fourth in France with a budget of about €1.8 billion.

- **France's recognized skills and expertise are assets that will be maintained.**

Electricité de France (EDF) is one of the major stakeholders in the French nuclear industry and it remains the world benchmark in nuclear power plant operations. Its yearly production of nuclear electricity reached 379 Tera Watt hour (TWh) in 2017.

What about AREVA? Since its creation in 2001, Areva is the one and only company with a presence in every part of the nuclear fuel cycle. Following the corporate restructuring of Areva concluded in 2018, EDF, became the majority shareholder of Areva NP. Since January 2nd 2018 Areva NP has been renamed Framatome.

FRAMATOME now holds all existing assets of Areva related to the design and manufacture of nuclear reactors and equipment, fuel design and supply, and services to existing reactors.

It is also worth mentioning that FRAMATOME will no longer be tied to a particular reactor design, and long-term operation of all types of reactors will be a major service objective.

Here, I would like to raise a special point and say that AREVA/FRAMATOME has been involved from the start in the *Bellene project*. Should this project be re-started, Framatome could be a helpful partner to implement it.

Another spin off of Areva is ORANO. This is a new company focused on the nuclear fuel cycle.

Although leading groups like FRAMATOME and EDF are often ~~are~~ heavyweights in terms of large contracts, other nuclear sector manufacturers also work on the design and maintenance of nuclear power plants throughout the world. France is proud of several private companies active in the international nuclear business (arena?), such as ENGIE (formerly GDF), Assystem, ONET, and many others.

➤ **Making safety and security a priority**

Nuclear energy is an industry like any other, except for the fact that it demands a special regulatory and institutional framework, as well as significant resources, skills and know-how to guarantee levels of safety and security that are essential, *particularly since the Fukushima nuclear disaster of March 2011*.

In view of its long-standing know-how and expertise, many countries call on France owing to the acknowledged qualities of its control and security institutions like the Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN), the CEA and SFEN, and to its renowned companies. For example, the creation by Japan, ~~for example~~, of an independent control and safety institution, is largely modelled on the French Nuclear Safety Authority.

➤ **In the next 20 years, energy consumption will double**

As the world population increases, there will be a catching-up by populations who currently do not have access to electricity. At the same time, the CO₂ emission levels will need to be halved. At the present time, there is no alternative to massive, cheap and CO₂ emission-free nuclear energy.

Therefore, nuclear remains one of the “two pillars” of France’s energy mix for the future, along with renewables. In that perspective, the main priorities for the next decades will be

- The guarantee of safety which remains the first priority;
- The extension of the "life time" of reactors in operation;
- The long-term management of radioactive waste with the closure of the fuel cycle and the demonstration of a viable solution for the storage of radioactive waste which must be reversible;
- Research for the emergence of new reactors, those of fourth generation as well as those of smaller size known as SMRs;
- The creation of a "center of excellence in dismantling".

As far as I know, these objectives are rather similar to those of Bulgaria. Consequently, and in conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the cooperation between our two countries will continue and even intensify.

I wish you fruitful discussions and I thank you for your attention.