

Bulatom conference 7th June 2023

Intervention of the French ambassador, Joël Meyer

France national strategy in the sector of nuclear energy

(Nb for the translators, whom I thank, it is possible that the paragraphs in italics are not read)

First of all, I would like to thank **M. Bogomil Manchev** and all of the organizers of this important international Forum held with the support of the Highest Bulgarian authorities.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference is being held this year in a context that is particular and I would add, **unfortunately particular**. For two reasons: the first reason is of course the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army and the regime of Mr. Putin. In addition to causing a human tragedy that will deserve justice, this aggression has upset our perception of energy issues and geopolitical issues. The two issues are now closely linked. The second reason is the scientific observation of a global acceleration of the phenomenon of climate change everywhere in the world, a dramatic evolution which consequently requires us to accelerate the movement ourselves to keep the commitments of carbon neutrality to which we have collectively subscribed. *(to remember: The French Prime Minister recently recalled the ambitious objectives set at European level: a) Reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030; b) Achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.)*

In these two contexts, the objectives of diversification and transition energy have become even more of a priority for France, as for many of the countries represented here, and as for Bulgaria of course. And I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Highest Bulgarian authorities, the Minister and Deputy Ministers of Energy for their determination in favor of an ambitious national plan for the diversification and decarbonization of energy.

Allow me therefore to say a few words about the French national strategy within the framework of these objectives and of course **about the essential lever constituted by civilian nuclear power to achieve them.**

I would like to share three main points with you:

1. **The first** - and you won't be surprised to hear me say this as I represent a State sometimes perceived abroad as prescriptive / interventionist if not "Jacobin" - is that France's own national ambition in nuclear passes through the presence or the return of a "strategist state" in the energy sector. **The State must act as a strategist, un stratege.**

a) With three main objectives, to:

- guarantee affordable energy for economic and social development;
- guarantee security of supply and strategic autonomy (this is the principle of sovereignty);
- guarantee respect for the preservation of ecosystems and the assurance of being able to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and definitively halt climate degradation

b) In view of these three objectives, this strategist State must:

- establish a vision and determine long-term energy and electricity mixes, taking into account geopolitical, technological, economic, social and environmental uncertainties;
- promote, and even channel, make consistent, fundings for the country's energy and industrial choices
- ensure industrial mastery over time ("la maîtrise du processus tout au long de son déroulement")

I just made an allusion somewhat ironically to the natural interventionism of the French State, but it must be emphasized that in France all the actors recognize the primordial role of the State in the energy sector, even more so today-as we are faced with climatic, geopolitical and industrial issues. There is no one in France who considers that the State does too much in this area. On the contrary, there are some who consider that the State does not do enough).

Of course, a "strategist State" does not mean a State which controls everybody and everything, but a State that encourages, that frees up local private and public initiatives, that gives them the means to act. But it also means a state that sets certain rules of the game, particularly in terms of financial support.

(When I speak of a "strategist State", I also mean a State which must be an educator, first of all on the subject of energy efficiency, whether with end consumers of individual or industrial energy.

The State must also upstream, promote interest in research and innovation in the energy sector from higher education. This is so that there is a perfect match between the skills acquired by the students and the needs of companies in the sector.

Finally, the State must also play a mediating role in the organization of a consensus on the modalities of our energy choices, including that of nuclear energy. Therefore, the French Energy and Climate Strategy is regularly revised, based on a broad consultation at local and national level. The Government is now preparing a report to address issues raised during this consultation and discussions will take place in Parliament in 2023.

2. My second point, in accordance with these principles I have just mentioned, are the last and concrete initiatives taken by the French State and government.

a) the first initiative is, as announced by the President of the Republic in February 2022, a new French energy strategy. The basic idea is to position France to massively produce carbon-free electricity. This is the great challenge for the coming decades, because the world of tomorrow will be more and more electric.

This strategy is based on two pillars:

- The first pillar is the massive development of renewable energies, in particular: • solar power: i.e. multiplying its production capacities by ten, and exceeding 100 GW by 2050; • and wind power, mainly offshore wind power: the goal is to create around fifty offshore wind farms – with an objective: 40 GW in service by 2050.

- **The second pillar is the development of the nuclear sector.**

Why nuclear? Because we consider that the energy transition, which we all call for, cannot take place under optimal conditions, without the use of this type of energy more and more efficient and safer and safer .

Several projects are underway:

- The first one is the extension beyond 50 years of the lifetime of all the reactors currently in service. This decision will be studied by EDF and the Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN), the most demanding regulators in the world in terms of safety, as recent maintenance has reminded us.

- Then the second projet is a program for the construction of new nuclear reactors. Six EPR2s will be built by 2050. Work on the first reactor will begin in 2028, with commissioning scheduled for 2035. It is the largest industrial project launched in France since the 1970s. In addition, studies will start for the construction of eight other EPR2 reactors.

- The third one is that the development of small modular reactors (SMR) and innovative reactors (AMR) will be accelerated.

- In addition to these concrete decisions, some legal and administrative measures have been adopted:

. A law aiming at accelerating the construction of new nuclear facilities near existing nuclear sites has been passed on 16th of May by the French Parliament. The law will allow the reduction of the time lapse (until two years) related to administrative procedures and simplify them. **I want to insist on the fact** that this text does not modify the environmental procedures or the safety procedures.

. Also, within the administration, the creation of the Interministerial Delegation for the New Nuclear (DINN) aims to coordinate all the actors mobilized to ensure that the deadlines and objectives of the construction program of 6 new EPR2 nuclear reactors will be respected.

b) the second initiative—concerns fundings. A year ago, the President of the French Republic unveiled a year's investment plan of 54 billion euros, entitled "France 2030". This plan should make it possible to catch up with the French industrial backwardness, to invest massively in innovative technologies and to support the ecological transition.

c) finally, in terms of education, there is a third initiative that has been launched, in June 2022, it is a sobriety plan. By being more efficient in our energy consumption, we will get out of fossil fuels more quickly. We have set ourselves a goal: to reduce our consumption by 10% by 2024. State, companies, communities, citizens, we must all take part.)

3. Finally, my third and last point is to specify that this French national strategy is obviously part of the European Union's own action.

This action, beyond the decarbonization objectives and the security issues of our electricity production, also highlights the necessary industrial autonomy of Europe in this area. It is for example, to take only the most recent initiative, what I call the European Green Plan, examined at the European Council on March 23rd. This regulation on "net zero industry", which responds well to the need for a shock of simplification and modernization for the most important sectors for the energy and climate transition.

But we consider once again, with other Member States, that to achieve our common objectives, **that nuclear power constitutes a necessary part of the response at European level**, both in our energy mix and to produce low-carbon

hydrogen tomorrow. This is also what corresponds to the spirit of our treaty: to respect the energy mix of each.

We are about fifteen Member States to think the same thing, including Bulgaria. On May 16, an important, not to say strategic, **meeting of the energy ministers of these countries was held in Paris at the initiative of the French Minister for Energy Transition, Mrs Agnès Pannier-Runacher.** It is a true nuclear Alliance, which is in force with the goal of establishing a roadmap for developing this energy. The aim is to create a consensus so that nuclear power is fully integrated into the energy strategy of the European Union. And I would like to salute the substantial contribution made by Bulgaria to these debates and yours personally, Minister Rosen Hristov, as you chaired a round table in this event.

To conclude, **nuclear energy is part of the solution.** And thanks to the contribution of nuclear energy, the efforts are beginning to bear fruit. Between 2021 and 2022, greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 2.5% in France. Obviously, that is not enough, but it shows that there is no fatality and that the trend is fundamentally irreversible.

Finally, I will not end without once again thanking the highest authorities of the Republic of Bulgaria for the already very long partnership that exists with France on this subject. Bulgaria itself aims to relaunch its program for the construction of new reactors and I am delighted that the Bulgarian authorities have wished to engage in dialogue with the French main actors in the civil nuclear field – EDF, Framatome – whose excellence and competence are very well known. Thank you Mr. Minister for the confidence thus granted to France.

Thank you for your attention.