

2013 New Year's Address

January 8, 2013

Atomic Energy Commission of Japan

On the occasion of the first Commissioners meeting in 2013, the Japan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) would like to present its views on the important activities for the promotion of research, development and the utilization of nuclear energy in this year.

On March 11, 2011, the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant of Tokyo Electric Power Co., Inc. (TEPCO) was hit by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the plant lost all the electricity supply due to the flooding caused by tsunamis triggered by the earthquake. Since the plants were not well prepared for this, this ended up with a serious accident with core melt, hydrogen explosions and release of large amounts of radioactive materials to the environment. Widespread environmental contamination forced nearby residents to evacuate, many of whom remain unable to return to their hometowns. With their communities disrupted, they are suffering from uneasiness, hardship, difficulty and inconvenience. Especially, huge burden is on the shoulders of children-raising families aspiring welfare of their children.

The Atomic Energy Basic Act prescribes that the JAEC is responsible for planning, deliberation, and decision on policies on research, development, and the use of nuclear energy with a view to securing energy resources for the future, advancing science and technology, promoting industry and thereby helping improve the welfare of mankind and national living standards, under the principle of restricting it to peaceful purposes, ensuring safety and operating democratically and autonomously. Considering its responsibility, the JAEC had been asking all concerned parties to strive unceasingly to improve the situation on-site and off-site of Fukushima Daiichi. It regrets, however, that the many are still, at this moment of the New Year, suffering from hardship.

The JAEC has asked, since the onset of the accident, relevant organizations and government bodies to make concerted efforts for decontamination, remediation and restoration of accident stricken areas. It also has collected and integrated for deliberation by the public and decision-maker views on cost of nuclear power generation and on the policy options of nuclear fuel cycle. Further, considering the failure of the attempt to revise “Framework of Nuclear Energy Policy”, the JAEC had released by the end of last year several position papers on key issues, including disposal of high-level waste (HLW), human resource management, research and development, public confidence building and medium- and long-term programs for decommissioning the Fukushima Dai-ichi NPP of TEPCO. It asked also, with self-reproach, the government to be responsible for taking actions to ensure

transparency in the processes of planning, elaboration and decision-making on these key issues. Given the above, there are four points to make to clarify our position.

First of all, under this circumstance, the JAEC calls for the government and TEPCO to continue utmost efforts this year as well for the support of the daily life of those affected by the nuclear disaster, for the remediation of areas contaminated by radioactivity, and for decommissioning of disabled reactors. At the same time, the Commission asks the government to continue providing the international community as its national obligation with accurate information in a timely manner on the Fukushima accident and remedial actions that follow.

Secondly, with regret that the use of nuclear energy created this tragedy though it is supposed to help improve national living standards, the JAEC asks the government and all relevant parties in the nuclear sector for comprehensive review of nuclear safety and security so that nuclear power can be qualified, by satisfying pre-requisites, as a part of the energy mix in Japan, as already emphasized by the Commission's position paper released last year. We strongly recommend a review based on the discussions held in the Fukushima Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Safety jointly hosted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Government of Japan at the end of last year in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture in particular, we expect the government and nuclear operators to ensure the availability of key safety functions of nuclear power plants under complex adverse conditions caused by external events such as Earthquake and Tsunami, even if its likelihood of occurrence is low during the life of the plants, with a view to be accountable in making every effort to prevent any social disruption or adverse impact on the environment incurred by a severe accident, regardless of the initial event, continuing to strive for the enhancement of safety culture and for the improvement of safety and security.

Thirdly, considering the current circumstances, whereby a new framework for nuclear power generation be established through dialogue with the public, we call for actions to strengthen programmatic activities for radioactive waste management and disposal and to restructure nuclear fuel cycle policies, conscious of the situation of Japan in the international community and its obligations, role and responsibility in terms of nuclear non-proliferation and security. Relating to these obligations and responsibility, programs for plutonium management, storage and management of spent fuel and final disposal of high-level waste, and waste management during the decommissioning of reactors, including studies on the direct disposal of spent fuel, remain crucial, even when related policies are changed. Therefore, there must be continued progress in their execution while reevaluating their effectiveness and gaining public understanding thereof.

Fourthly, continued efforts on R&D based on short and long-term thinking and human resource development are essential. It is especially important to conduct R&D activities for science and technology useful for effective implementation of off-site and on-site remedial actions and those for ensuring and enhancing nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation in the international community. It is also important to continue to promote R&D for innovative nuclear energy technologies such as fast reactor cycles and radiation application for better living standards, and basic and generic R&D and human resource development to support future application of these science and technologies. Considering the increasing number of countries wishing to benefit from nuclear science and technology, international cooperation and contribution to forming international order and norms should also be promoted effectively and efficiently.

Public trust to the government and nuclear operators is essential for these actions. We strongly recommend the steady actions with transparency and through public consultation, bearing in mind that public understanding is crucial for every planning and implementation of these activities.