Welcome Speech of Shunsuke Kondo, Chairman, Japan Atomic Energy Commission, at the Second Meeting of the Study Panel on the Cooperation in the Field of Nuclear Energy of the Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia, Tokyo, September 1, 2008

Thank you, Dr. Kunihisa Soda, Commissioner of Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan for your kind acceptance of taking the role of chairperson of this meeting, and I would also like to thank Dr. Sueo Machi, the FNCA coordinator of Japan, for your untiring efforts for the success of the FNCA activities, including the preparation of this meeting.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of Atomic Energy Commission of Japan and the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan I am very pleased to welcome you all to the second meeting of the Study Panel on the Cooperation in the Field of Nuclear Energy in Asia, established as an important new initiative of the FNCA. Our gratitude must go to those who have traveled great distance to be here and we are particularly grateful to Mr. Philippe Lemoine of the International Atomic Energy Agency, for your kind acceptance of our invitation to contribute to this meeting and coming here all the way from Vienna when the agency has started to be busy again after summer holidays.

The main objective of this meeting is to exchange the experience of developing infrastructure for the assurance of nuclear safety in FNCA member countries and explore possible cooperative activities among them for assuring nuclear safety in the region in future, in which every member is certainly interested strongly.

At this occasion, I would like to present a quick overview of nuclear energy policy in Japan for those of you who did not attend the previous meetings of the FNCA. In Japan, ten electric power companies are currently operating 55 LWRs, which supply about 30% of electricity in Japan and it can be said that they contribute to the increase in Japan’s energy self-supply ratio from 4 % to 16 % when we consider the nuclear power as semi-domestic energy sources.

The Atomic Energy Commission decided in 2005 the Framework for Nuclear Energy Policy as a basic policy strategy for the Government and industries to follow for ten years or so to come. Its main objective is to make the share of nuclear power in electricity generation after the year 2030 similar to or greater than the current level of 30 to 40 % for improving energy security, energy economy and environmental protection in Japan.

The Framework provides it as a prerequisite for the planning and execution of any actions taken by the Government and industry to incessantly pay attention to;

a) Strict limitation of nuclear activities to peaceful purposes;
b) Assurance of safety and security through the promotion of effective and efficient regulation;
c) Assurance of openness and transparency to the public of plant operation and administrative activities including safety regulation and the public participation in their policy making;
d) Steady promotion of safe disposal of radioactive wastes, in parallel with the promotion of the Mottainai policy of pursuing reduce, reuse and recycle of waste;
f) Promotion of international cooperation and contribution; and
g) Promotion of integrated management of operation and administration based on the incessant assessment of environmental and business risks accompanied.

Then the Framework set a portfolio of actions across three different time frames; near-term, medium-term and long-term. As I do not want to waste your time any more on general matters, however, I would like to limit my comment on the current status of these actions to safety related ones and those taken by the Commission after 16 July 2007 earthquake at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa NPP, in particular.

As you may know, the operating units at the site were automatically shutdown and all plants behaved in a safe manner during and after the earthquake, although the earthquake significantly exceeded the level of the seismic input taken into account in the design of the plant. Furthermore, there has been no report of damage of safety-related structures, systems and components of the plant, although whether to reuse the plant should be determined after the detailed metallurgical and structural-mechanical characterization of the effect of earthquake that might remain in the plant.

The Atomic Energy Commission as well as the Nuclear Safety Commission announced, right after the earthquake, its view that the adequacy of seismic safety of all nuclear facilities in Japan should be checked as soon as practicable, in view of the fact that the seismic input to the plants had significantly exceeded the design-basis earthquake input. And, the regulatory agency ordered all

licensees to do the check as a matter of course.

When detailed study on the cause of the excess had revealed several findings, including the focusing of seismic wave due to a peculiar geological structure under the site, all operators submitted last May a draft report on the result of checking the seismic safety of their plant, taking into consideration of those findings. Currently the regulatory agency is reviewing the reports in detail.

As a guardian of nuclear energy policy, the Atomic Energy Commission has been asking operators and regulators to communicate with people and municipalities in the neighborhood of nuclear facilities about what they are doing without delay. The Commission has also reminded them the importance of performing sound business risk assessment and management activities as a part of their integrated management activity for assuring the continuation of safe and reliable operation of nuclear facilities.

Though this is just an example of businesses of regulatory authority, we can recognize that knowledge and skills necessary to promote reliable nuclear safety regulation spread across diverse scientific and engineering disciplines. The decision to plan this meeting resulted from a growing awareness of both such recognition and the need for increased attention of regulators to the quality of integrated management activity of operators to ensure safety, security, and radiation protection.

I hope that the exchange of experience and opinion in this gathering among those who have contributed in each country to the nuclear safety regulation will stimulate the interest of participants to establish and renew relationships between member countries to cooperate for maintaining and improving the quality of their activities. In the end of this meeting, you may propose, as an example, the establishment of opportunities to acquire knowledge and skill for heightened attention to the quality of regulatory activities in the framework of the Asian Nuclear Training and Education Program (ANTEP), which we have established to support national human resources development activities of the FNCA countries.

With that I wish you would have a productive meeting today and tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention.