

Statement by Luis E. Echávarri

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It is a pleasure and an honour for me to be here today to sign the Joint Declaration on Co-operation between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in the Field of the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy.

I would like to thank Rostechnadzor, Rosatom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice for making this possible, and of course, our Russian hosts for organising this highly important event.

Please allow me to make a few short remarks: The OECD Nuclear Energy Agency is an intergovernmental organisation with 28 member countries from Europe, America, Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. The Agency's mission is:

- to assist its member countries in maintaining and further developing, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal bases required for a safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; as well as
- to provide authoritative assessments and to forge common understandings on key issues as input to government decisions on nuclear energy policy.

In the Agency's five-year Strategic Plan, member countries clearly identified the Russian Federation as a country with which the NEA should establish more formal co-operative links. Today's signature of the Joint Declaration is the concrete demonstration of such co-operation.

I should say that the NEA relationship with the Russian Federation is not new. In fact, Russia has been an observer in the NEA's two safety committees since 1996 and has been an ad hoc observer in the Nuclear Law Committee since 1993. In addition, the Russian Federation has been involved in several NEA joint projects over the years, and hosted its first joint project, the RASPLAV project, starting in 1994.

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Although I consider direct participation in the NEA's committees and working groups as the cornerstone of our co-operation, the Joint Declaration opens up possibilities for further co-operation in other areas, including:

- carrying out peer reviews of specific projects and the secondment of Russian experts to the NEA;
- research in nuclear science, nuclear safety, and the regulation of nuclear and radiation safety;
- strengthening and harmonising national legislation with internationally accepted principles for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In conclusion, I would like to say that today's ceremony is a profound sign of change, and opens a new chapter in the co-operation between the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and the Russian Federation. This Joint Declaration is highly significant and an important step towards strengthening ties between the Russian Federation and the NEA. Russian participation in all of the NEA standing technical committees will enhance the work of the NEA pool of over 3 000 international nuclear experts.

Thank you for your attention.