

Nordic Nuclear Forum and NuclearEurope2022

Taking Finland's recipe for nuclear energy success beyond its shores

7 June 2022

Rafael Mariano Grossi

Director General



IAEA

International Atomic Energy Agency

It's a pleasure to address the Nordic Nuclear Forum and NuclearEurope2022.

When it comes to nuclear, our host Finland really is top class. It was the first country to adopt a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement; it is a contracting party to all the major nuclear safety and security conventions; and it co-operates with the IAEA at all levels. Its nuclear energy programme is a great example of the benefits of nuclear energy done right.

Finland and the International Atomic Energy Agency have worked together to help other countries with ambitions for a similar level of success. Whether through knowledge sharing, peer reviews, or regional projects, Finland has contributed to the safe and secure development of nuclear energy programmes beyond its shores.

I'm very happy Finland, together with Sweden, is organizing a joint side event on the safe management of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste at the margins of the IAEA's General Conference in September 2022.

One of the first trips I took as Director General was to Onkalo, where I was able to see for myself the first deep geological repository for spent nuclear fuel. For decades, the solution for high-level nuclear waste had been available only on paper. That Onkalo is almost ready for operation is vitally important to the wider acceptance of nuclear. And it comes just as the twin challenges of climate change and the global energy crisis are shifting the spotlight back onto nuclear energy.

There's as popular Chinese proverb that says; "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now."

When it comes to nuclear, Finland planted a mighty tree 20 years ago with its decision to build Olkiluoto 3. It has borne many fruits.

Powered by reliable, affordable electricity, Finland's economy is buoyed by heavy industry that exports to markets far and wide. At the same time, Finland has some of the world's most ambitious climate change targets. It wants to reach carbon neutrality 15 years earlier than most other countries! Thanks to its carefully considered market-based approach to nuclear and renewables, it's well on its way.

And on its journey, the nuclear industry in Finland has created jobs, supported communities and is a sector that attracts bright young people.

Fins largely accept nuclear energy as a good thing. That didn't just happen. The trust was built through transparency and a democratic approach to decision-making. The Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority is a trusted public authority and its operators, Fortum and TVO, are highly credible because their plants have an excellent safety record and high load factors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I started my remarks at the very end of the fuel cycle and so I would like to close them with a look to the future.

Small Modular Reactors will be part of your discussions this week and rightly so. As they come to market, they will offer new options to countries and industries, including in district heating and hydrogen production.

SMRs have been nuclear's 'new' innovation for some time. To get them to market with the highest levels of safety, security and efficiency, I launched the IAEA's Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative. It brings together all stakeholders,

including industry and regulators, so that together we can ensure their safe and timely deployment. I'm happy that Finland is well represented and look forward to our ongoing collaboration.

Let me leave you with a final statistic. For the world to reach its climate targets, nuclear capacity will need to double. Now is the time for us to redouble our efforts and to look outward. Finland is a steadfast supporter of international safety, security and safeguards, and its nuclear energy programme offers a compelling case for others. I look forward to working even more closely together to spread nuclear success beyond Finland's shining example, for the benefit of everyone.