Philippine National Presentation
by
HONORABLE ANGELO T. REYES
Secretary, Department of Energy
Republic of the Philippines

International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Energy in the 21st Century
Beijing, China
20-22 April 2009

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to speak before members of this body. My presence here today will highlight the Philippines' position on nuclear energy from the perspective of a developing and non oil-producing country.

Our country's renewed interest in nuclear power, like the rest of the world, is primarily driven by concerns on energy security, volatility of fossil fuel prices and rising carbon dioxide emissions.

In the pursuit of energy security, we are continuously working to attain an optimal energy supply mix. Foremost in our consideration is that we would want to source our energy needs locally. Second, is that we would want to diversify our energy sources.

The reality, however, is that our developing economy is still dependent on imported energy sources and on fossil fuels to satisfy our power needs. To veer away from this, we are slowly moving towards a renewable energy system. Early this year, we passed a law that will further develop the renewable energy industry in our country.

While we have taken that big step towards clean energy utilization, our calculations estimate that the contribution of renewable energy sources to the country's power requirement is projected to be between 35% to 55% until the year 2030. This is of course subject to technological developments and cost considerations, specifically in the area of storage technologies. Assuming that the maximum share of 55% from renewable energy sources will be utilized in the power generation mix, the remaining 45% gap will have to be supplied by reliable base load capacity. This may include nuclear power.

As the demand for power continues to rise, we are studying nuclear energy as one of the long-term options for power generation without bias against other energy sources.

Concomitant and integral to our quest for securing our energy future, we are working with solutions to protect the developing Philippine economy from the volatility of fossil fuel prices through a more diversified and stable energy mix in power generation that will result to sustainable and reasonably-priced electricity rates.

We are, however, confronted with the challenge that, on the average, about 60% of energy sources utilized in the power generation mix come from fossil fuels primarily oil, coal and natural gas. Moreover, the Philippines still has one of the highest power rates in Asia.

That is yet another basis as to why we are seriously considering nuclear power since it provides a relatively competitive generation cost with the cheapest power source which is coal. Among power sources with high upfront costs like wind and solar, nuclear power has the cheapest generation cost.

As we work to bring about access to affordable and sufficient electricity for every Filipino, we keep in mind that energy utilization must be consistent with the need for the protection and preservation of our planet's fragile ecosystems. Therefore, we are aiming to reduce the country's contribution to carbon dioxide emissions. The Philippines has taken proactive action by laying the groundwork to shift to a renewable energy system. As a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the subsequent Kyoto Protocol, we are fully committed to doing our part in addressing global warming even though we are not legally bound to impose a national limitation on emissions.

In our efforts to ensure that the use of energy must not damage our environment, we have to deal with the fact that renewable energy development is still costly. As such, nuclear power presents an appealing energy option since the complete nuclear power chain emits the least carbon which is about the same as wind and hydropower.

For a developing and non oil-producing country like the Philippines, these are the merits we see in utilizing nuclear energy in power generation. We have already undertaken a nuclear power program in the past. Political circumstances then resulted to the mothballing of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, our lone nuclear power plant which was not operated.

Currently, the Philippine government is taking appropriate steps in studying nuclear power as a long-term energy option. Consistent with the recommendations of the IAEA Expert Mission, we have formed the Inter-Agency Core Group on Nuclear Energy to study the prospect of introducing nuclear in our energy system.

In all this, we are strictly subscribing to a sequential and logical plan with regard to nuclear energy. All our actions are being undertaken in consonance with the Infrastructure Requirement in the Development of a Nuclear Power Program recommended by the IAEA.

One of the most sensitive and critical issues confronting the adoption of nuclear remains however, is the concern over the final disposition of nuclear wastes. I challenge, therefore, the developed economies utilizing nuclear power to come up with a sustainable solution to address the final disposition of nuclear wastes issue, a solution that will be acceptable especially to prospective users of nuclear energy.

Let me end my intervention by reiterating that the Philippines is forging ahead with plans to realize energy security and an optimal energy mix given the realities that we face. Our energy policy rests on our national economic development plan and if we decide to utilize nuclear energy for power generation, we will be working closely with the IAEA to cover all concerns and issues in establishing a Nuclear Power Program for the Philippines.

Thank you and Mabuhay.