Mr. Secretary General,
Your Excellencies,

I would like to express my great appreciation to H.E. Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon for the initiative to organize this important meeting.

Bulgaria welcomes the number of activities undertaken at the highest political level to address the important issues of nuclear safety and security.

In this context we note the Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy held this spring in Ukraine and the Remarks of the H.E. UN Secretary General Ban-ki Moon as a positive contribution to international efforts for safe and secure use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

We believe that this High-Level Meeting provides an opportunity to continue the lessons-learned process from Vienna Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety with follow up actions to strengthen nuclear safety, emergency preparedness and radiation protection as well as to improve nuclear security worldwide.

As many other IAEA member states Bulgaria considers nuclear power as a viable option to meet our energy needs. Nuclear energy has a key role for providing base load power to our economy with a share of 35% of the total energy mix.

In line with the policies for sustainable development and development of low-carbon economy our Government has declared its institutional support for the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with full compliance with the IAEA safety standards and best practices for nuclear safety and security.

We have almost 40 years of impeccable safety record of operation of our nuclear energy program confirmed by numerous missions of the IAEA, WANO and WENRA peer reviews.

Bulgaria has already given an example of responding to perceptions for the need of increased safety requirements by closing in 2006 four out of our six reactors well before the expiration of their projected life.

We gave full support to the decision initiated by the European Council to carry out EU-wide comprehensive safety and risk assessment in all EU countries with nuclear
installations with a high degree of transparency. The first results will become available by the end of the year and the process will continue next year with the aim to have a complete picture of the situation by mid-2012 on the basis of which decisions on further policy and legislative measures can be taken.

A parallel process in close cooperation with the EU Member States will be followed for assessing security threats, including terrorist attacks.

We consider it is imperative for states developing or planning to embark on a nuclear power program to create an appropriate nuclear safety infrastructure based on IAEA standards and relevant guidance and assistance.

Nuclear power contributes significantly to global energy generation. In the background of increased energy needs worldwide this important capacity cannot easily be replaced.

It is clear that more needs to be done to strengthen the safety of nuclear power plants as well as to enhance a safety culture and effective international cooperation so as to significantly reduce the risk of future nuclear accidents. There is need for rigorous adherence by the international community to the most robust international safety standards and full transparency. Only by achieving these goals we can restore and maintain public confidence in nuclear energy.

I thank you for your attention!