Mr. Secretary-General

Heads of State and Government,

Here we are again six months after the Fukushima disaster. This should firstly be an opportunity for all of us to pay tribute to the courage of the Japanese, to their capacity to endure, to their tremendous dignity, and to the way in which they managed a major crisis.

But 6 months after Fukushima, Mr. Secretary-General, the international community should hold the right debate. The question is not “nuclear energy or no nuclear energy.” Everyone is free to choose their own energy mix. But who can say that, given the unprecedented demand for energy around the world, we can do without nuclear energy, the only energy source that will allow us to honor our commitments with respect to reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

A country like Japan, which does not have any oil, which does not have any gas – do you think that one of the largest economies in the world will be able to function just with solar and wind energy?

The demand for energy, that’s the key to growth and development. The real question isn’t “nuclear energy or no nuclear energy” it’s “how safe can we make nuclear energy”? That’s what we should be focusing all our efforts on.

And I’d like to make a few comments.

The first, Mr. Secretary-General, is that it’s now foolish to think that it’s easier for the international community to start monitoring a military nuclear facility than a civilian nuclear facility. That’s the first anomaly. Nuclear energy for military purposes poses considerable problems, but civilian nuclear energy also poses problems in terms of safety.

France argues that all countries that have access to civilian nuclear energy – and we believe that all countries have the right to have access to civilian nuclear technology – should firstly establish their own independent nuclear safety authority. France has one. That hasn’t always been the case.

To all countries that want to develop civilian nuclear energy, we want to say, “it’s only possible if your citizens know that, thanks to an independent supervisory body, the safety criteria will be the best possible.”
The second proposal we’d like to make relates to the rapid intervention force. When there’s a nuclear accident, borders can’t contain it. The rapid intervention force doesn’t call the national sovereignty of countries into question. The rapid intervention force is essential to nuclear safety.

Third comment: a regional as well as global skills development center must be established. Nuclear technology, nuclear safety technology must be developed throughout the world.

Lastly, France argues in favor what’s referred to as the peer review system. Mr. Secretary-General, I know that a number of countries prefer a voluntary review system. France would be prepared to accept a mandatory review system. Why? Because nuclear energy must go hand in hand with the highest level of safety. It’s not nuclear energy or safety, it’s nuclear energy and safety. And to ensure safety, we must have a mandatory peer review system, a training center, a rapid intervention force and an independent authority.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is what France would like to contribute to your debates.

Thank you.