Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for his initiative to draw attention of the international community to the issue of high importance – nuclear safety in the world. The 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident as well as other incidents remind us that issues of nuclear security and safety must be reassessed in detail and at the highest international level. Now is the exact moment to make decisions in order to avoid or limit similar disasters in the future.

We all – nation states, the UN, the EU, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – have to learn all available lessons from nuclear accidents. We must take the responsibility and concrete actions to respect and improve the existing system of nuclear safety and security regulations worldwide. In March 2011, the European Council invited the European and international community to adopt the highest nuclear safety standards for the already existing power plants and those to be developed. The IAEA Director General Mr. Amano has prepared the Report and the Nuclear Safety Action Plan which has just been endorsed at the IAEA General Conference in Vienna. We fully support these initiatives. But we also should do more.

As nuclear accidents respect no borders, the development of any nuclear energy project in any state must be implemented with due responsibility for the population of their own and other states. Open and honest consultations with all potentially affected countries, constructive settling of transnational disputes, full transparency and information sharing must be the universal norm. And if legal international imperatives are needed to ensure that, they should be adopted.
Special attention has to be paid to site safety. New nuclear projects cannot be even considered without a comprehensive seismic and environmental safety assessment. Stress tests must become the routine procedure for every – planned or existing – nuclear power plant, its site and technology.

Neither can we forget that even the best technologies still depend on the human factor. Investments in maintenance capacity building and expertise of personnel are essential not only to develop new technologies, but also to maintain safety and security of their operation.

The concerns I have expressed here are based on very practical considerations. Today in our direct neighbourhood and in the centre of Europe we have two nuclear power projects being developed without proper environmental assessment and with no proper sharing of information. It seems odd and worrying. It is also threatening – not only to Lithuania but to the entire region.

If we agree that only safe technologies in safe sites under safe construction with safe operation and safe decommissioning can guarantee real nuclear safety and security, I invite the international community, with a strong lead from the International Atomic Energy Agency, to assure universal adherence to these principles. It is the only way to avoid new nuclear disasters. Let’s treat the Fukushima and St. Petersburg accidents as the last wake-up call for the responsible behaviour of all the actors in nuclear energy since a nuclear accident anywhere is an accident everywhere.

The time of declarations has already passed. Now it’s time for action.

Thank you.