**NEI President and Chief Executive Officer Maria Korsnick's**

**Welcome Remarks**

**Nuclear Energy Assembly**

**June 7, 2021**

Good afternoon. I'm so excited to welcome you to this year's Nuclear Energy Assembly.

We are very grateful for the support of our sponsors in making this event a success. I'd like to thank all our sponsors, who you'll see throughout the conference and who represent the future of our industry.

It's been an incredibly trying year—not just for our industry, but for the country as a whole. The pandemic has forced us to think differently. We're thinking differently about how we want to work and live. About how to strengthen our economy and our infrastructure. And when it comes to energy, we're thinking differently about the best way to reach a carbon-free future.

This year, our message to the world is simple: Nuclear energy is the source that can make it all work—not just electricity production, but job creation, economic revitalization, and decarbonization.

And you, the people gathered here today, are the ones who can make nuclear work. We're increasingly being recognized for what we've built, and the future we're going to help build.

Over the course of these next three days, you'll hear from policymakers and influencers who are going to shape this future.

Our industry—from plant operators to the supply chain—built the U.S. fleet into the largest source of carbon-free energy anywhere on earth. Now, we can make nuclear energy the core of the world's clean-energy system.

Nuclear plants produce the most carbon-free electricity in the country, which is why urban and rural communities count on them for clean, reliable power around the clock. Nuclear accounts for 20 percent of our nation's total electricity and more than 50 percent of our carbon-free electricity.

Last year, nuclear energy became the second-largest source of electricity in the United States overall. Our 94 reactors produced nearly 800 million megawatt-hours—surpassing coal for the first time ever.

And we're doing more with less. In 1989, it would have taken 33 additional reactors to generate the same amount of electricity that we generated in 2020.

We've done this by operating at more than 90 percent of capacity for the last 22 years. And we've done it all while making nuclear energy even more affordable.

As we've powered the country, we've helped build thriving communities. Nuclear technology is American technology. It creates good-paying jobs across the country—the kinds of jobs that anchor a community.

Our industry provides real opportunity and growth. We can accelerate our national economic recovery, and truly help communities "build back better."

Today, the nuclear industry employs more than 100,000 people directly. The supply chain—including fuel, manufacturing, and maintenance—supports four times that many jobs, many of them unionized.

At the height of construction, the Vogtle 3 reactor in Georgia—which will go online early next year—employed 8,000 people. It was the largest construction project in the state. When completed, Vogtle 3 and 4 will be the first reactors of their kind in the United States. Together, they will produce more carbon-free electricity than all 7,200 wind turbines in the state of California.

Throughout the pandemic, and during sudden crises like this year's devastating winter storms across the southern U.S., nuclear workers powered through unprecedented conditions. They kept the lights on in hospitals and the heat on in homes.

The fleet we've built is the very definition of essential.

In Washington, D.C. and in statehouses across the country, we're building an unparalleled coalition for making nuclear energy the core of our clean energy system.

To avoid the worst effects of climate change, we have to bring carbon emissions from electricity generation close to zero by 2050. State governments and the Biden administration support the key role of nuclear energy alongside other carbon-free sources.

Tomorrow you'll hear from Jennifer Granholm, the Secretary of Energy, who will share her outlook on reaching net-zero carbon emissions. When it comes to decarbonization, this administration understands that we can't leave any tool on the shelf. Nuclear has to play a vital role alongside other carbon-free sources like wind, solar, and hydro.

Last year, Congress significantly increased appropriations to accelerate research, development and demonstration of new technologies. And lawmakers from both sides of the aisle signed on to legislation that recognizes nuclear's contributions to today's economy and our clean energy future.

In an era of continued polarization, that level of support is remarkable—and it's only growing stronger. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle value the jobs, carbon-free electricity, and partnerships abroad that nuclear produces.

Nuclear is poised to play a critical role globally as we work to address the changing climate. In a recent report, the International Energy Agency envisioned a strong role for nuclear in the future energy system.

Because of everything we've built together, we're poised to meet this moment.

We've gone from concept to site selection. We've gone from design to demonstration. We're not just talking about the next generation of nuclear technology—we're actually beginning to build it.

The next generation of reactors will come in all sizes, makes, and models. They are going to be flexible and versatile. They'll be able to change their output, pairing perfectly with more variable sources like wind and solar.

They'll offer energy solutions for every situation, whether it's a small town in the uppermost part of Alaska or a country like Poland trying to transition away from coal while boosting their energy independence.

Exciting new projects are underway, almost all of them involving NEI members.

X-Energy has finalized their contract with the Department of Energy, and TerraPower has announced it will select a site for its advanced reactor demonstration. On Wednesday, we'll hear from Bill Gates, who launched TerraPower, about how the next generation of nuclear will help address the climate crisis.

NuScale received NRC approval for their design and will partner with Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems to build small modular reactors in Idaho.

Westinghouse, GE Hitachi, and Holtec are all delivering their own conceptual designs.

With the continued progress and the right investments and policy choices, many of these designs can be online before this decade is out.

As we build the clean energy system of tomorrow, we're talking about decarbonizing. But we're also thinking about decarbonizing in a way that not only preserves jobs but accelerates our economic recovery.

As we transition to a carbon-free energy system, we're acutely aware of the costs. We understand the pain that plant closures cause, whether they are nuclear or some other source. Investment in nuclear energy—targeted in communities that have long relied on fossil fuels—can not only avert job losses but take advantage of existing talent from the fossil fuel industry.

Workers from across energy sources built today's nuclear fleet. And workers from those same energy sources can help build the fleet of the 21st century.

Many of the skills required, like operating a steam turbine, are highly transferable. I know that firsthand. Just as we see at plants across the country, when I managed a nuclear plant in New York earlier in my career, workers from fossil fuel plants would come work scheduled refueling outages with us.

A special incentive for advanced reactor construction in coal country would keep jobs in communities that badly need them. And it would make good on the Biden administration's promise to empower workers who can build our clean-energy future.

In many cases, next-generation nuclear reactors could literally be built on fossil fuel sites. Much of the infrastructure connecting these plants to the grid is already there. NuScale's scalable technology could support a variety of needs and geographic areas and be located on retiring coal power plant sites.  Some advanced reactors could even fit the steam systems at our newer coal plants, which would significantly reduce the cost of construction—potentially by 25 percent or more.

States like Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Utah, and West Virginia have all signaled interest in this approach. Our industry can create clean energy capacity and economic opportunity in the places that need it most.

Finally, we cannot build a clean-energy future, or achieve our climate goals, if our current plants shut down.

That's a real risk. After nearly 60 years of carbon-free generation, Indian Point in New York shut down this year.

If the nuclear plants under threat this year are shut down, the lost carbon-free generation would be equivalent to all the renewables we deployed in 2019 across the entire country.

That isn't decarbonizing. It's throwing in the towel before the fight even begins.

NEI is fighting to keep plants online anywhere they are under threat. We need legislation and funding that reflects that reality.

As the threat of climate change intensifies, we need all of your voices to make sure we're building a carbon-free future, not sacrificing years of progress.

Nuclear energy is the source that can make it all work. And there is no worldwide answer to climate change and economic recovery without it.

Thank you again for being here. Together, we can build nuclear energy into the carbon-free core of our clean energy system.

Let's get to work.