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MINISTER OF CLIMATE

Michał Kurtyka

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As the Polish Climate Minister and former President of COP24 please allow me to express my deep appreciation for the ongoing efforts the Commission is undertaking in the fight against climate change, especially in its energy dimension through promoting transformation towards climate-neutral energy systems. I would like to reiterate that Poland remains committed to gradually but steadily align its power sector to this paradigm, which it fully supports.

At the same time it is important to stress how local conditions may vary requiring different priorities and actions. Poland's baseload generation currently relies heavily on fossil fuel combustion. Our geography excludes the development of non-intermittent renewable capacity like hydro, while the window of opportunity to implement nuclear power was missed in the late eighties as a result of an arbitrary decision. This, combined with a large population and industry with rising energy demand, puts us at a different starting point than the rest of our EU partners. This is why Poland, following good example and experience from other Member States, intends to develop nuclear power to replace the base-load capacity provided by coal with a zero-emission, stable generation at a cost affordable for Polish citizens and economy.

We strongly believe all available low-emission technologies that can help to achieve a climate neutral EU by 2050 should be supported by the European Union. Therefore, we were surprised when nuclear power was not reflected in the recent EU policies, including the European Green Deal package, while its place in the EU Taxonomy is still under question.

While half of EU countries utilizes or intends to develop nuclear power as part of their energy transformation, this technology, providing nearly half of EU low-emission generation, is excluded from the broad financial opportunities the green transition provides, which eliminates the level-playing field in the energy sector. Although we are aware that the provision of any support to nuclear sector is contested by a number of Member States, we are also deeply convinced this should by no means impede the room of choice for countries that consider it a necessary element of their energy mix. Excluding nuclear sector from the green transition opportunities bypasses the principle of Member States energy sovereignty and violates obligations under the Euratom Treaty to promote the development of the EU nuclear sector enshrined in articles 1 and 2c.

Therefore, while not questioning the green transformation as such, but posing fundamental question about its general direction and principles in terms of technology, I would like to once again emphasize the necessary role that nuclear energy has to play in clean energy systems, which is strongly supported by recent reports delivered i.a. by the IPCC and International Energy Organization, to name a few. Moreover, while bearing in mind that all existing energy technologies have a negative impact on the environment, more and more international studies conclude that the environmental footprint of nuclear generation, even considering its entire life cycle, is per unit of generating capacity no higher than the one left behind by renewable generation.

Considering the increasing network imbalances partially attributable to the rising deployment of intermittent renewables, nuclear will remain indispensable in the EU power system for decades to come. As a stable low-emission baseload it will guarantee the continued renewable deployment provided synergies between these two complementary technologies are fully explored. This is a good place to recall the *European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy - A Clean Planet for all*, which acknowledges that nuclear power, together with renewables, will form the backbone of a carbon-free European power system, which was later confirmed in the November 2019 European Parliament Resolution on COP 25.

The COVID-19 recovery highlighted another benefit from the development of nuclear power, which is capable of producing a broad added value across many industrial sectors and generates a large number of high quality jobs, both directly and indirectly. This is why the decades-long and hard-earned European leadership in nuclear technologies should not be squandered. To the contrary - it is our responsibility to maintain and develop it for the benefit of future generations.

To conclude, Poland remains committed to progress towards climate neutrality, which it intends to endeavor through the deployment of both renewable and nuclear technologies, while exploiting invaluable synergies between the two. Therefore, we call on the European Commission, as the guardian of the Treaties, including the Euratom Treaty, to ensure that the EU energy and climate policy is developed in a technology-neutral and evidence-based manner, including the works undertaken within the European Green Deal and Sustainable Finance Packages. Such fact-based approach will only be possible with the involvement of independent experts with strong knowledge of the nuclear life cycle. It is also important that EU reaches out to analysis undertaken by major international organizations, like the Report on the development of deep geological repositories currently elaborated by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and many other documents published by the International Atomic Energy Agency in this scope.

Further prejudice against nuclear power will only continue to penalize new build projects implemented by several Member States, thus hindering the electrification process to which

nuclear - representing over 45 % of EU low-emission generation - is a major contributor. But most importantly - taking nuclear out of the picture will prevent the achievement of 2050 climate goals, which is well demonstrated by the raising CO₂ emission levels in the countries phasing out nuclear power.

Reiterating my full support to the green transition efforts the Commission is robustly undertaking I remain open to further exchange with you on this important topic.

Michał Kurtyka
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