

# Plenary Session 3: Nuclear Energy and Our Green Future

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## Summary

The Plenary Session “Nuclear Energy and Our Green Future,” moderated by Economist columnist Simon Long, included Dr. Suzuki Tatsujiro of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), Dr. Chang Soon Heung of the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), President and CEO of the Stimson Center Ellen Laipson and Director General of the Arab Atomic Energy Agency (AAEA) Abdelmajid Mahjoub.

Dr. Suzuki argued that in a post-Fukushima environment, Japan must review regulations and safeguards and implement a new cost assessment of nuclear energy that includes the environmental cost. He also noted that although Fukushima is a crisis, it could also be a great opportunity to move toward a green future, and cited the goal of Japan to build an eco-friendly area in the earthquake devastated region.

Dr. Chang then focused on green future as including green growth. He argued that nuclear energy is needed as part of the portfolio to reduce greenhouse gasses because it is cheaper than other forms of renewable energy. Secondly, Dr. Chang joined Suzuki in calling for a second look at regulations and nuclear safety moving forward.

The third speaker was President and CEO of the Stimson Center Ellen Laipson. Laipson focused on the Persian Gulf region as it in many ways represents energy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She explained that despite the fact that many of the Gulf States are currently able

to provide all their energy domestically with fossil fuels, they still need nuclear energy for domestic use because the Gulf States made a strategic decision that it is better to deplete their fossil resources more gradually for export while diversifying domestically. This is especially needed given that in the long run resources will get scarcer, pushing energy costs up drastically in the next 30 years. Finally, she predicted that nuclear energy will be a key component of the Gulf's energy portfolio in the future, along with hydrocarbon and solar.

The final speaker, Dr. Mahjoub, explained that although the Arab countries have resisted the development of nuclear energy in the past, the increasing scarcity of resources in the region, coupled with its rapid industrial development, necessitate an expansion of nuclear energy. He explained that the extent and cost of climate change in the region will depend on the availability of technologies for green development. He concluded with a note of caution regarding the intersection between nuclear energy and efforts to control nuclear weapons proliferation. "A world free of nuclear weapons should not be a world free of nuclear science and technologies." He explained that fears of nuclear weapons should not be a reason to deny the region of nuclear technology.

Despite disagreements over the specific path forward, panelists agreed that there is a pressing need for a renewed look at regulations, safety and security in order to secure the public trust in nuclear energy in a post-Fukushima world.

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