

Panel: How Safe Are Nuclear Power Plants in South Korea? (Grand Ballroom III)

Date/Time: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 /14:00-15:15

Talking Points for: Suh Kune Yull, Professor, Seoul National University

South Korea has no option but to expand its nuclear power program despite growing public concern over safety and aging of the early fleet of reactors in the wake of Japan's Fukushima disaster in 2011. The proportion of South Koreans who considered nuclear power safe fell to 34.8 % in November 2012, down from 40 % in April 2011 and 71 % in January 2010. Worse yet, tiny cracks have been found in the YGN-3 reactor vessel upper head, ever-increasing concerns about nuclear safety following a chain of recent scandal involving the use of unverified parts. The total electrical generation capacity of the nuclear plants is 20.5 GWe from 23 reactors. This is 29.5% of the total electricity generation, but 45% of the total electricity consumption and 8.6% of the total energy consumption. The South Korean nuclear plants maintain capacity factors of over 90%. South Korea is seeking to export its nuclear technology, with a goal of 80 reactors by 2030. ¹South Korean companies are building a research reactor in Jordan, and four APR1400 plants in the United Arab Emirates.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.