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Statement by Dr. Ivan Selin

I have informed the White House of my intention to leave the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as of July 1, four years after I took office as Chairman.

I do this with mixed feelings because I have enjoyed immensely the challenges of this job. But even if the Commission is left temporarily without a quorum, thanks to steps we took last summer to put in place a contingency plan, the remaining Commissioners will be able to operate with the full authority of the Commission until a quorum is restored.

I have spent the last six years of my life in my second tour in government -- as Under Secretary of State and as Chairman of the NRC. These have been exciting years, years in which I have been proud to serve and proud to be associated with many solid accomplishments. The last four years have been particularly eventful, significant ones in the life of the NRC. We have accomplished much in adapting our rules, regulations and procedures to the changes in the world of energy, while never wavering from our primary mission of protecting the health and safety of the American people.

In these four years we have also witnessed a revolution in the world of international nuclear power. Previously isolated nuclear power programs -- in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, East and South Asia, and South Africa -- have joined the world nuclear community, while newer programs in East Asia have taken off. I am proud of the role that the NRC has played in meeting the challenges of this unexpected international development, and increasing the safety of these programs.

Now it is time to move on. My intention is to return to the private sector, to start a new business with my son. We're going to explore the possibility of building non-nuclear power plants in Asia where the demand for energy is enormous, as a number of countries strive to improve the quality of life for their citizens. Note that I said non-nuclear, such as gas-fired or coal-fired generating plants. Given what I have been doing for

the last four years, I don't think it would be appropriate to be involved in nuclear power, even though nuclear power will be part of the national energy mix in any number of places.

Please indulge me for a moment if I underline, briefly, some of the major accomplishments over the past four years here:

- continued improvement in the safety of operating reactors;
- increased openness in the way that the Commission conducts its business;
- a one-step process for approving new reactor designs and licensing new reactors;
- renewal of existing reactor licenses; and
- simplification and reduction of a variety of regulations.

All but the last of these were objectives I cited as my priorities in my confirmation hearings four years ago, and all have been accomplished while we reduced the NRC budget by 3% a year in real terms.

My successors will have plenty more to do. They will have to carry through on these programs, further streamline the regulatory process, and continue to reduce the costs of the agency. They will also have to see through the licensing of facilities for spent fuel and should get the NRC out of the business of regulating the medical use of radioactive materials.

The NRC is a small agency, with about 3,000 highly skilled, dedicated people and a budget of slightly more than \$500 million. The agency's principal task is to regulate 108 nuclear power plants which supply more than 20 percent of the country's electricity. While new plants are not being built today, existing facilities will still be producing electricity at the current high levels for the next 20 years, making an important contribution to the wealth of the nation. Nuclear power in the United States is among the safest in the world; a vigilant, independent regulator is required to ensure it stays that way.

I feel good about the contributions the agency has made in the last four years; I am confident it will continue to be an agency of which its leaders can be very proud.

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