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**Commissioner Nils J. Diaz
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission**

Remarks Before The American Nuclear Energy Symposium

**Miami, Florida
December 12, 2000**

Good morning, ladies and gentleman, it is indeed a privilege and a personal pleasure to address this distinguished gathering on the status and future of nuclear energy in the Americas.

Buenos dias, señoras y caballeros es un privilegio y un verdadero placer el compartir con esta distinguida asamblea enfocada en la actualidad y el futuro de la energía nuclear en las Américas.

The supply of abundant, reliable and economical energy, especially electricity, is essential for mankind. Energy is an enabler of production and productivity and, as experience has shown, nuclear energy can be an important component of the energy mix for countries in need of energy diversification. I have often said there are necessary conditions for the successful development and implementation of nuclear power by a nation: political and social stability, financial capability, and a strong technical and regulatory infrastructure. However, there are two sufficient conditions needed: safety and economics.

In the United States of America, the sufficient conditions -- safety and economics -- have improved as a result of the now established synergistic relationship between nuclear safety and economic performance, no longer at odds but complementing each other, with safety the leading condition. At the U.S. NRC, we have been able to strengthen our focus on safety because the performance of nuclear power plants (NPPs) is so much improved. In turn, the nuclear power plants are able to increase safety and economic performance. NPPs in the U.S. are today very competitive in the marketplace.

Two major accomplishments at the U.S. NRC have aided in the improved status of nuclear energy: a streamlined, fair, and equitable license renewal process, and risk-informed improvements to regulation that truly focus on what's important to safety and reduce unnecessary burden. I believe that the condition of excellent licensee performance in both safety and economics, and the predictability of the U.S. NRC regulatory framework, set safe use of nuclear power in the U.S. on very firm ground.

The status of the U.S. nuclear power industry and its regulation has restored the U.S. to a position of

world leadership in this field. The inseparable relationship of safety and performance is key in deciding whether nuclear power continues to be a reliable choice for the energy requirements of the world.

I wish you progress and success in your discussions and deliberations. As you know, I have personally favored increasing the strength of the Americas by improving political, commercial, financial, and educational ties between U.S. and all democratic governments in the continent. A key component of stability and growth is a comprehensive energy policy because it is indispensable for the quality of life of all our people.

I would like to conclude by paraphrasing a great American, Mark Twain, to suggest that “the news of the demise of U.S. democracy and the government are greatly exaggerated”. When the election process is finished, there will be freedom, there will be justice, and there will be the pursuit of happiness.

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