

Statement to Parliament: Written ministerial statement on energy policy

As part of preparations for EU Exit, the UK is establishing a domestic nuclear safeguards regime to ensure that the UK continues to maintain its position as a responsible nuclear state and that withdrawal from Euratom will not result in the weakening of our future safeguards standards and oversight in the UK.

This Government believes that it is vitally important that the new domestic nuclear safeguards regime, to be run by the Office for Nuclear Regulation, is as comprehensive and robust as that currently provided by Euratom. The government has therefore decided that it will be establishing a domestic regime which will deliver to existing Euratom standards and exceeds the standard that the international community would require from the UK as a member of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency).

International oversight will be a key part of the future regime. The UK is seeking to conclude new agreements with the IAEA that follow the same principles as our current ones. This will ensure that the IAEA retains its right to inspect all civil nuclear facilities, and continue to receive all current safeguards reporting, ensuring that international verification of our safeguards activity continues to be robust.

Discussions with the European Union are on-going. We will be exploring a number of options for smooth transition from the current Euratom regime to a domestic one. The unique and important nature of the civil nuclear sector means that there is strong mutual interest in ensuring that the UK and Euratom Community continue to work closely together in the future. The UK's ambition is to maintain a close and effective relationship with the Euratom Community and the rest of the world that harnesses the UK's and the Euratom Community's expertise and maximises shared interests. By maintaining our current safeguards and standards we are providing the best possible basis for continued close cooperation with Euratom in the future.

Whatever the outcome of those discussions, the Government is committed to a future regime that provides at least the existing levels of assurance. The legislation to provide for this was announced in the Queen's speech and will be brought forward in due course. This policy statement provides important context both for parliamentary consideration of that Bill, and for the forthcoming talks with the European Union, which take place in the last week of September.