Good morning everyone. First of all I would like to thank the IEA for inviting me to speak here today. Dr. Birol continues to show excellent and far sighted leadership in placing energy efficiency at the top of the IEA agenda. Brian Motherway has brought together a fascinating range of issues and speakers, which draws on the wealth of experience he has of making the low carbon transition a reality. I am delighted to see how he is continuing to make this vital contribution at the international level.
Energy efficiency as a means to an end

Each of us in this room spends a huge amount of time making the case for energy efficiency. And you don’t need me to tell you that the case is a very strong one. The IEA has captured it perfectly with its simple message ‘the cheapest and cleanest energy is that which you do not use’.

But after all our efforts, what will success look like? I believe success will mean we no longer need to have global conferences on energy efficiency. Instead it will just be the norm for our buildings, our transport and our industrial and agricultural processes to use energy efficiently. I believe that the key to achieving this is to look at energy efficiency as a means to an end and not an end in itself.
**Case study – Warmth & Wellbeing**

As an example, let me share with you what we are learning in Ireland about using energy efficiency to help people with long term respiratory health problems, who are also at risk of energy poverty.

There is now a lot of international evidence that living in cold, damp, poorly ventilated houses is linked to chronic health conditions, particularly in older people and young children. This is only made worse when people cannot afford the energy they need to heat their homes properly.

The Warmth and Wellbeing pilot scheme will bring comprehensive energy efficiency and structural upgrades to about 1,500 Irish homes by the end of 2018 at a cost of €20m. Alongside this, we are also undertaking careful research to gather firm evidence of the positive impact of energy efficiency on the health and well being of individual people.
We also want to see if we can measure a reduction in their need for health services and improvements in social outcomes, such as educational performance.

With works now underway on about 400 homes we are hearing some extraordinary stories about the how living in warmer, more energy efficient homes, with cleaner air, is changing lives. We are hearing about people who had become isolated in homes they couldn’t afford to heat, and who had never made contact with their local health services, who are now getting the care they need and starting to get back out into their communities. Improving the energy efficiency of the homes of these people has not just given them a level of comfort they have never known, nor just reduced their energy bills, it has been the catalyst for a real improvements in their quality of life.
Making the case for energy efficiency

So what does that tell us about how we need to make the case for energy efficiency? There are three key points I’d like to make here:

1. Energy efficiency must add value

Firstly, energy efficiency is not just an energy only issue. And that is a real challenge for energy policy makers. We are so comfortable in our energy silo.

Energy is an enabler of economic activity and social well-being. People use energy almost unconsciously to do almost everything. Therefore, to engage successfully with people on their energy use, the message needs to be about the value energy efficiency can add to those activities. The message from the Warmth & Wellbeing scheme isn’t about using less energy or the technologies that enable energy efficiency, it’s about using energy better to improve health and social inclusion.
If we are motivate people to act on energy efficiency, we must speak to their priorities – better health and social inclusion outcomes, the competitiveness of business, or the cost effectiveness of our public services. This is what I mean when I say energy efficiency is a means to an end and not an end in itself.

And this is why I am so pleased to see the establishment this year of a new Behavioural Economics Unit in the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. It is one of the key strategic developments it has been possible to introduce following the additional funding I managed to secure for energy efficiency in 2017, bringing our overall budget for sustainable energy in Ireland to over €100m.
The establishment of this Unit builds on the excellent work SEAI is doing with the IEA as a partner in the Demand Side Management working group. The group held a highly successful event met in Dublin in May, and will continue to be a key strategic partnership for energy policy making in Ireland.

2. Energy efficiency needs joined up government

Secondly, we will not realise the full potential of energy efficiency without coherent policy making across government. The Warmth & Wellbeing scheme has got off the ground because it is a joint policy initiative between myself and my colleague the Minister for Health.

In the business community, we are seeing an increasing value being placed on energy efficiency to fulfil resource efficiency criteria necessary to attract large scale investment. This is now fast becoming a key issue for policy on foreign direct investment, in flagship projects like the Dublin Docklands.
Since 2009 the public sector in Ireland has saved over €600m in energy costs and improved its energy efficiency by 21%. This is public money that can be put to much better use on frontline services, while demonstrating the potential of energy efficiency to citizens and driving the market for clean energy services.

Therefore, it is vital that, as energy policy leaders, we give our colleagues in government the evidence they need to embed energy efficiency in their policy areas. We need to go beyond the rhetoric to produce the data. And now we are starting to be really able to do just that. In Ireland we very much value the work of the IEA in helping us develop the systems and best practice to do this.

And we are going to strengthen our partnership with the IEA by making an additional voluntary contribution to further this work. If more member nations are prepared to join this research I believe that we can produce world class evidence that can shape public policy around the world.
3. *Energy efficiency and clean air – motivating action on climate change*

Thirdly, we are all only too well aware of the challenges around motivating action on climate change. Even those who acknowledge its reality, and are sympathetic to the need for action, can feel overwhelmed at the scale and distance of the problem. Ireland is grappling with this problem in our soon to be published National Climate Mitigation Plan.

This is why I feel that, aligned with our action on climate change, we need to place much greater emphasis on the need to improve air quality, and the very tangible health and other benefits that are delivered directly from energy efficiency. Indeed cleaner air and better public health is one of the main drivers for action on climate change in countries like India and China.
Having said that, I am conscious there can be a tension between climate and clean air policies and some of these tensions are highlighted in the detailed special report from IEA last year, ‘Energy and Air Pollution’.

For example, wood is seen as carbon neutral in climate terms, but its particulate matter causes real problems for air quality and public health in the domestic context. The IEA report proposes a Clean Air Scenario, a pragmatic and attainable strategy to reconcile the world’s energy requirements with its need for cleaner air.

In line with this, Ireland is in the process of developing its own National Clean Air Strategy by the end of 2017 with measures across sectors to improve air quality for all Irish citizens. Indeed Ireland hosted the first Clean Air Dialogue with the European Commission in Dublin in March this year, to promote actions to improve air quality and contribute to Ireland's implementation of EU clean air legislation.
At the 2nd Global Climate and Health conference last year, Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the UN, said:

‘Clean energy policies reduce air pollution…. Human health and the environment both win’:

This is a strong public health and environment message. That is why air quality is central to Ireland’s energy efficiency programme. For example, our new Deep Renovation pilot scheme will support, not only deep energy efficiency measures for homes, but also switching from fossil fuels to low carbon heating systems.

We know that energy efficiency is the first step on the path to safeguarding the environment for future generations. If we can combine the message of long term collective gain on climate change, with one that focuses on the air quality benefits available here and now, we can create an even more compelling proposition for energy efficiency to be, as the IEA puts it, ‘the first fuel’.
**Agreement of EU Energy Efficiency Directive**

This is why I am so pleased to see agreement finally reached on the EU Energy Efficiency Directive earlier this week. In particular the retention of the 30% target, which Ireland has consistently supported.

**Conclusion – responsive leadership from governments**

In conclusion, realising the potential of energy efficiency to be central to action on climate change and clean air is all about leadership.

We are asking every section of our economy and society to be responsive to the demands of decarbonisation. As governments and public administrations, we must lead by example.
That is not easy. The path to decarbonisation means change. Public administrations never find change easy. And when it comes to decarbonisation, the change it is bringing is challenging to the centre and its familiar ways of working – in all kinds of ways – be it distributed generation or fiscal policy.

However, if we are to support our citizens to make the efforts we ask of them, governments must walk the same path. And that journey has already begun with energy efficiency.