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22 May 2018 : The UK's nuclear energy industry has welcomed confirmation by prime minister Theresa May that the government intends to seek associate status to Euratom R&D programmes.

In a speech on 21 May 2018 Mrs May said she wants the UK to have a deep science partnership with the European Union because "this is in the interests of scientists and industry right across Europe".

She said : "And today I want to spell out that commitment even more clearly. The United Kingdom would like the option to fully associate ourselves with the excellence-based European science and innovation programmes - including the successor to Horizon 2020 and Euratom R&T [research and training]."

Mrs May said it is "in the mutual interest of the UK and the EU that we should do so" and added that such an association would involve an appropriate UK financial contribution, "which we would willingly make".

Tom Greatrex, chief executive of the London-based Nuclear Industry Association, said the UK civil nuclear industry has long called for an association between the UK and Euratom so important collaborative scientific research can continue in the UK.

He said there are thousands of highly skilled personnel working on the Euratom funded fusion R&D programme, many of whom have felt uncertain about the future of their jobs since the Brexit referendum.

"It is welcome that the UK government has acknowledged the benefits of the UK's participation in

these Euratom programmes and is seeking an association agreement that will enable that to continue," he said.

"That is a benefit to the UK, to the rest of the European Union and to the global scientific community, and I hope the European Commission respond positively."

But he said this is just one part of the current Euratom framework and progress in replicating other vital areas is still needed before the UK leaves the EU in March 2019.

Euratom is the EU's nuclear safety and research watchdog, but when the UK leaves the EU it will also be leaving Euratom.

Euratom was initially created to coordinate the member states' research programmes for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. According to the EU, the Euratom treaty today helps to pool knowledge, infrastructure and funding of nuclear energy. It ensures the security of atomic energy supply within the framework of a centralised monitoring system.