

OPENING REMARKS

SENIOR REGULATORS' MEETING

20 September 2007

IAEA Board Room

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Head of the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security

Distinguished senior regulators, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the 2007 session of your meeting.

The Senior Regulators' Meeting, organized every year during the IAEA General Conference, provides a unique opportunity for senior regulators from all our member States to get together to identify current issues and challenges and exchange experience for feedback. This meeting is increasingly important for the Agency and is becoming a key place for having high level exchanges among regulatory bodies on how to face these challenges. It is also an opportunity for senior regulators to meet other policy makers in the nuclear areas to build collective wisdom establishing common philosophy for the future direction for the international safety cooperation.

We are observing a time of major changes in the world markets and technology, which are impacting the nuclear industry and its regulators as never before. Both the nuclear industry and regulators have traditionally been rather conservative when it comes to embracing changes and therefore a key challenge today and for the future is to properly assess and address the safety implications of these changes.

This implies that the further enhancement of sharing arrangements of operating and other safety experience remains high on our agenda.

Regulatory effectiveness and its continuous improvement are the key elements for ensuring readiness to address the current and future challenges. This will be the first topic for this meeting and will deal with the results and lessons learned from the first Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) missions in 2006 and 2007. The topics for this afternoon cover areas where exchange of experience is also essential and I will come back on this.

With regard to the IRRS, I informed you last year of the approval by the Board of Governors of the Fundamental Safety Principles replacing the three previous safety fundamentals publications. This new unified Safety Fundamentals provides a unique opportunity to also integrate our set of Safety Requirements in a coherent and harmonized manner. The Commission of Safety Standards with the support of the four Safety Standards Committees is working in this direction, in parallel with the revisions underway of the BSS and the Safety Requirement on the legislative and regulatory framework, GS-R-1.

The Safety Fundamentals provided also an opportunity to better integrate our Safety Review Services including the services to the regulatory bodies. This has resulted in the establishment of the Integrated Regulatory Review Services (IRRS). Several missions were already conducted recently, in the UK, in France, in Australia and in Japan and we are receiving a number of new requests for this service, including Canada, China, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, USA.

With the first missions in Australia, France, Japan and UK, we have now already a rich accumulation of experience which we can all benefit from. This is the objective of the Sessions I and II today. It is an opportunity for the countries having received the mission and the candidate countries to exchange experience gained through the entire process of preparation, conduct and follow-up of this service. The intent is to discuss the feedback from the recent missions so as to continuously improve the Safety Standards used as a reference, in particular GS-R-1, as well as the quality of IRRS.

It is also an opportunity to contribute to the proposed networking of the regulatory bodies on the regulatory effectiveness and international reviews. The IRRS sessions today will build on the result of the seminar organized in France in March this year as a first key step towards broader sharing of the results and lessons learned through the IRRS. The next seminar is planned in Spain next year. We encourage having every year such a seminar and every four year a regulatory effectiveness international Conference like the one organized in Moscow last year.

Through this overall arrangement supported by knowledge networking, we expect the benefit of the IRRS would be more widely and deeply shared and contribute to enhancement of regulatory effectiveness.

This afternoon will be dedicated to some other important specific areas for exchange of recent experience. Out of a number of important issues, three areas were selected: I) The earthquake that affected the Kashiwasaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in Japan, II) the events during outages and refuelling and III) the incidents and accidents affecting patients in medical applications.

As you all know, the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in Japan, which is the biggest nuclear power plant site in the world with more than 8,000 MWe total capacity, was affected by a strong earthquake on 16 July 2007. The Japanese authorities invited an IAEA mission consisting of international specialists to observe the current conditions at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant. The team conducted last month a fact finding mission and identified the preliminary lessons learned for the event that might have implications for the international safety improvement. The report of the mission is available on the IAEA web site.

The Japanese authorities also proposed to share the lessons learned from other events concerning reactivity control during outages and refuelling. I'd like to express to the representatives of the Japanese Government our sincere appreciation for their commitment to experience sharing.

Another important issue, addressed in several fora and for which there is an opportunity also to share important lessons is the regulatory control of medical applications. Incidents and accidents affecting patients in medical applications of radiation are frequently reported to the international community. Overexposure of patients is almost chronic in many countries. It is important to share the root causes of these incidents and accidents and to exchange on the various regulatory practices. Ultimately, we have to improve their safety and also establish and amend, as necessary, our set of Safety Standards and related publications on these activities. This is the objective of the last presentation under the session III today.

Finally, I take the opportunity of this opening statement to inform you that immediately after the Senior Regulators'

Meeting an important presentation will be made in this Board Room, which is also of great interest for the senior regulators. Commissioner Antonio Colino Martínez from the Consejo de Seguridad Nuclear of Spain will present the Spanish protocol for the radiological surveillance and control of scrap and metallic products resulting from its processing.

I now wish you a successful meeting and hand the proceedings to your Chairman Mr. Atsuyuki Suzuki, Chairman of the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan.