

**52nd General Conference  
Senior Regulators' Meeting  
3 October 2008**

**CHAIR SUMMARY**

Once again, this Senior Regulators Meeting took place within the auspices of the General Conference of the IAEA. It is very satisfying to see more than 100 participants, including the heads of so many regulatory bodies from the IAEA Member States, participating actively in this Meeting.

**Sessions I and II  
Establishing a National Nuclear Installations Safety Infrastructure**

**Introduction of the discussion**

The IAEA Director General stated in his remarks to the Board of Governors last week, “Embarking on nuclear power is a complex process that requires an appropriate regulatory and legal framework, an effective and independent regulatory body and the building of the necessary human capacity.”

Additionally, in his annual letter to the IAEA Director General, the INSAG Chair stated, “Safe operation can only be ensured if there is a comprehensive infrastructure in place that is properly maintained and improved throughout the life of the nuclear power programme.”

In his opening statement this morning, the DDG Taniguchi stressed that, “our nuclear safety community should clearly communicate to all those considering nuclear programmes that the use of such technology requires a strong commitment to safety that must endure the lifetime of the programme.” Subsequent discussions indicated that this is taken to mean around 100 years.

It is clear from these statements that establishing a national safety infrastructure implies many challenges which need to be addressed simultaneously. To assist and inform our considerations in addressing these issues two presentations were made.

**Presentations**

Mr Meserve, the Chair of INSAG, presented the recently issued INSAG 22 report which, using as a basis the IAEA Fundamental Safety Principles SF-1, details the “obligations” that new entrants must satisfy to establish a sophisticated and comprehensive nuclear safety infrastructure.

Mr Caruso, for the IAEA Secretariat, then presented a draft safety guide, which is proposed to provide a roadmap to apply the full suite of IAEA Safety Standards progressively at the appropriate phases of the implementation of a nuclear power programme.

Mr Klein and Mr Li Ganjie gave keynote addresses identifying the benefits of independent nuclear regulators having a partnership programme, based on the experiences of the USA and China.

Other panel members from Brazil, Finland, and Japan gave a brief introduction on the nuclear safety infrastructures in their countries.

### **Discussion highlights**

Several important aspects were identified:

- The importance of establishing at the earliest opportunity an independent, competent and well resourced regulatory body.
- The recognition that regulatory bodies of vendor countries could have new obligations, i.e. to establish partnership with the regulatory body of the buyer country.
- That the independence of regulatory body is a priority, but they should be prepared to exchange best practices with, and work in cooperation with, international organizations and other regulatory bodies.
- The need to establish “partnerships”, (rather than provide ‘assistance’), at several levels:
  - Multilateral with the use of IAEA Safety Standards and services.
  - Bilateral with vendor country and even beyond. For example it was indicated that it would be useful to establish partnerships with other regulators regulating the same type of NPPs or having larger nuclear power programmes. Examples provided included training of staff abroad or inspectors observing construction.
- The need for regulatory oversight of the supply chain was emphasized as well as challenges resulting from possible new suppliers. This regulatory oversight is necessary to ensure that the licensee provides the primary oversight of the suppliers’ assurance of quality products.
- The need to avoid bypassing the licensee was discussed, in order to ensure that they retain the prime responsibility for safety. This implies avoiding direct vendor/regulator relationships and ensuring that contacts are established through the licensee.
- The IAEA peer review mechanisms, particularly the IRRS, was mentioned as one of the key useful international exchange mechanisms. The benefit of the further development of peer review processes at more technical levels was put forward.

### **Sessions III and IV 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the IAEA Safety Standards: The next 50 years**

#### **Presentations**

Mr Mrabit, for the IAEA Secretariat, presented the history and current status of the IAEA Safety Standards, which addressed the processes for the development and implementation of the Standards. He also identified how the Standards are applied and the vision and strategies for the future, with a view to establishing the necessary conditions for a worldwide application of the safety standards.

Mr Lacoste, the Chair of the IAEA Commission on Safety Standards (CSS), presented the experiences in the use by Member States of the IAEA Safety Standards. He noted the importance of the various sub-committees (NUSSC, RASSC, TRANSSC, and WASSC) in preparing and developing the standards. He highlighted the various uses by Member States and how the Safety Standards had been used as the basis of work by WENRA. Finally, Mr. Lacoste listed conditions for a worldwide use of the IAEA safety standards, consistent with the strategies presented by the Secretariat.

Mr Adamchick, Deputy Head of Rostekhnadzor in Russia, gave a short presentation to inform the meeting on the application of the IAEA Safety Standards to improve the Russian system of regulatory documents in the field of the use of nuclear energy.

Other panel members from Ghana, Spain and USA also gave a short introduction on the application of IAEA Safety Standards in their countries.

### **Discussion highlights**

Several important aspects were identified:

- It was agreed that the safety standards should not be developed with a view to becoming legally binding at this stage, and recognized that this was not the intent of the Secretariat.
- Through the discussion, the terminology “use of safety standards” was preferred to the terminology “application of safety standards”, the latter being seen as a step toward conferring binding status on the safety standards.
- The discussion supported the efforts of the Secretariat, the CSS and its associated Committees towards improving the safety standards user-friendliness and simplifying the safety requirements. The availability of the translation of the safety standards into the official languages was mentioned as one of the possible remaining barriers for their worldwide use.
- The discussion also confirmed the importance of adopting a top-down approach based on the Safety Fundamentals SF-1.
- The meeting recognized that the quality and relevance of the IAEA safety standards has significantly increased and noted that this was a pre-condition for their actual use by Member States, consistent with the strategy presented by the Secretariat.
- The crucial need for providing the Secretariat with feedback from the application or use of the safety standards was emphasized as a key condition for their continuous improvement. Establishment of appropriate networking was considered as a possible way to systematically collect and analyse the feedback.
- It was recommended to enhance the visibility of the safety requirements applicable to medical applications and, if necessary, to further develop guidance material for their implementation.
- The fragility of the isotopes supply chain was discussed together with consideration of the possible safety implications. Initiatives were reported with a view to avoiding undue pressure on the regulatory body to maintain in operation ageing isotope production equipment.

In conclusion, the Chair of the meeting, Mr. Weightman, noted that the discussion confirmed the conditions mentioned by the Chair of the CSS, and particularly the CSS roadmap adopted in May 2008, as necessary towards a worldwide use of the IAEA safety standards. Considering the challenges that this involves, the Chair emphasised the importance of senior regulators acting in partnership and suggested that the findings of the meeting be reported to and discussed at, the next meetings of INSAG and the CSS.