

OPENING REMARKS
SENIOR REGULATORS' MEETING

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IAEA Board Room (C04)

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Welcome and Introduction

Good morning distinguished senior regulators.

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the 2008 session of the Senior Regulators' meeting. Each year during the General Conference, this meeting is organized by the Agency to provide a forum for senior government officials from our member States to exchange information and experience on current policy and technical issues and challenges related to regulatory matters in the fields of nuclear, radiation, transport and radioactive waste safety and security. This meeting also promotes the interactions among senior policy makers of the larger nuclear community attending the General Conference and related events, such as the Scientific Forum.

Today, the nuclear community is faced with many new challenges in safety and security. As new nuclear power programmes emerge and mature programmes expand, managing safety and security becomes a

cornerstone of sustainable development. In order to prevent another serious nuclear accident or terrorist incident, which, should it occur, will erase the high expectation of nuclear power development worldwide, we need new thinking and a new approach adapted to the dynamically changing global situations. This is why I prefer to use the phrase "Vitae Nova" rather than "renaissance" which requires fresh insights and overcoming old mindsets, rather than a simple revival of good old days. The challenge now faced by many Member States are really enormous for building and strengthening human and organizational capacity, and strong regulatory infrastructure for constructing and operating new nuclear power plants for the first time or after a long interval, or introducing advanced radiation technology in medical and industrial practices. As the country using nuclear technology is primarily responsible for safety and, as operational safety cannot be outsourced, building of sound safety expertise and strong safety culture is an essential precondition for the country introducing nuclear technology. This annual gathering of Senior Regulators is an important opportunity to share a common view and to promote international cooperation to meet the increasingly complex challenges of nuclear development. Further, this meeting should promote clearer communications and sharing of views regarding the enormous challenges we now face with a wider community beyond the technical and safety experts.

The programme for this year's meeting will cover the topics of establishing a national nuclear safety infrastructure and the worldwide

application of the IAEA Safety Standards. Please allow me to elaborate further on each of these important subjects.

Establishing National Nuclear Installations Safety Infrastructure

As the IAEA Director General stated in his remarks to the Board of Governors last week, (and I quote) “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.” The Director General also quoted from the International Nuclear Safety Group’s (INSAG) annual letter to the IAEA, which stated, (and I quote) “Moreover, 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.” I reference these statements to emphasize that our work toward ensuring safe and secure nuclear operations is not finished after the governmental infrastructure is established; on the contrary, the further demanding work of sustaining and continuously improving the substantive safety infrastructure has only just begun.

The political and industrial leaders promoting nuclear power development worldwide may tend to underestimate the vital importance of safety. New entrant countries may tend to regard safety as a hindrance rather than an enabler for successful introduction of new nuclear power plants. 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.

I would like to address another critical aspect of the safety infrastructure that deserves specific mention. It is not possible to eliminate completely the risk of an accident or malicious use of nuclear material. Therefore, it is imperative that national infrastructures must have effective emergency preparedness and response capabilities, including trans-border cooperative measures.

During this session, I look forward to the presentations of the INSAG report and the draft IAEA safety guide both of which pertain to nuclear safety infrastructure.

Regulatory Independence

Let me say a few words about regulatory independence. Assurance of independence will remain as an international challenge as existing nuclear programmes expand and new programmes begin. The importance of regulatory independence is prominently recognized in the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the Joint Convention and in the IAEA safety standards. In addition, regulatory independence is highlighted in the IAEA Fundamental Safety Principles document, SF-1. Specifically, SF-1 states that the regulatory body must, (and I quote) “be effectively independent of the licensee and of any other body, so that it is free from any undue pressure from interested parties.”

Compared with past discussions on this issue that were mainly focused on legal “de jure” aspects, recent discussions have been more focused on “de facto” aspects of technical and managerial competence, and human and financial resources, particularly for new countries launching new nuclear power plants. Legal independence and authority are necessary conditions for overall regulatory effectiveness, but not necessarily sufficient conditions to assure independent regulatory judgement and implementation.

As those who have successfully established independent regulatory programmes may attest, independence is an evolutionary process and a constant struggle that requires an unyielding commitment to safety.

50th Anniversary of the IAEA Safety Standards

The IAEA is proud to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the IAEA Safety Standards programme. The first IAEA safety series publication was issued in December 1958. Since then, more than 200 safety standards were published. The experience and focus on continuous improvement accumulated through these fifty years have resulted in the global recognition of the high quality and relevance of the IAEA safety standards within the Global Nuclear Safety Regime. Since the Chernobyl accident, members of the nuclear community have become bound by each other’s performance and we are now all in the same boat for public confidence and continuous improvement of our performance through international cooperation. The IAEA Safety

Standards and their application, in particular the peer reviews and advisory services, are essential components that support the harmonized implementation of the international instruments, such as the Conventions on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention. They also support the development of effective national safety infrastructures more directly to achieve high levels of safety performance. It is imperative that new entrants to the Global Nuclear Safety Regime pledge their commitment to international conventions, codes of conduct, safety standards and peer reviews.

Looking Towards the Future of IAEA Safety Standards

In consideration of the future of the IAEA Safety Standards programme, let me focus your attention for a moment on the recent report by the Commission of Eminent Persons on the future of the IAEA. This report contains many thought-provoking and important recommendations pertaining to the IAEA Safety Standards and their application. In particular, the Commission of Eminent Persons recommended, (and I quote) “Granting that decisions on nuclear safety ultimately rest with national regulators, over time states should enter into binding agreements to adhere to effective safety standards and to be subject to international peer reviews of nuclear safety.” Such a vision may seem like a long term and challenging proposition at this moment; However, rather than being legally mandatory or not, what is really important is that the IAEA Safety Standards are effectively applied not only in existing nuclear programmes, but also in emerging

ones in order to maintain a high level of safety worldwide. I call upon the members of the nuclear community and senior regulators to encourage the application and feedback of IAEA safety standards and promote continuous improvements in nuclear safety worldwide.

The Agency continues to upgrade its safety standards, including the re-evaluation of seismic hazards. In response to increasing Member States' concerns, we established an International Seismic Safety Centre, which will pool expert knowledge and assist nuclear operators and regulators in the aftermath of major seismic events. On a broader level, the Agency will also coordinate international efforts to assess other extreme natural and human-induced hazards to identify needs to further improve the level nuclear installation safety worldwide.

Safety and Security Synergy

The interface and synergy between safety and security is an important matter of policy and practicality. This issue was well discussed in depth in the Scientific Forum Wednesday morning. As you are aware, the Safety Fundamentals states that “safety measures and security measures must be designed and implemented in an integrated manner.” This was further highlighted by the Chairman of the Commission on Safety Standards in his letter to the IAEA Director General. In that letter, he recommends that, (and I quote) “the review of the nuclear security series publications must be considered so as to verify that the application of the safety related recommendations given

to Members States does not compromise security and that the recommendations from the security series publications do not compromise safety.” The integration and synergy between safety and security is but one area, among others, where continued international cooperation will lead to further improvements in the IAEA Safety Standards and Security Guidance documents and their effective application worldwide.

During this meeting, a presentation from the Secretariat on the history and status of the IAEA Safety Standards and a presentation from the Commission on Safety Standards on the experience in their use by the Member States are planned to introduce a panel discussion to discuss the future of the Safety Standards in the long-term and particularly the necessary conditions for further promoting worldwide application of the safety standards.

While I have touched upon the some of the continued work and challenges we face in the future of IAEA Safety Standards, let us not forget that the 50th anniversary is also a cause for celebration of our combined achievement. In this regard, the Chairman of the Commission on Safety Standards, the Chairman of the Senior Regulators meeting and I, myself, invite you all to a cocktail reception this evening in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the IAEA Safety Standards programme.

Closing Remarks

I thank you for your attention and I wish, as usual, a very productive dialogue during this session.