

Deputy Director General's Remarks

3rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety

Friday, 22 April, 2005

Madame President, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you and the delegates to the 3rd Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety for the very successful completion of your meeting, and to share with you some closing thoughts concerning your insightful deliberations over the past 2 weeks. My staff and I have had the honour to serve you in this important undertaking that constitutes the cornerstone of the Global Nuclear Safety Regime. We have been impressed with the dedication of each of the delegations to this meeting – with the high quality of the National Reports that were submitted last Autumn; with the depth of the questions that were posed by each of you; with the serious attitude to try to provide as accurate answers as possible to these questions, and lastly, by the commitment made during the proceedings of the past two weeks. This personal and professional dedication is the essential component of the mutual learning process that is the premise upon which this Convention is based.

As you know, we, the Secretariat, have been communicating the vision of continuous improvement of the Global Nuclear Safety Regime as one of the key principles upon which we serve our Member States. In this regard, the successful implementation of Convention on Nuclear Safety is the major driving force for this improvement. It should be gratifying to all of us to recognize that every country in the world with operating nuclear reactors, as well as the 25 neighbouring countries without such installations, are now signatories to the Convention. Fifty of the Fifty-five Contracting Parties, with over 500 delegates,

were in attendance at this meeting. In addition, your welcoming of Indonesia and Uruguay as fully participating parties, as well as the openness with which you included India in your deliberations demonstrates your commitment to ensuring that safety insights and lessons learned be shared as widely as possible.

I, likewise, laud your initiatives at further improving the openness and transparency by which the Convention is implemented. The changes that you have made to the rules and guidelines will allow for all Contracting Parties to be able to attain and retain the insights and knowledge from these Review Meetings without reservation or misinterpretation. The public outreach activities that have been pursued through the posting of National Reports on public websites and through the communications that have been made with the media, likewise, demonstrate your commitment to openness and transparency. Other new initiatives, such as holding a special session on “Leadership Challenges,” in response to the insights posed by the International Nuclear Safety Group (INSAG), and by your call for the greater participation of industry executives on delegations, only further demonstrates this commitment.

The many important findings and conclusions during these two weeks, will serve as valuable guidance for the IAEA in implementing its future safety programmes. Of particular note, we are particularly encouraged by the Resolutions on the use of IAEA Safety Standards and the number of positive statements, including specific invitations regarding IRRTs and OSARTs. The Secretariat is now more firmly committed to enhance its efforts to further improve the quality and user-friendliness of the Safety Standards and the review services in place to provide for the application of these Standards.

As the Contracting Parties look to the second decade of the Convention, I would like to share some thoughts to supplement your initiatives for improvement. During the first decade of the Convention, there seemed to be a great focus on tackling specific technical issues of concern in the world. This could only be expected, given the fact that the Convention was drafted in the limelight of the accidents at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. But, over the past 20 years, the nuclear community has demonstrated that the technical lessons from these, and other, events were learned and implemented through the improvement of safety management in both operating and the regulatory organizations. The significant and steady improvement in the performance indicators for the nuclear industry reflects this success.

The challenge for the next decade, therefore, is to overcome any complacency resulting from this success and move the focus on safety to the next plateau. This must be done within the diminished margin of easily visible further improvements and in the increasingly more severe competitive conditions of the globalized, deregulated marketplace. You have recognized this in your characterization of priorities being given to promoting the effective and human factors driven Safety Management Systems

This reflects your recognition of the need for all organizations to focus on Continuous Improvement. Such improvement can only be attained if there is sustained commitment and vigilance concerning safety at all organizational levels, effective mechanisms for the early detection and assessment of problems, comprehensive plans to remediate these problems and prevent their recurrence and, most importantly, efficient networks and systems to share the lessons

learned. This Convention and the communications channels that it fosters are essential to the attainment of this goal.

Just as important are the actions that you have endorsed to ensure that the Convention on Nuclear Safety is not just a triennial exercise and gathering of nuclear professionals but, instead, is an ongoing process that looks to continually promote the advancement of nuclear safety. We, the Secretariat look forward to serving you in this regard, whether it be the simple tasks of managing and securing the proceedings of the meeting, the maintenance of the secure CNS website for your use, or the preparation of its own analyses of safety issues and trends in the world. The IAEA and all of the staff are committed to these tasks.

In closing, I would like to reiterate a point that the Director General made to you at the last review meeting. Safety is a national responsibility and, within that concept, it starts and stops with each of your individual national schema. Every operating organization carries the primary responsibility for safety. And, every national regulatory body stands in the background to the operator, ensuring that appropriate rules and regulations are in place to guide them, and that an appropriate oversight program is in place to assure their attentiveness to detail and to serve the citizens of that country. However, you, the Contracting Parties, have recognized that you are not in this alone. It is only through the cooperative and open sharing of technical knowledge, of best practices, of strategic insights and plans that you can assure that this technology is safely applied.

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to the President of the Review Meeting, Ms. Linda Keen, for her excellent leadership. Likewise, I recognize each of the Officers of the Review Meeting for their sense of teamwork and their commitment to excellence. Finally, I again congratulate each of you for your constructive spirit and your personal dedication. The progress that you have made and the successes that you have achieved are something of which each of you can be very proud.

I wish you all the best and the safest of trips home.