

**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Chairman Christopher T. Hanson  
Remarks for SelectUSA Civil Nuclear Roundtable  
June 7, 2021**

Good morning. It is my pleasure to join you today to share my insights and perspectives during this Civil Nuclear Roundtable. I want to thank the U.S. Department of Commerce for organizing this event and for inviting me to participate. I look forward to our dialogue this morning and to future opportunities to share information on NRC regulatory activities with the nuclear industry and our counterparts at other U.S. Government agencies.

As some of you may know, tomorrow is my one-year anniversary of arriving on the Commission, and I have been the NRC Chairman for just over four months. My entire tenure at the NRC has been during the Covid pandemic, which has presented a unique set of challenges as I engage with NRC staff and work to meet with the U.S. industry, my international counterparts, and other stakeholders. However, as the pandemic environment improves, I look forward to engaging with you all at events, such as this, in-person soon.

The NRC is working towards becoming a modern risk-informed regulator in order to be in the best position to continue meeting our important safety and security mission well into the future. Our transformative efforts will help the NRC keep pace with the highly dynamic, interconnected environment in which we operate, and be prepared to regulate an industry working to implement innovative new technologies. We're also using this opportunity to re-evaluate the way the NRC conducts business to streamline processes and procedures and maximize efficiencies to better serve the American public.

Our BeRiskSMART framework was developed to empower the staff to consistently apply and communicate risk insights for all NRC decisions to fulfill our mission. I've been pleased to see that recent survey results revealed that approximately 70 percent of NRC staff think the work done under the BeRiskSMART framework is important to accomplish our work. Through this effort, we are constantly asking ourselves, "is the juice worth the squeeze?" In other words, will the effort or proposed change lead to an appreciable impact on safety or security?

Other risk initiatives, including advanced risk management licensing programs for operating reactors, continue to be approved by the NRC and implemented across the industry. These programs provide operational flexibility and result in measurable improvements to safety because of voluntary configuration changes made by the operating reactor fleet. In addition to operational flexibility, these programs enhance safety by ensuring that power reactor licensees and the NRC focus on the most risk significant issues.

As activities associated with small modular and advanced reactors continue to increase, it is important that the NRC maintains an open dialogue with all interested stakeholders, including reactor designers, operators, financiers, and our international regulatory counterparts.

That said, the NRC is an independent regulatory agency, and while a license from us is a prerequisite for deployment of these technologies, we are not a technology proponent nor a promoter of these new energy technologies. The NRC safeguards its independence and under no circumstance will compromise safety for geopolitical or commercial interests. However, independence does not mean isolation. The NRC must not, and will not, be an impediment to innovation and longer-term deployment.

**U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Chairman Christopher T. Hanson  
Remarks for SelectUSA Civil Nuclear Roundtable  
June 7, 2021**

Working collegially and professionally with scientists, international counterparts, industry, public interest groups, and others is key to the safe and secure use of nuclear energy in the future. In support of our commitment to being prepared to license new technologies, I want to specifically highlight the important and necessary work that the NRC performs in the international arena. To ensure the success of our critical domestic safety mission, international cooperation is vital in helping us learn from one another, ensures timely sharing of operating experience, and advances global nuclear safety, security, and nonproliferation.

The NRC is engaged in a wide range of bilateral and multilateral activities that enhance the safety and security of nuclear activities worldwide. We have bilateral agreements with over 45 regulatory counterparts, including almost every country with a power reactor program. These agreements facilitate technical exchanges, regulatory information sharing, personnel exchanges, and regulatory assistance.

The NRC's regulatory approach has long been considered a model for countries operating or considering a nuclear program, and both new and established regulators routinely seek the NRC's assistance and cooperation. In support of nuclear safety, it is imperative that we continue to work with embarking countries to ensure they pursue strong standards of nuclear safety, security, and non-proliferation. I would note that this type of international engagement should be of particular interest to this audience given that strong regulatory frameworks are key to the safe deployment of U.S. technology overseas and the NRC is working diligently to share our knowledge and best practices with our international regulatory pursuing these new reactor technologies. I encourage the industry to consider the impacts of its outreach to burgeoning counterparts overseas, as you all can help instill the values of a strong safety and security culture in these countries, which will further strengthen global nuclear safety and security.

The NRC is also working to leverage our longstanding partnerships with mature regulatory bodies to ensure continued high levels of nuclear energy safety and security. Most of you are likely aware of one of our main cooperative activities related to new reactor reviews – NRC's collaboration with our neighbors and colleagues at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (or CNSC). The NRC and the CNSC have been working together on advanced reactor and SMR technical review approaches and pre-application activities under a memorandum of cooperation signed in 2019. We are optimistic on the future of this first-of-a-kind effort and hope it will inform our future bilateral activities, though I would note our work with the CNSC may not be easily replicated with other regulatory partners with more disparate regulatory approaches. However, we are confident our efforts with the CNSC in this area should enhance both regulators' reviews of new technologies and support their eventual safe deployment.

With that very high-level overview, I'd like to conclude by thanking you once again for inviting me to participate in today's roundtable event, and I look forward to today's dialogue.