

Chair Christopher Hanson
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Opening Remarks for Senior Safety and Security Regulators' Meeting
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Good morning and thank you for being here for this session of the Senior Regulator's Meeting. I am happy to be here today – joined by my dear friend Christer Viktorsson, Director General of FANR - to discuss the outcomes from the Regulatory Effectiveness Conference. This was a tremendously well-planned and executed event, and I cannot thank my FANR colleagues enough for their hospitality and leadership in hosting this conference.

During the conference, Christer and I shared reflections from the various plenary remarks, panel discussions, and presentations and we were very motivated to carry forward the important topics discussed in Abu Dhabi and turn them into concrete actions for the future. We developed the Call for Action to capture the four main topics and challenges facing regulators that we heard during the conference. We shared these concepts with the participants at the end of the RegCon, and now we have a chance to share them with you in hopes that you will join us in building momentum for positive change within your regulatory body and globally. It is only by leveraging our collective wisdom, enthusiasm, ideas, and capabilities that we will be truly ready to address the challenges that lie ahead of us.

Before turning to DG Viktorsson to share his perspectives, I wanted to offer a couple of reflections on the first two themes from the Call for Action. The first theme is Leadership, which is indeed a multifaceted topic. The discussions held during the RegCon made it abundantly clear to us that as leaders, we must equip our workforce with the skills needed to drive our regulatory missions forward in these changing times.

Each of us undoubtedly has a vision of what an ideal regulator looks like, taking into account unique circumstances within our respective organizations. I will share my vision of what that looks like within the United States in hopes of spurring further discussion during our session this morning.

At the US NRC, we are facing the need to hire a significant number of staff both to augment our current workforce and plan to replace members of our staff who are making plans for a well-deserved retirement. All that is combined with a strong demand signal for technical expertise to support a potentially large number of SMR and advanced reactor licensing reviews at home, as well as robust international cooperation in both materials and reactors. The rapid pace of technological advancement is another factor that is leading us to prepare for new workstreams, such as deciding the regulatory approach for fusion regulation and preparing for the anticipated use of artificial intelligence in licensee applications as well as in our own government systems.

And finally, we have the unexpected – those “oh no” events and moments that demand prompt, collaborative, and decisive action. We didn't predict armed conflict at operating nuclear power plants; we didn't predict the COVID-19 pandemic, and we don't know what the next major challenge to our safety and security missions might be in the future. In short, we need to prepare people to be leaders more quickly than ever before, with a strong safety and security compass to guide us. We must find a way to grow and nurture our next generation of leaders so

that they can make the important decisions needed to tackle tomorrow's challenges, whatever they may be.

It was so energizing to see the fresh ideas presented by our new generation of regulators during the youth session at RegCon. These young people are the future of nuclear regulation, and it is our responsibility to prepare them to act with courage, conviction, and decisiveness.

In addition to strong and competent leadership, one theme we identified from the conference was Organizational Readiness and Agility. I know that we have some incredibly smart scientists out there, but I don't think we have figured out a way to predict the future just yet. Until we do, we have to plan for the future that we think we will see and have contingency plans in place in case that is not the future that comes to fruition.

To that end, the robust dialogue we had at RegCon showed us that we should invest in strategic workforce planning to make sure that we have the right skill sets in place at the right time to address the regulatory demand.

It is critically important for us to scan the horizon for changes to the regulatory demand – for the NRC, that mean talking to vendors, applicants, and licensees to understand their plans and how those plans may impact us. Over many years, we have learned that a steady flow of information between the regulator and our stakeholders, we can more easily make fact of life adjustments to our budgets, our staffing plans and our workload. It's also essential to have proactive frameworks in place to help reduce unnecessary risk and uncertainty, whether that means planning for waste disposal funding before a facility begins operating or establishing measures for the long-term control of disused sources after their useful life.

Finally, I want to underscore the power and the importance of banding together as a global nuclear safety and security community. This theme came up repeatedly during the RegCon sessions.

When we, as regulators, support one another and share best practices and lessons learned, it pays dividends across the globe. Our friends at the IAEA have invested significantly in finding ways to harness the power of international cooperation – whether by collecting and sharing operating experience from severe weather impacts at nuclear power plants, or by broadening access to and safe use of radioactive materials in the Rays of Hope program. This sharing of information helps to elevate safety and security globally and enhances our ability to approach new challenges with agility.

Before I hand the microphone over to DG Viktorsson, I want to leave you with one request – and that is to bring your ideas and perspectives to this forum so that we can carry forward the themes from the RegCon and work as a unified community to prepare for a future full of possibility and unknowns.

Indeed, I do believe that we are going places as regulators where we have never been, and it is our chance to be intrepid leaders, to develop the regulatory leaders who will carry on our legacy in the future, and to uphold our critical role of ensuring safety and security at all nuclear facilities. I look forward to hearing from our speakers, and from each of you, as we carry forward the themes from RegCon together.

I want to thank each of you for participating in this meeting and for showing such leadership in the realm of regulatory effectiveness. The expectations for us are high right now as the world shines a light on the potential for SMRs, advanced reactors, and new large light water reactors to address clean energy goals. I appreciate the insights that you've shared and look forward to advancing these shared goals. In light of our common interest in forward progress, I want to commend the IAEA for their support in forming a small group to focus on monitoring and tracking progress between now and the next conference. I look forward to seeing the wonderful progress this community will make between now and RegCon 2026!