

**SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OECD/NEA FORUM ON STAKEHOLDER CONFIDENCE,
Paris, France, June 8-10, 2005
Foreign Trip Report**

Subject

Participation in the sixth annual meeting of the Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC).

Dates of Travel and Countries/Organizations Visited

June 6 - June 11, 2005

Attended FSC meeting at the Paris, France Headquarters of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The FSC is a working party to the Radioactive Waste Management Committee (RWMC) of the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). During the meeting, the FSC elected a new chairman and a new core group. I was elected and will continue service as a member of the new FSC Core Group. Immediately following the annual meeting, I attended a meeting of this new core group and participated in planning of future meetings and workshops.

Author/Title/Agency Affiliation

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Sensitivity

Not applicable

Background/Purpose

The FSC was chartered in 2000 by the RWMC. It is made up of members from thirteen countries with active waste management programs as well as representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the European Commission. Delegates to the FSC from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not attend this meeting. Besides the annual meeting in Paris, the Forum also sponsors an annual workshop with wider participation to examine, in detail, issues of stakeholder confidence that have arisen in a particular member country's waste program. The most recent of these country workshops was held in Germany, in October 2004 [see Trip Report, ADAMS No. : ML050110172].

Abstract

Of particular note at this year's annual meeting were topical sessions on "Media Relations" and "The Link between RD&D and Stakeholder Confidence." As a part of the second topical session, I made a presentation entitled, "Stakeholder Confidence in Effective Safety Regulation: A regulator's view of the role of independent research capability," prepared in collaboration with Sitakanta Mohanty from the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses. In addition to these highly informative and discussion-provoking topical sessions, FSC members were briefed

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on a desk study prepared by the NEA Secretariat on "Stakeholder Involvement Techniques." This study, accompanied by an extensive list of useful references from the various member state programs, was a follow-on to the topical session on the same subject held at last year's annual meeting. FSC members agreed that the findings of this study should be prepared for publication as an FSC product. Also at this meeting, the FSC members elected a new chairman and a new Core Group. As a newly re-elected member of the FSC Core Group, I was asked if the NRC staff would be willing to host the next Core Group meeting in January 2006. Forum members were briefed on the preliminary analysis of the results of a questionnaire summarizing cultural and structural changes in radioactive waste management organizations made to address issues of stakeholder confidence. Before adjourning on June 10, FSC members heard updates from fellow delegates on member states' waste programs, with emphasis on stakeholder issues. Such opportunities to exchange experience firsthand and learn from other countries' successes and failures at building the trust and confidence of stakeholders, continue to be of value to NRC's public outreach program. Visible and constructive participation by NRC staff at FSC meetings and workshops enhances NRC's credibility in this arena and contributes to NRC's performance goals for maintaining safety and enhancing public confidence. Following the Fall workshop in Spain, the Forum's next annual meeting will take place the week of June 7, 2006, in Paris.

Discussion

Opening

Yves Le Bars, outgoing chairman, opened the meeting, announced renewal of FSC's mandate by the RWMC, and summarized the Forum's activities over the past year, including the publication of three FSC reports on Learning and Adapting to Societal Requirements, Stakeholder Involvement Tools, and Stepwise Decision Making. Brief presentations were provided of several international initiatives of interest to the FSC.

Report on Eurobarometer 2005

Wolfgang Hilden, of the Radioactive Materials Management and Transport Sector, within the European Commission, summarized the results of the most recent Eurobarometer assessment of EU citizens' opinions of nuclear energy and radioactive waste. More than 24,000 citizens, in 25 member states, were interviewed in February and March of 2005. Based on this poll, 74% of Europeans feel that they are not well informed about radioactive waste, with citizens of Sweden feeling the most informed (51%) and those in Spain and Portugal the least (15%). This result is relatively unchanged from that found in similar polls conducted in 1999 and 2001. The majority of Europeans polled remain opposed to nuclear energy (55% opposed, 37% in favor) and the majority of those opposed stated that they would not change their opinion even if the waste problem were solved. Women were found to be significantly less accepting of nuclear power than men (29 % vs. 46%, respectively), where as age appeared to have little influence. Citizens who felt well informed about nuclear power and nuclear waste were, in general, more likely to be accepting of nuclear energy. Overall, the poll found that public acceptance of nuclear power and radioactive waste remains a complex issue, with much variation between member states, and no clear separation between new and old member states.

Organizational Changes in RWM Institutions: preliminary survey results

FSC members received a report on a preliminary analysis of the results of a recent self-assessment questionnaire about cultural and structural changes made by waste management organization specifically to address stakeholder confidence. Most respondents identified high-profile difficulties or failures in siting process brought about by lack of local acceptance as triggers for organizational changes. Some cited pressure from the public for greater visibility of regulatory authorities (Sweden and Switzerland) and one (Canada) cited specific legislation compelling major actions to improve stakeholder confidence. Resistance to such change was frequently related to employee and policy-makers reluctance to embrace input from 'non-technical' input to what they perceive as 'a technical problem.' Insufficient resources were also contributing factors, especially when organizational decision makers were skeptical that values outside of science and engineering had to be part of their decision making. Some successes were cited where staff members, themselves, were involved in developing organizational visions and values, and internal communication and consultation were enhanced. All organizations responding thus far, including implementers, regulators and policy makers, acknowledged that cultural shift towards greater transparency was underway. A summary of the complete survey results will be presented at the next FSC business meeting.

Election of new chair and Core Group

Members of the FSC elected a new chairman, Peter Brown, of Natural Resources Canada, and a new Core Group. As NRC's delegate, I have served as a member of the FSC Core Group since its inception in 2000, and was re-elected to the new group.

TOPICAL SESSION: "Media Relations"

In 2003, the FSC conducted a survey of media relations within FSC member organizations, results of which were presented at the 2003 annual FSC meeting. Subsequently, the FSC created a working group on media relations. At the 2004 annual meeting, FSC held its first topical session on media strategy, organized with the participation of a senior media consultant and three journalists. At this second topical session, presentations were invited from FSC members, including a policy maker (Switzerland), a regulator (UK), and two implementers (Hungary and Sweden), to discuss their respective media strategies, best practice cases, and examples of success and failure in dealing with the media. General themes emerging from all of the presentations were those of evolution from a largely reactive media strategy focused primarily on technical issues, to one that is proactive, timely (even anticipatory), and more encompassing, including information on process, social and cultural context. Speakers spoke to the importance of media training for preparing technical staff to interact with media representatives, as well as the value of allowing both properly-prepared technical staff as well as PR professionals to interact with media as the situation and subject matter warrant. Several of the FSC speakers noted that a media strategy cannot be separated from an overall stakeholder engagement strategy. Also emphasized was the value of a dedicated communication team implementing an integrated communication strategy and plan, that includes an agreed-upon approach to the media.

Following these presentations, Steven Di Biasio, a media expert and former journalist, was invited to offer his observations and to provoke discussion. He stated that one of the most

difficult things in large organizations was accepting that communication needs to be done professionally. He reinforced the earlier speakers on the need for a proactive, rather than passive, approach to the media. He agreed that technical experts should speak to the press, but only when properly prepared and trained. Biasio likened secrecy, even when appropriate, to “waving a red rag in front of a bull.” He strongly urged radioactive waste management organizations and regulators, if they must hold closed meetings, to provide briefings before and confer after such meetings and go out of their way to include, not exclude the press and the public. According to Biasio, one should assume that one is always “on the record” when dealing with the press, but that it is perfectly appropriate to set ground rules about what you can and cannot discuss. As all of the speakers noted, Biasio stressed the importance of clarity and plain language, and the value of using easily understandable comparisons. In closing, he encouraged the need to build trust through long-term relationships with the media.

TOPICAL SESSION: “The Link between Research, Development and Demonstration (RD&D) and Stakeholder Confidence”

Yves Le Bars, speaking both as outgoing FSC chairman and as a former implementer, introduced this four-part topical session. In his remarks, Le Bars noted that among the several key conclusions from FSC’s work, thus far, was that stakeholder involvement requires both a new organizational culture and the restoration of credibility to the voice of “experts”. He observed that the role of the “expert” has changed. After World War II, shortages and the cold war gave the “expert” the legitimacy to make technical decisions. After some time, however, difficulties and the recognition that alternative approaches are possible, societies moved toward a “shared legitimacy,” that is, legitimacy arising from experts together with decision makers. In recent times, as a result of environmental and health crises, multiple independent actors have called for true public policies arrived at through visible, decision-making processes that provide for stakeholder participation. As a result of increasingly complex issues and social demands, legitimacy now must emerge from the interplay of three types of actors: the “experts,” the decision makers, and stakeholders.

Citing French polling results, Le Bars noted that a strong majority of the French public perceive the French waste management implementer, ANDRA, as “competent” (73%). In the same poll, however, a much smaller fraction (33%) perceive that ANDRA “tells the truth.” Interestingly, this same poll found that public perceptions about public interest/consumer groups were just the opposite-- with only 30% of the public perceiving such groups as “competent,” but fully 91% believing them to be truthful.

Le Bars also commented that the role of research and researchers, while related, differs from that of project implementers. According to Le Bars researchers seek to expose, and, where possible, reduce uncertainties, whereas implementers seek to show that uncertainties are manageable and acceptable. In Le Bars view, researchers must guard against going outside of their fields of expertise when speaking with the public or the press, and they must accept that they are not the decision makers.

Part-1: Stakeholder confidence vis-a-vis the role of science, scientific institutions, and experts in today’s society

Presentations from two “thematic” invited speakers comprised the first part of this topical session. The first was “The role of, and relation to, science in today’s societies, as well the issue of confidence in researchers and institutions,” by Martin O’Connor, Professor of Economics at the Center of Economics and Ethics for the Environment and Development at the University of Versailles. The second was “The role and behavior of the experts and how to expose the expert’s value system in order to gain stakeholder confidence,” by Kjell Andersson a consultant for Karita Research.

O’Connor stressed that research and science do not exist outside of society. Rather, integrity and quality in scientific practice and in the application of research, is one of several fundamental criteria of quality—one of several “ethical bottom lines”— that must be assured for a viable and legitimate partnership with affected communities. He emphasized that, today, stakeholder confidence rests on a changing burden of proof. According to O’Connor, listening is no longer enough-- it is necessary for actors, including experts, to stretch outside their competence, to both genuinely understand other parties’ good reasons and work to address them.

In his presentation, Andersson asserted that in democratic societies, decisions are based not on expert’s values but on citizen values. Democracy requires accountability as well as citizen awareness and transparency. While society accepts that experts have an role in supplying the scientific bases for decisions, Andersson maintained that it will no longer let experts frame the problems and set the agenda for their solutions, as these are inherently political decisions. In his view, democratic legitimacy can be enhanced through participatory deliberations conducted before any formal collective decision making. Andersson described and compared various applications of “deliberative discourses” to several radiation exposure and waste management decisions in Sweden (repository site selection, remediation of contaminated sites, and assessing acceptable radiation exposure from the widespread use of a third generation of mobile phones).

Part-2: The role of RD&D for stakeholder confidence as seen by institutional actors

The second part of this topic session included three somewhat more concrete presentations on the use of RD&D by an implementer (France), a regulator (U.S.) and a policy maker (Canada). It was during this part of the topical session that I presented, “Stakeholder Confidence in Effective Safety Regulation: A regulator’s view of the role of independent research capability,” which was prepared in collaboration with Sitakanta Mohanty from the Center for Nuclear Waste Regulatory Analyses. The presentation slides for this talk were forwarded to the EDO in accord with Management Directive 3.9, on May 23, 2005 [ADAMS No. : ML051430158]. In conjunction with my presentation, I distributed copies of NRC’s Strategic Plan [NUREG-1614 Vol.3] noting the Agency’s Strategic Goal of Openness, and copies of the recently published Guidelines for Internal Risk Communication [NUREG/BR-0318].

Part 3: The Role of RD&D for stakeholder confidence as seen by non-institutional actors

Perspectives of a local community (Oskarshamn, Sweden), a mayor (Vandellòs, Spain), and an academic (France) were discussed in the third part of the topical session.

Harald Åhagen stated that informed consent is vital for stakeholder confidence. To reach informed consent, it is necessary for the public and the local decision makers to become informed and to understand what they are to judge. Building true competence, according to Åhagen, takes a long time and must be done on the terms of the public and the local decision makers. It cannot be done by forced information or education and requires participation and influence. In Åhagen's view, lack of patience and tight schedules by the implementor is the greatest threat to the maturation of this process. Local participation and influence, to be effective, puts demands on both the citizens and the experts—on citizens to engage, build up competence, and to offer questions and advice to the experts. And on experts to be open about uncertainties and to share power. Experts must not only have communication skills, but must also be willing to talk about their work before they have final answers and be willing to share draft plans. In order for local dialogue to be authentic, it must start before solutions are set.

According to Åhagen, the role of the regulators, as the “peoples experts” has been of fundamental importance in Oskarshamn. Initially, SKI and SSI (the Swedish regulators) were reluctant to participate during site characterization out of fear that such participation would appear to compromise their objectivity. This position was not accepted by the municipality. Subsequent visibility and participation by the regulatory experts, along with openness on the part of the implementer's experts has produced a solid platform for local participation and support. Municipal support for the site investigations for the spent fuel repository were measured in April 2005 at 80%.

Mayor Josep Casellnou Barceló spoke to the importance of early involvement with a community to assist the citizens to envision how a waste management project (in Spain's case, a storage facility) can provide long term security as well as contribute to the local economy, culture and infrastructure. He emphasized that to do this effectively, “societal R&D” was necessary along with other more obvious technical research. The mayor also stressed the importance of engaging the full range of municipal stakeholders in shaping a shared vision of the facility as part of the community.

Ghislain de Marsily, Professor of Applied Geology, University of Pierre et Marie Curie and the French Academy of Sciences spoke on behalf of academic research scientists. In addition to the obvious role of the sciences for understanding and designing the repository system, Professor de Marsily emphasized the role of R&D for demonstrating to stakeholders that the system is understood. He also underscored the importance of credibility within the scientific community, as demonstrated through peer-reviewed publications, of the science supporting a repository safety case. According to de Marsily, credibility for the broader community of stakeholders cannot be achieved without credibility within the scientific community. He also noted that such credibility was equally important for retaining good technical staff and for attracting talented young Ph.D.s..

National updates with emphasis on stakeholder issues

At the end of the meeting, each delegate was allotted five minutes to report on significant events or activities regarding stakeholder issues.

After the Meeting

As a member of the Forum's core group, I attended a core group meeting, after the formal FSC meeting adjourned, and contributed to planning discussions for the next FSC country workshop, in Spain, the week of November 21, 2005. During this meeting, I was asked if NRC could host the next meeting of the FSC core group at NRC headquarters, in January 2006.

Pending Actions/Planned Next Steps for NRC

2005 FSC Country Workshop and Site Visit—"Strengthening Decision Making in Spain: *The national centralized storage project and the COWAM Spain initiative* to be held in Spain, November 21-23, 2005

7th Annual Meeting of the FSC—To be held June 7-9, 2005, in Paris

Attachments

1. Proposed Agenda and Convocation for the 6th Meeting of the RWMC Forum on Stakeholder Confidence (FSC)
2. List of Participants