

March 2, 2007

Andre-Claude Lacoste
Chairman
Nuclear Safety Authority (ASN)
6 Place du Colonel Bourgoin
75572 Paris cedex 12
France

Dear Chairman Lacoste:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I want to thank you for your letter of December 26, 2006, concerning cooperation between the NRC, the Autorité de Sécurité Nucléaire (ASN), and the Institut de Radioprotection et de Sécurité Nucléaire (IRSN), as part of Stage 1 of the Multinational Design Evaluation Program (MDEP). The NRC agrees that topics and approaches for working together should be agreed upon in order for the MDEP to provide tangible benefits to the participating regulators.

The NRC and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland (STUK) have identified several technical areas on which it would be beneficial to share detailed design information, including the three mentioned in your letter: the main control room design, probabilistic risk assessment, and fire protection. The actual method of cooperation will involve a sharing of applicant-submitted design documentation between STUK and the NRC, the development of written comments, and subsequent meetings to discuss the completed reviews. Each regulator will remain solely responsible for the review within its country. However, they will have the added benefit of being able to consider the comments or questions developed by the other regulator.

As a first step, STUK has provided to the NRC documents submitted by its applicant, Teollisuuden Voima (TVO), regarding the design of the main control room for the Finnish European Pressurized Water Reactor (EPR). The NRC staff has reviewed this information and has provided questions back to STUK to consider as part of its design review process. A meeting to discuss the results of the NRC's review is being considered. It is expected that STUK will perform a reciprocal review when design information for the U.S. EPR is submitted to the NRC by its applicant.

Your letter also identified three technical topics for which it is expected that different regulatory approaches will be taken in Finland, the U.S., and France. The NRC agrees that it is important to understand the differences among the regulatory approaches, the bases for these differences, and how these differences will ultimately influence the EPR design. As you know, such information is also being studied as part of Stage 2 of the MDEP, albeit more generically. The NRC also believes that there would be value in sharing insights regarding associated construction inspection programs.

-2-

I understand your staff is planning to host the next MDEP Stage 1 trilateral meeting in March of this year. The NRC staff plans to participate in that meeting and will be in contact with your staff on developing a specific agenda that will move this initiative forward. Lastly, the NRC remains open to any additional ideas that you might have regarding ways to enhance cooperation. The Commission looks forward to working together with ASN and IRSN in this and other areas.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Dale E. Klein

cc: Jukka Laaksonen,
Director General of STUK