



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001
E-mail: opa.resource@nrc.gov
Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

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“Opening Address by the Conference President”

Prepared Remarks by

The Honorable Gregory B. Jaczko
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

at the

IAEA Conference on Effective Nuclear Regulatory Systems

Cape Town, South Africa

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Good morning. I am honored to serve as President of this important conference. As I look around this room, I am reminded of what a complex undertaking a conference like this can be and the distance most of you have traveled to participate in this gathering. I am also reminded of the great opportunity we have this week to make additional progress on the challenges we face. Thank you for the commitment you have made to work together over the next week.

I would like to thank the International Atomic Energy Agency, and especially Deputy Director General Tomihiko Taniguchi and his staff at the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, for organizing this conference. I would also like to thank the Republic of South Africa, especially Ms. Elizabeth Peters, Minister of Energy and one of our conference Deputy Presidents, Guy Clapison, and his staff at the South African National Nuclear Regulator (NRR), for serving as our gracious hosts. South Africa is known around the world for its beauty and rich history, and I am looking forward to learning more about this spectacular country.

International and, in particular, regional cooperation around nuclear issues is increasingly important. I would like to acknowledge the important work being done on this continent through the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies of Africa.

As the Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, I am fully engaged in working toward the development and support of strong, effective and independent nuclear regulatory bodies on an international basis. Three years ago, the IAEA sponsored the first conference of government regulators to share their common perspectives and experience in addressing challenges of nuclear safety and security. The goal of the conference was to develop a global vision and to promote international cooperation. Representatives from more than 50 countries participated in that important gathering. The Moscow conference was the first of its kind, providing regulators a forum for exclusive focus on regulatory issues without limits of time, membership or subject matter.

The conference discussed key cornerstones of effective regulation: the independence of the regulatory body, a firm foundation of adequate financial resources, skilled staff, quality management practices, and public confidence in the regulatory body and its decision-making processes. Additionally, several key safety and security challenges were identified. We are honored to have our Russian colleague Mr. Nikolay Kutysin as a Deputy President of this second conference. He brings with him the expertise and lessons from that conference.

As we heard from Mr. Taniguchi, much progress has been achieved on those goals over the last three years and I am extremely pleased to see the group reconvene and continue its discussion on these critical issues.

We have a significant challenge to meet this week, and that is to use this unique regulatory forum to continue the progress that we made three years ago. I hope to see us converge around the four major themes of this conference and establish a concrete plan of action by the time we close on Thursday.

Our four themes include –

- Emerging regulatory challenges;
- Regulatory independence and effectiveness;
- Impact of multinational activities on the national responsibility for nuclear safety and security;
- Impact of multinational activities on the national responsibility for nuclear safety and security;
- and finally, international safety and security communication and cooperation

A renewed interest in nuclear power worldwide has brought with it an increased focus on these regulatory issues, and I believe we all agree that a strong and effective regulatory program must be a prerequisite to any nuclear power programs.

At the conference this week, we will examine and discuss our priorities as regulators and work to identify and address the challenges we face – both individually and together – around safety and security. The work we do is critical for each of our countries and for the international community as a whole.

I want to just touch briefly on the four themes for this week to set the stage. A robust regulatory program has three essential components: legislation and the rules and regulations to ensure safety

and security; adequate resources; and technical capability. One of the critical challenges for regulators of mature industries is the need to resist complacency. We must remain vigilant at all times about the safety and security of the existing fleet and nuclear materials.

For those countries that are newcomers to nuclear power development, your greatest challenge may be to establish the infrastructure necessary for an effective and efficient regulatory program. This is where the assistance of organizations such as this can be invaluable, in helping many of you to identify your regulatory needs and build your capacity; sharing experience, expertise, and lessons-learned; and providing a foundation for international coordination and cooperation.

I believe that one of the most crucial components of a nuclear regulatory program is independence. It is only through establishing and strictly maintaining independence from the industries we regulate that we will be able to effectively and consistently evaluate the safety of plant operations and radioactive materials applications; it is how we will enforce implementation and adherence to regulations; and ultimately, as we heard the Minister of Energy say, earn and maintain the confidence of the public.

One of my top priorities for my tenure as Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is promoting greater openness and transparency in our Commission's decision-making procedures. This is a key part of being an effective regulator. Everyone will not always agree with the actions we take, but it is critical that stakeholders and the public understand and respect the processes by which we make decisions. That is the path toward building the enduring credibility of a regulatory body.

Building and maintaining public confidence is a significant issue for both existing and new entrants into the nuclear energy field. Countries with established nuclear industries must be vigilant about maintaining the public confidence they have cultivated from their past work and must not become unresponsive or disconnected from public concerns or questions. New entrants can be open and transparent from the very beginning to ensure the highest level of public confidence as early as possible. All regulators should keep in mind that it is far more difficult to rebuild public confidence after losing it than it is to build and sustain it from the beginning. Again, the challenge this week is to see how we can make concrete progress.

At the same time that we are working to consistently improve our domestic regulatory programs, we must also bear in mind that nuclear safety and security is an international responsibility. The effectiveness of nuclear regulation worldwide depends upon strong international and regional cooperation and this conference is a fine example of how that can work. We all have much to learn from one another.

International organizations like the IAEA play an important role in providing guidance on effective regulation and promoting the sharing of experience, best practices and lessons learned. We have a responsibility to cooperate closely in the context of this global regulatory framework. Strong, effective regulatory structures and well-established cooperative relationships will increase safety and security for us all.

I encourage all of you to contemplate how we, as a global regulatory network, can plan for the future to ensure adequate resources to meet the needs of the potential growth in nuclear power plants, while at the same time not losing focus on the safety and security of the existing fleet. We learn from sharing our knowledge and experiences with each other, and we become better and more effective regulators because of that sharing.

So, I would just conclude with the charge for this week – to seek new and concrete ways to address the challenges we face. Two years from now I hope the more than 300 people from over 80 nations who are here today will still be talking about what a productive nuclear regulatory systems conference we had in beautiful Cape Town. I am appreciative for the opportunity to be amongst such a diverse and talented group of peers this week and look forward to all of us working together to make that goal a reality.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to working with you, both this week and in the years ahead.