

July 30, 2010

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), I am writing to describe the actions planned in response to the recommendations identified in the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report GAO-10-489, "Convention on Nuclear Safety Is Viewed by Most Member Countries as Strengthening Safety Worldwide," issued April 2010.

GAO recommended that the NRC, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State (DOS), work with other Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) to take the following actions:

- Encourage Contracting Parties to include performance metrics in national reports to better track safety in civilian nuclear power plants and help countries more systematically measure where and how they have made progress in improving safety.
- Expand efforts to increase the number of Contracting Parties' national reports made available to the public by posting them on the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA's) public Web site.
- Promote greater public dissemination of Contracting Parties' written answers to questions about their nuclear power programs by posting this information on IAEA's public Web site.

The NRC agrees with the three GAO recommendations and GAO's conclusion that the CNS plays an important role in strengthening nuclear safety worldwide. NRC will coordinate with other U.S. Government agencies to submit a recommendation to the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) encouraging Contracting Parties to include supplemental information in the national reports that could help measure progress in improving safety. The Contracting Parties established the OEWG as a forum to discuss and develop proposals to improve the openness, transparency and effectiveness of the CNS. The NRC and DOS are already coordinating efforts to promote this recommendation at the fifth CNS Review Meeting, to be held in April 2011 in Vienna, Austria. The NRC would like to note that Contracting Parties will have to agree on the proposal before it can be implemented.

Lastly, the NRC will continue its practice of having DOS post the United States national report and the written answers to questions in the national report on the IAEA secured CNS Web site. The NRC will also continue to make these documents publicly available on the NRC's Web site. The NRC, joined by the U.S. Government agencies involved in this activity, believes that openness and transparency are very important. Therefore, the NRC and DOS will continue to encourage Contracting Parties to make as much information publicly accessible as possible. The NRC understands that the amount of information may vary from country to country depending on circumstances.

The NRC appreciates the opportunity to share its planned actions and to coordinate with other U.S. Government agencies to implement the recommendations discussed in the GAO report. Should you have any questions, please contact Ms. Rebecca L. Schmidt, Director of the Office of Congressional Affairs, at (301) 415-1776.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Gregory B. Jaczko

cc: Senator Susan Collins

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator Susan Collins

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Darrell Issa

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
cc: Senator Thad Cochran

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
cc: Representative Jerry Lewis

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
Washington, D.C. 20548
cc: Gene Aloise, GAO
Glen S. Levis, GAO