



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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S-12-014

**Remarks by
NRC Chairman Allison M. Macfarlane
Fukushima Ministerial Conference
Saturday December 15, 2012**

The United States thanks the Government of Japan, our hosts in Fukushima Prefecture and the IAEA for convening this essential conference. This is an important opportunity for us to continue sharing our experiences with identifying and implementing nuclear safety enhancements in the aftermath of the Fukushima Dai-ichi accident. In particular, this forum enables us to examine ways in which the international community can continue working together to build on the momentum of ongoing activities to ensure that this work is sustainable.

The accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant was devastating. We commend the people of Japan for their courage in working to mitigate the accident in the face of tremendous obstacles at great personal risk, especially during the first weeks following the disaster. I recently had the opportunity to visit the site for the first time since the accident and I was deeply moved by what I saw.

In the spirit of looking forward and moving beyond the short-term response to the Fukushima Dai-ichi accident, we would like to commend the Government of Japan for seeking guidance from the international community on forming the new Nuclear Regulation Authority. An independent and transparent regulatory agency with adequate resources is essential for ensuring the safety of any nuclear program. It is important for all of us to continually examine our national programs so that regulatory independence is practiced and protected.

The international community has worked collectively for nearly two years since the accident towards the important objective of enhancing nuclear safety worldwide. We've learned a significant amount from the accident, identified numerous specific technical issues that require renewed attention, and made measurable progress in implementing improvements. But there is more work ahead. The challenge we now face is making the transition from short- to long-term activities and ensuring their sustainability.

It is important to emphasize that operators have the primary responsibility for safety at individual facilities. The United States reaffirms our commitment to support Japan's efforts to address the impacts of the Fukushima accident, particularly the need for plant operators to assume responsibility for safety. In the U.S., the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO) works with

industry to provide peer evaluations of power plant performance, with special attention to safety culture. We commend INPO's effective peer oversight of the nation's reactors, which is recognized globally. INPO's international counterpart, the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO), is also known for reactor safety oversight. We would like to recognize its recent efforts to increase visibility of safety-related services, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the IAEA.

In addition, the United States believes that governments as a whole must make nuclear safety a top, permanent priority so that the burden of responsibility does not fall to regulators alone. Safety decisions must be clear, technically accurate, and free of undue influence. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that our work to improve global nuclear safety is reflected at every reactor. The United States has demonstrated its commitment to nuclear safety at the highest levels of government. We strongly endorse the "Action-Oriented Objectives" identified at the recent Extraordinary Meeting of Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety. We are already undertaking or planning to undertake each identified action and we call on others to do the same.

The United States government is taking a number of actions to enhance the safety of our 104 reactors. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission established a Near Term Task Force shortly after the events at Fukushima Dai-ichi to review U.S. processes and regulations to determine if improvements were necessary. The NRC staff prioritized these recommendations into a set of actions that take a balanced approach to defense-in-depth as applied to low-likelihood but high-consequence events such as prolonged station blackout resulting from severe natural phenomena. These actions are intended to clarify and strengthen the regulatory framework, with a specific focus on protection against natural disasters, mitigating the consequences of severe accidents, and ensuring emergency preparedness.

Integrating lessons learned into our overall regulatory approach is the next step in a continual process that will ensure the appropriate prioritization of actions and long-term sustainability.

The IAEA's Action Plan for Nuclear Safety is an important guide for international cooperation on Post-Fukushima activities. We call on countries to continue their work to implement the Action Plan. In particular, the plan highlights the need for "establishing a global nuclear liability regime that addresses the concerns of all states that might be affected by a nuclear accident, with a view to providing appropriate compensation for nuclear damage." We urge all Member States to continue efforts toward achieving this important objective, including adherence to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation and other international nuclear liability instruments, as appropriate for each country. With regard to this important objective, I am pleased to note that France and the United States recently moved forward to set forth our common views on nuclear liability and on collaboration towards achieving a global nuclear liability regime.

The Fukushima Dai-ichi accident has profoundly changed the nuclear safety landscape and we are inspired by the international cooperation to improve nuclear safety worldwide. We commit to continue work with international counterparts to share information and insights, prevent complacency, and emphasize the need for full government involvement. The United States believes

that countries with established nuclear programs must also take seriously their role in supporting emerging nuclear programs. We must take what we have learned and share those lessons with the global nuclear community while continuing to apply them in a sustainable way.

In closing, we again praise our Japanese colleagues for demonstrating critical self-reflection and transparency, which allows all nations to benefit from Japan's experiences. The United States appreciates this opportunity to continue our important dialogue.