

**International Conference  
on  
Knowledge Management in Nuclear Facilities**

Closing Statement given at the closing session 21 June 2007  
by the

Conference President Mr. D. Torgerson, Canada

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I would like to welcome everyone to the Closing Session. Everything has to come to a close and from my perspective, this was a very successful conference. In my first address to the conference, I said that in my view there were three main elements to a successful knowledge system or knowledge culture: foundations, processes, and applications. All of these elements, plus the sub-elements under these areas, had to be healthy to have a successful knowledge system.

As I listened to the presentations, I was pleased to see that there has been progress in all of these three areas. In fact, if I compare this meeting to the policy meeting we had in Vienna in 2002, I would have to say that in 2002 the emphasis was mainly on the problems. What I have heard in more than 80 percent of the presentations at this conference is that the focus has shifted to the solutions. Now people are talking about what they are putting into place to overcome the knowledge management gaps. So I am very encouraged; whenever you move from a problem mode to a solution mode, it is very positive indeed.

One of the foundations I mentioned was policy. It is clear to me that there are different challenges in environments where government policy is positive or at least neutral towards nuclear power, as opposed to environments where the policy is against nuclear power. In organisations that work in areas where the policy is not negative, the focus is primarily on attracting the best people and the mechanisms for knowledge transfer to those people from the older generation. We had a lot of discussions on those mechanisms, and some very creative approaches have been initiated. In countries where the policy is more negative towards nuclear power, there are special challenges, concerning attracting people in the first place. It is difficult to attract students into the nuclear area when they see that in 20 years there may be no nuclear industry in a particular country.

I was very impressed by last night's meeting with the Young Nuclear Generation. It was just great to see the enthusiasm of these young and talented people! In 2002, I told the story of a survey that was done in the late 1990s on why students were not going into engineering and physical science. The survey came up with three things: one was that the courses are too hard, and you might fail; secondly, even if you do pass these difficult courses, the jobs don't pay that well; and thirdly, the least attractive people go into those disciplines. But I can tell you from last night, reason three is no longer the case! I don't think we can do much about the difficulty of the courses, but it looks to me like the other things are in hand: really bright, articulate young people are coming into our industry. But 90 percent of them say they are mobile. If there is not a positive environment in one country, they will move to where the vision is stronger. So it is up to our generation to create the strong vision to attract these students.

One other issue that we have to watch is that even where nuclear knowledge management is very robust and strong, it has to be sustained. Human beings like to build things; we like to start them up and we like to get them going. But then, when they have to be sustained, sometimes we are more interested in moving on to other things. So I'd say that complacency is the enemy of a robust knowledge system. We have to be forever diligent to sustain the knowledge systems we put into place. Nothing ever works on its own. It always has to be managed.

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My final point looks at the future. I think that this conference, as I said, has been very successful. I see a logical progression occurring from problem definition to solutions, and then moving towards lessons learnt, best practices, and sustaining the nuclear knowledge culture. So I would like to suggest to the IAEA and the other sponsoring organizations, and to the Conference organizers, that it would be appropriate to have a follow-on conference of this type, which could focus on those latter three topics: the lessons learnt from what has been initiated; the best practices, which countries without nuclear programs could consider adopting; and then, particularly for established nuclear technology countries, sustaining the nuclear knowledge culture over the entire time nuclear facilities are operating. I think we need to maintain the excellent momentum that we have built up so far for managing nuclear knowledge.

Thank you for your enthusiastic participation.