

International Conference on Knowledge Management in Nuclear Facilities (18–21 June 2007)

Opening Statement

By : Mr. E. Gonzalez Gomez, FORATOM

It is a pleasure and an honour to be here today, and I want to thank the organizing committee and the IAEA for inviting FORATOM to this session of the conference on knowledge management in the nuclear industry. This is a timely meeting because we face today challenges in the world economy and well being where nuclear energy will be called to play an important role as long as we will be able to maintain our capacities so that it can be further utilized

Let me share with you some reflections on the subject:

Nuclear Energy is a knowledge based technology.

Because the use of raw materials has only been possible after an extraordinary development that took place during the first half of the last century where the paradigm on energy was transformed and for the first time the departure from mechanical, electrical or chemical energy was achieved. This was the result of an unprecedented effort that to us from the four basic elements, as understood by the ancient Greks, to the capacity of using the energy from the core of the ATOM. This was achieved by the intellectual capacity, the knowledge.

Energy availability and nuclear energy is a public good and such, the responsibility of our institutions.

This is the “raison d’etre” of the institution that assembles us today. And this because the implications of nuclear energy go beyond the role of the enterprises, the companies are responsible of using this public good inside a framework defined by our institutions. It is the responsibility of the institutional framework to define and establish the framework for the use of nuclear power.

Nuclear energy gives us today, and more so in the future the possibility to utilise a source of energy free of CO2 emission and less dependent on unstable world areas from a geopolitical point of view.

In this situation the different actors have responsibilities specific to their roles and they have to fulfil them. We can’t dismiss the possibilities that nuclear power offers and light heartedly not assume the tasks we are confronted with.

Nuclear power produces in Europe one third of the electricity and it occupies 400.000 persons in different industries and institutions. The companies associated in FORATOM have established the strategies to continue the safe operations of the installations, and in the last years there has been a consolidation of good and safe operation. We have established the necessary mechanisms to maintain the relevant capacities. For new projects in construction phase a special effort has been made and we have felt that more professionals in technical matters are need.

Very often in difficult situations related to the public position of parties and governments who in a very short-sighted stance have not only taken position against the actual use of nuclear power, but have also cut efforts in maintaining capacities that the public good needed in order to respond to the challenges,. This has impacted negatively and we have to perform additional efforts. The United States alone has public commitment in the research that multiplies by four the one of the EU.

This has damaged the overall accumulated knowledge.

Today we can see that this situation starts to change and in the European Union signs start to appear that show a renewed interest in the public domain to take the necessary steps so that the situation may be reversed.

The council of ministers that took place the 8 & 9 March 2007 started to assume the role of the nuclear energy in helping the European Union to face climate change and security of supply, it decided to support the creation of an European Energy Forum that will discuss specific aspects for the actual and future use of this technology. Additionally a "Nuclear Energy Technology Platform" is going to be launched with a first meeting foreseen for the 21 September 2007.

Nuclear Power will continue to be a necessary source of energy and the industry will comply with its commitments for operating plants. For new built steps are being adopted so that it can be possible to construct the new installations. It is a responsibility of us all to be up to the challenge, governments, regulators, research centers, universities as well as the industry itself, we all have to face the situation and establish the necessary policies that will make it possible.

FORATOM welcomes the possibilities that this conference offers to report on the situation, envision the future and propose policies that will help us all in the future.