

**International Conference on Knowledge
Management in Nuclear Facilities**
IAEA, Vienna, 18 June 2007

Opening Remarks

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Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I very much appreciate the invitation by the IAEA to be here today at the opening of this conference on Knowledge Management. The OECD/NEA had already collaborated with the IAEA at the Saclay Conference in 2004, and we are very pleased to be contributing to the organisation of this new Conference on Knowledge Management in Nuclear Facilities.

Although many human activities, if not all, require knowledge, it is a very important characteristic of nuclear power to be based practically only on knowledge. While using fossil fuels, oil, gas and coal is relatively easy, to extract energy from uranium or other fissile materials is extremely complicated. Therefore, to generate, preserve and disseminate nuclear knowledge is essential to maintain nuclear power as an energy source for the future. If there is to be a renaissance of nuclear energy, it is even more important to maintain all the knowledge that has been generated in the past decades. And this has to be achieved while overcoming the difficulties that the lack of new investments has created in many countries, where infrastructures previously in place have disappeared.

In this context, let me outline, from the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency perspective, what we believe are the main elements of knowledge management from an international point of view.

First of all, knowledge management in the nuclear sector is a very broad field, and we do not think that this is an area in which the OECD/NEA has a global responsibility. We are very pleased that the IAEA is taking the lead in this field, and we are very happy to help where our experience and advice could be valuable.

In fact, a basic point that I would like to share with you is that if every organisation and institution maintains and disseminates at least the knowledge it has generated itself, we would be on the right track. If the OECD/NEA just maintains and disseminates the relevant knowledge that the organisation has generated during its 50 years of international co-operation, I would be very happy. If, in addition to that, we can provide advice and support to others, the IAEA and member countries, I would then be more than pleased.

I will be participating this afternoon in the Policy Forum and will present to you, in detail, the NEA activities concerning knowledge management in function of three main goals: 1) Generate and develop; 2) Identify, preserve and maintain; and 3) Disseminate,

transfer and share. So I will have the opportunity later on to be more explicit about these very important OECD/NEA activities.

But let me now insist on an element which is key for the future: the human factor. In many countries where infrastructures have diminished over the past two decades because nuclear investments have dropped off, it is very difficult to attract the new generation to the nuclear sector.

Very recently, the NEA held a policy debate on nuclear research at the April 2007 meeting of its Steering Committee. One of the main conclusions of the debate was that the most critical element for the future is to attract the new generation of students to the scientific and technical studies necessary to develop nuclear power. Although the lack of scientific and technical students is not unique to the nuclear sector, and other sectors are experiencing the same problem, it is in this sector where the shortage is possibly the most acute.

A very important outcome of the debate was that the NEA Steering Committee has agreed to discuss, at its next meeting in October, a declaration to be sent to member countries at ministerial level on the importance, for countries that wish to further develop nuclear power in the years to come, of establishing mechanisms which can help universities and research institutions attract students to nuclear studies. There is experience in some OECD countries on how useful these mechanisms can be in changing the trend of the past decades.

Let me conclude these very brief opening remarks by thanking the IAEA once again for its invitation to the OECD/NEA to be here with you today, and by assuring all of you that our organisation will continue to carry out its responsibilities in this very important field in close collaboration with the IAEA.

Thank you for your attention.