

CN-145 International Conference on
Environmental Radioactivity: From Measurements and Assessments to Regulation

CLOSING ADDRESS

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Distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen:

On behalf of the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it is my duty to bring this conference to a close. The Department of Nuclear Safety and Security and the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications have been cooperating very closely to organize this event and we are pleased that it has been so successful.

Before closing, I would like to make some observations and remarks. You have already heard from the Chairpersons of the six sessions of the Conference as well as from the President of the Conference, Mr. Herwig Paretzke. My remarks will be from a different perspective – that of the IAEA – concerning how the outcomes of the conference relate to the IAEA programmes and future plans.

Firstly, I would like to note that this conference has covered essentially the whole of the IAEA's interests in relation to the control of radionuclides in the environment. For this reason it has involved two separate Departments of the IAEA and some widely different disciplines – including regulation, assessment, monitoring, sampling and measurement. It is evident that strong links should exist between the various areas considered during the conference. In some areas there is close cooperation and involvement but it is also clear that there is often limited contact and interaction between some disciplines that might be expected to be closely connected. This suggests that there is work to do in future to achieve a greater degree of connection and interaction between the disciplines of the environmental area.

It was pleasing to see the strong interest shown in the sessions on Sampling, Measurement and Quality. The assurance of quality in sampling and analysis and the support to Member States efforts and international expert communities in this area, is of major interest to the IAEA. For this reason the IAEA plays a key role with the provision to Member State laboratories of matrix reference materials and the organization of proficiency tests and other inter-laboratory exercises. The Chair and President's reports will be very helpful to us in planning and implementing the new project on 'Reference

Materials for Environment and Trade' already included in the 2008/09 programming cycle.

On the occasion of this conference, the new catalogue of IAEA Reference Materials was launched on CD. We hope that laboratory personnel will find the new format more user-friendly and informative than previous versions, and we look forward to having feedback from users.

In the safety area, the conference has drawn attention to the existence of a comprehensive set of international safety standards covering radionuclides in the environment. It has also revealed areas of the safety standards where some evolution and adaptation is needed to reflect experience gained and also to reflect the new directions indicated in the forthcoming recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

It was apparent during the conference that some of the safety standards in the environmental area, which were developed with the help of experts from Member States and approved by senior committees of national delegates, are not necessarily well known among persons in the field and I therefore believe that more attention needs to be given to publicizing and promoting them, through missions and training events. It may also be appropriate to consider offering an international review service based on these standards and covering all the important environmental aspects discussed by the Conference, and, in particular, to help the improvement of national monitoring programmes.

The conference has included a major presentation of the results of the latest of the IAEA programmes on environmental assessment modelling – the EMRAS programme. These programmes, which stretch back to the immediate post-Chernobyl era, have been consistently successful in attracting interest and commitment from Member States and, at the same time, contributing to the resolution of some important environmental problems. The EMRAS programme ends later this year but I would like to assure you of the Agency's commitment to continue its work in this area - on appropriate environmental issues that will reflect current international and national concerns and interests.

I would like to mention some important international events in the future:

Firstly, the next UNSCEAR meeting will be held in Vienna in end of May. The meeting will include the presentation of an updated document on the effects of ionizing radiation on non-human biota and the update of the well-known report on exposures of the public from the various sources of radiation. This year's meeting will also be used to set the new programme of work of UNSCEAR.

In June 2008, the International Union of Radioecologists, the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authorities, the French Institute for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety and the IAEA will hold an international conference on Environmental Radioactivity in Bergen, Norway.

Finally, I would like to remind you that the process for the revision of the International Basic Safety Standards has begun and the outcomes of this process may be expected to have some significant effects on your work in future years. Also, the IAEA has begun the process of publishing reviews of methods for radionuclide analysis and, based on these reviews, developing recommended methods for use by Member State laboratories.

Now, I would like to close the conference but first I would like to express my thanks to all those who have contributed to the conference, the oral presenters, the authors of posters, the chairmen of sessions, the President of the Conference, the cooperating organizations and all others who have helped to facilitate the smooth running of the sessions.

I hope you will have a pleasant journey to your home countries and I look forward to seeing you on some future occasion at the IAEA.

I declare this conference closed.