

The Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety

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15 December 2012

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The events of 11 March 2011 have left an enduring mark on the international community in the wake of the damage caused by the Tohoku earthquake and ensuing tsunami which struck Japan that day. As we reflect upon the events that followed the earthquake and tsunami, we must not forget the hardship and suffering of those who lost their lives, family members or homes, and I would again, on behalf of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, like to express my sincere condolences to all those who have suffered. I would also like to express my appreciation to both Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency for giving me the opportunity to address you today.

As you know, the events of March 2011 continue to have significant impacts on nuclear power around the globe. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident has not only had a direct impact at the plant itself and on the population surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi site, but also on nuclear energy policies, safety and regulation worldwide, affecting current and future nuclear power reactors. It is vital that we fully take stock of the accident at Fukushima Daiichi, that we undertake the essential analyses and associated R&D, that we learn from this information and experience, and that we implement the necessary follow-up measures.

Immediately following the accident, the OECD/NEA offered its direct assistance to the Japanese authorities, notably in the development and implementation of national safety reviews and stress tests, best practices in the remediation of land contaminated with radioactive materials, planning and effective management of decontamination activities, long-term planning for the decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, and main elements to achieve an effective regulatory reform.

It offered its direct assistance to the international community in organising in June 2011, in co-operation with the French Presidency of the G8, a ministerial meeting which enabled

important discussions on how to reinforce international co-operation and international legal frameworks on nuclear safety. Among other conclusions, participating countries agreed that it would be appropriate to strengthen the Nuclear Safety Convention. The NEA was specifically requested to promote nuclear safety best practices and to evaluate lessons learnt from the accident.

The Agency continues to maintain its support to the Japanese authorities through conferences, workshops, analyses and reports, primarily organised by the Agency's three standing technical committees most closely involved in the Fukushima follow-up work: the Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities (CNRA), the Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (CSNI) and the Committee on Radiation Protection and Public Health (CRPPH). These committees and various sectors of the NEA Secretariat have worked together with Japanese and international organisations to provide a wide range of information and expertise.

NEA follow-up work by the various committees is being co-ordinated through the Integrated NEA Fukushima Actions for Safety Enhancements (INFASE) programme, headed by the Senior-level Task Group on the Impacts of the Fukushima Accident set up by the NEA Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities on 23 March 2011. The programme's actions are focusing on onsite and offsite accident management, crisis communication, regulatory infrastructure and decision making, the reassessment of defence-in-depth as well as certain nuclear safety methodologies, and radiological protection and public health. A summary report of key NEA actions and member country responses is currently being prepared and is expected to be published in the first half of 2013.

These international initiatives have already started to bring about positive results. One year and nine months later, I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made in a number of areas.

NEA support to the Japanese authorities regarding regulatory infrastructure has been manifested through a number of missions to Japan, and is reflected in the very positive development of the new Nuclear Regulation Authority.

In the area of radiological protection and public health, the NEA has, in collaboration with the International Commission on Radiological Protection, co-sponsored a series of public dialogues here in Fukushima Prefecture on the rehabilitation of living conditions following the Fukushima Daiichi accident. This Fukushima Dialogue Initiative has focused on

community and stakeholder co-operation, contaminated foodstuffs and the education of children and youth.

A major publication on Japanese liability legislation, much of which has been translated for the first time in a significant co-operative effort between the NEA and the Japanese authorities, will be available in the coming weeks on the NEA website.

Regarding crisis communication, the NEA organised an international workshop in Madrid in May this year in collaboration with the Spanish nuclear regulator. The sharing of experience at this workshop enabled participants and the Secretariat to take into account lessons learnt from the Fukushima Daiichi accident and to improve the international dimension of the Agency's "Roadmap for Crisis Communication of Nuclear Regulatory Organisations".

In terms of the reassessment of defence-in-depth, the NEA Steering Committee held a policy debate on this subject in October. The member countries recognised that the concept of defence-in-depth is valid, but that issues have been raised regarding its implementation which needs to be further reviewed and improved, especially in light of events at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. They stressed once again that the prime responsibility for safety lies with the operator, but that the regulator has an important role to play in ensuring that the barriers in place to protect the public and the environment remain effective. In this context, independent, technically competent nuclear regulatory bodies are key for ensuring such effectiveness, and the international community welcomes the establishment of the new Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) in Japan.

The member countries agreed on the importance of a robust safety culture, as well as of communicating effectively with the public on a regular basis and not only in times of crisis. They also encouraged close international co-operation among nuclear regulators, research bodies, organisations and industry, and highlighted various means of co-operation for improving nuclear safety defence-in-depth. The Committee welcomed continued NEA efforts to support further enhancement of nuclear safety defence-in-depth at the international level, notably through the activities of the NEA Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities and the NEA Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations which will be holding a joint workshop in June 2013 to further investigate the issue and follow-up actions.

International co-operation will also be fundamental to the decommissioning of Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Through the sharing of information as various

elements of the plant's situation are investigated, other operators and regulators will be able to learn from this experience. In this respect, the NEA is also committed to offering its assistance in establishing a full programme of international joint projects on the decommissioning and dismantling of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

As a first step, in the area of accident management and progression, the NEA has launched the new Benchmark Study of the Accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. This project is key to improving the current knowledge base regarding the status of the cores in units 1 to 3 of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, in preparation for fuel debris removal and as a part of the Japanese government's R&D roadmap for the medium and long term in preparation for the decommissioning of units 1 to 4.

The NEA has specifically carried out a review and analysis of its previous joint international research projects which are relevant to the accident at Fukushima. This research and analysis, on areas such as ex-vessel phenomena and containment response, is part of a general reassessment of operating experience to address conditions that could challenge nuclear safety. Through the analyses the Agency has completed thus far, and those which it will undertake in the coming months, we will improve the knowledge at our disposal and that of the international nuclear community for improving nuclear safety.

With decades of experience in co-ordinating joint international research projects, the NEA is uniquely positioned to continue to support Japan as it moves forward in carrying out Fukushima-related research and analyses, and applying lessons learnt. Supported by members and associated countries with advanced nuclear power programmes in Europe, North America and Asia, the NEA can bring together the top technical and regulatory experts from mature nuclear industry and regulatory organisations in focused efforts to help Japan, and the international community, meet the post-Fukushima challenges to nuclear energy policy and use.

Thank you.