

ENISS: A European nuclear industry contribution to the safety standards harmonisation process

Karl-Frederik Ingemarsson (Vattenfall AB), ENISS Steering Committee Chairman

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first like to thank WENRA for inviting me to speak at this stakeholder seminar today and for giving me the opportunity to outline the work that the ENISS (European Nuclear Installations Safety Standards) group is carrying out to promote ever greater safety standards in the nuclear industry.

We live in a world where public consultation, dialogue and participation are watchwords that define how a modern, responsible and progressive industry should operate. This is also how we see our role today in this debate.

Safety, like self-preservation, is a basic human instinct. Not surprisingly, our industry believes that involving the broadest possible range of stakeholders in decisions about something as fundamentally important as safety is a must. Nuclear operators are especially aware of their responsibility for ensuring that nuclear installations and all activities performed are safe in the long, medium and short term. The continuous improvement that has been made with regard to safety culture — even in the absence of legally-binding instruments - reflects the safety related behaviour of NPP operators. Safety always has been, and will remain, our number one priority. There is no compromise possible. This is also why organisations like WENRA were created and why the ENISS initiative was launched.

Before I talk about ENISS though, I would like to give an overview of the nuclear situation in Europe today. The industry continues to invest time, money and expertise in improving and harmonizing safety standards at a time when nuclear's revival has gathered pace and more and more stakeholders are turning to nuclear energy as the best energy option for combating climate change and ensuring security of supply.

Europe's nuclear plants operate safely and reliably, producing large amounts of electricity at competitive prices. They are environmentally-friendly because they emit no greenhouse gases, thereby helping countries meet their Kyoto CO₂ reduction targets. Today, there are 163 operational nuclear reactors in the EU, Switzerland, Romania and Bulgaria, producing 33% of all the electricity. As far as base load electricity is concerned, they provide more than 50%. I don't think that European citizens are aware of this fact. When EU 15 became EU 25 on 1 May 2004, the number of European nations producing nuclear energy rose from 9 to 14. When Bulgaria and Romania join in 2007, that number will grow to 16. In addition, a new nuclear plant is being built in Finland. In France, construction of EDF's first EPR will start in 2007. Other new-build or completion projects are being considered in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Lithuania. Poland has decided to build its first nuclear power plant in the next decade.

The nuclear renaissance is now a reality. Increasingly, governments, business leaders and environmentalists now accept that nuclear energy, as part of an overall energy mix that includes renewables, offers the best option for safeguarding security of supply, combating climate change and providing an affordable source of energy for Europe's consumers. Consequently, several countries are now reviewing their nuclear strategy and reassessing their current and future energy needs. To achieve the European Commission's ambitious goal of improving energy efficiency and reducing energy intensity by 20% by 2020, more electricity will have to be produced.

The political rethink that is underway in several European countries has been accelerated by the recent gas supply crisis and by renewed warnings about failing to meet the Kyoto targets. Gradually, the nuclear map of Europe is being redrawn. Countries have woken up to reality in different ways:

The Netherlands, for example, recently called its phase-out policy into question by extending the lifetime of its only nuclear power plant, at Borssele from 40 to 60 years. In Sweden, Vattenfall AB and OKG will invest € 780 million on uprating the Forsmark, Ringhals and Oskarshamn plant's generating capacity. Clearly, these decisions reveal a new way of thinking about nuclear that contradicts some countries' existing phase-out policy.

Other countries, like the UK, Italy and - to a lesser extent – Germany, have also committed themselves to reviewing their whole energy strategy, including the nuclear component. In the UK, there is even talk of a possible new-build programme, even though their AGR fleet lifetime extension programme is under preparation.

At European Union level, the signs for nuclear are also positive: the recent statement by EU Economic Affairs Commissioner, Joaquin Almunia, that it would be “suicide not to consider nuclear energy” and the recent statement by the European Commission's President, José Manuel Barroso, that “all energy options should be considered, including nuclear” reflect how nuclear is back on the EU policy agenda too. Furthermore, EU Energy Commissioner, Andres Piebalgs' will publish his energy review Green Paper in March and nuclear will be part of it.

In the crucially important field of research, the recent accession of Euratom to the *Framework Agreement for International Collaboration on Research and Development of Generation IV Nuclear Energy Systems* highlights how the industry and the scientific community are already gearing up to a new generation

of nuclear power plants. Whether we are talking about today or tomorrow, nuclear energy is back. Public acceptance as a barometer of how the nuclear industry is progressing reflects these facts.

A new spirit of pragmatism has led more people to accept the significant economic and environmental advantages that nuclear energy has over fossil fuels. To build upon this growing capital of public acceptance, our industry must continue to engage civil society in constructive debate about the key issues that fuel the nuclear debate – and none is more important than safety. This brings me back to ENISS and the important stakeholder role that it plays in maintaining safety standards at the top of the policy agenda.

The European nuclear industry recognises that the liberalisation of the European energy market has led to the deregulation of electricity generation and supply and that diversity of national regulations could seriously distort competition. Undoubtedly, harmonizing regulations is the best way of ensuring that the industry can evolve within a stable legal framework. Consequently, nuclear license holders strongly support WENRA's work on the harmonization of European safety standards for existing nuclear plants, as well as for waste and decommissioning. This support led to the creation, within FORATOM, of the ENISS initiative, in May 2005, in Brussels.

The principal mission of ENISS (see slide 1) is to bring together decision-makers, operators and specialists from the nuclear industry with national regulators in order to identify and possibly agree upon the scope and substance of harmonized safety standards. But it doesn't stop there. The license holders must also support the regulators to ensure that, once they have been defined, the new regulations are implemented, in a harmonized way, at all nuclear installations across Europe. As joint stakeholders in the process, license holders and the

regulators must play comparably important but different roles in achieving this common goal.

ENISS above all provides the nuclear industry with the platform that it needs to express its views, provide expert input and interact fully with regulators throughout the process. Our first task has been to present a common industry position with regards to the safety **reference levels** that WENRA has proposed. By engaging in constructive debate with WENRA and playing a dynamic role in the process, ENISS also defends the industry's interests in a proactive way.

ENISS is fully committed to helping make the process work (see slide 2): the ENISS Steering Committee defines the policy and is in charge of making major decisions. It is composed of representatives from important European nuclear utilities, each bringing special national expertise and experience to the process. The Administration Group coordinates and drives the work programme. It is supported by Expert Groups dealing with reactor safety and waste storage and decommissioning. The Secretariat is in charge of managing all aspects of the ENNIS Initiative.

The ENISS membership (see slide 3) groups together nuclear utilities and operating companies from 13 European countries. For Germany, Spain, Switzerland and Slovakia, their members in the Steering Committee represent all NPP operators. License holders from 4 other European countries with NPPs (see slide 4) have been invited to join the ENISS organization.

WENRA published 3 Harmonisation Reports on 16 January.

On the first one, entitled “Harmonisation of Reactor Safety in WENRA countries,” Mr. Fourest will provide some more technical remarks later, so let me just mention one interesting point: according to WENRA (see slide 5):

- 88% of the required reference levels are already being implemented at existing reactors; in a further 6% of cases there is a difference, but this can be justified from a safety point of view, leaving only 6% needing to be implemented to achieve harmonization. This assessment clearly reflects the fact that the implementation at reactors corresponds rather well with the required reference levels and that license holders have always accepted responsibility for continuously improving safety.
- The second and third WENRA reports are called: “Waste and Spent Fuel Storage Safety Reference Levels” and Decommissioning Safety Reference Levels.” ENISS was somewhat surprised by the issuing of those reports. We had expected them much later. The scope, and especially the number and content of the reference levels, is considered by us to be out of proportion and imbalanced compared with the reactor safety harmonization report. Therefore, a call for comments until 1 June seems to be impracticable.

The work of ENISS is a good example of how dialogue and results-oriented participation with stakeholders can help identify optimal solutions to the problems that our industry faces today. It is important to set up a platform for interactive discussion between ENISS and WENRA on all aspects related to safety.

Thank you for your attention.