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In the relatively short history of WENRA there are already several important milestones. I have had the unique opportunity to experience the majority of them in person. And what is more, in different roles.

My very first face to face contact with WENRA dates back to spring 2000. Like other heads of nuclear safety regulatory bodies in then EU candidate countries I was invited as a guest to WENRA meeting in Paris. My task was not an easy one, I had in a diplomatic way to convey to distinguished WENRA members that the “Report on Nuclear Safety in EU Applicant Countries” released in March 1999 was a big achievement with a few crucial gaps or misunderstandings concerning the situation in the Czech Republic. Fortunately enough I was not alone, the situation in other candidate countries was similar. We were sure that we could help to improve the revised version of the report, because it was quite clear that better and open communication, trust and respect to each other could solve open issues quickly. Our comments and offers to cooperate on improvement were actively welcomed by WENRA members and the revised report published in October 2000 can be considered as real success.

In spring 2003, there was a WENRA decision for “advance” enlargement, and the heads of regulatory bodies from candidate countries became full members of the club. Then we discussed the appropriateness of changing the name of the association and with my active support we decided to keep the already established trademark and remain “WENRA”. Following years were devoted to a “bottom-up” attempt to promote the harmonization of nuclear safety requirements in the EU. Our working groups did a super job. WENRA reference levels in reactor safety and radwaste management are really respected documents, and WENRA is a well recognized player in the nuclear field.

In autumn 2006, I was passed the baton of the WENRA chairmanship. I would like to remind you that I come from an EU-10 member country and moreover from a country with a relatively small nuclear program. Is not the WENRA decision concerning my chairmanship proof of a real European Community spirit and way of thinking of the club?

However, as Bob Dylan famously sings: “The Times They Are A-Changing”. We have much work to do to keep our “trademark” WENRA shining, to find new motivating tasks and also to find new inspiration from our partners. We have already decided to prepare a base document for harmonizing the approach to safety of new reactors. We have invited our colleagues from non-nuclear EU countries to join freely our deliberations as observers. We continue to provide our expertise to EU institutions. The next step we could consider would be another “advance” enlargement, i.e. inviting our colleagues from Ukraine, Armenia and possibly also the Russian Federation to join us.

The activities of WENRA can be characterized by mutual trust, openness and respect. If we can keep this friendly but at the same time ambitious spirit, we will be able to contribute even more to our common core business: protecting the people.