

EUROSAFE Forum 2005

- Introduction -

Lothar Hahn, Technical and Scientific Director of GRS

Ladies and gentlemen,

Being the third in our trio of organisers, I would like to welcome you very warmly to our EUROSAFE Forum 2005. My special thanks go to our Belgian partner Association Vinçotte Nuclear, our co-host here in Brussels, who with much commitment has taken part in the preparation and staging of this Forum. The fact that we have won a new co-organiser in AVN is to be seen as a signal that the EUROSAFE Forum is put on an even broader European basis. It is also a further milestone on the way to the creation of the EUROSAFE Association which – as my colleague Jacques Repussard has already pointed out – serves for bundling the competences of the European Technical Safety Organisations.

In Berlin last year, the central theme was "Learning from Experience – A Cornerstone of Nuclear Safety". It is closely related to this year's theme "Safety Improvements - Reasons, Strategies, Implementation". It, too, emphasises the aspect of operational safety, from which new requirements for safety ensue.

It has to be our common goal to analyse all signs that indicate a potential for safety improvements, irrespective of whatever interests may prevail. Safety improvements have always been a routine matter in nuclear power plants.

Safety improvements are the result of new research findings, improved safety analysis methods, and the diversity of operating experience. They serve for the improved protection of man and the environment on the one hand and for the requisite reliability and availability for safe plant operation on the other. These goals are not in opposition; they rather more complement each other to a certain extent.

The implementation of known safety improvement options is often preceded by intensive scientific discussions among all involved. It is the task of the independent experts to present and document comprehensibly their proposals and recommendations in agreement with the regulatory authority. On their part, the licensees are expected to be open to these recommendations and also to question them critically. I believe that this perception of the different roles is part of a democratic process. In this context, the respective technical and administrative regulations in the different countries play a major role. For example, the German Atomic Energy Act stipulates that if modifications are applied, the necessary precautions against damage have to be taken in line with the state of the art in science and technology. Furthermore, nuclear technology has to meet international requirements set by the EU and the IAEA or laid down in other international agreements, e. g. in connection with radiation protection and the transport of radioactive materials.

I am curious to see how the theme of our event will be presented in the three plenary lectures from the point of view of the technical safety organisations, a regulatory authority, and a nuclear power plant operator.

Following the lectures, six experts from Europe will discuss with you the "Perception of safety improvements by the general public". Questions are bound to be raised on the use and the importance of safety improvements, on their motivation, on whether there may be only technical or perhaps also political reasons, and finally on how the improvements are communicated to and perceived by the general public.

The organisers are very pleased that they have managed to win Professor Jean-Pierre Contzen over for the moderation of the panel lectures and the panel discussion. Professor Contzen is a former Director General of the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission and currently Professor at the Instituto Técnico of Lisbon.

I would already like to point out a further highlight of our event, the guest lecture of the EU's Energy Commissioner, Mr Andris Piebalgs. It is a special joy and honour for us that he has accepted our invitation. His presence here today makes our Forum a truly prestigious event.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I now have your attention for a few further organisational details. Apart from the programme booklet, you will find notes on programme changes and a questionnaire on the Forum in your conference bags. We would kindly appreciate your feedback.

You will find a poster exhibition in the foyer, presenting further work and information. They complement tomorrow's five seminars. The authors will be pleased to answer your questions during the breaks.

At reception and in the foyer, various information booklets are on display. Among them, you will also find – and please excuse my taking the liberty of pointing it out – the 2004/2005 GRS Annual Report, which we have just published to coincide with the EUROSAFE Forum. The final report of the French-German Initiative for Chernobyl on the Chernobyl Shelter is also hot off the presses.

Finally, after Commissioner Piebalgs has ended his lecture, I would like to ask you to make your way up to the cocktail reception on the 30th floor without much hesitation. There you will be able to enjoy the wonderful views of the Brussels evening lights while this room here will be rearranged for our dinner.

Let me now wish you interesting lectures and stimulating conversations and thank you for your attention.

Professor Contzen, may I now ask you to lead us through the further programme this afternoon.