

Welcome by Jacques Repussard, IRSN Director General, at EUROSAFE 2004 in Berlin

Thank you Lothar.

Guten Tag, bonjour à tous and good afternoon,

Since the last EUROSFAFE meeting in Paris last year, many discussions have taken place between IRSN and GRS, also with some other technical bodies. The two organisations, which we represent, GRS and IRSN, have decided in the last few months to deepen their strategic relationship and intensify co-operation. This partnership is realistic and makes good sense. It is realistic because we share common values, independence, a knowledge-based approach, consistency and impartiality and – not to forget it – business ethics.

Also it is realistic because our past co-operation, which has now been going on for a decade, has shown excellent results, practical operational results, which everybody can see. The definition of the risk levels which could be expected for the EPR reactor are a product of the joint work of GRS and IRSN. The RISKAUDIT institution, which is now very well known in Eastern Europe, in Russia and Ukraine, has been a creation of both institutes and has a European leadership role in helping develop nuclear safety approaches in Eastern Europe.

The EUROSAFE approach, to which we come year after year, is also a result of this co-operation. So we have results to show for and there is no reason to think that we cannot continue to prove our joint value to be more than the added total of the two values of the individual institutes.

It is realistic, as I said, but it also makes good sense, mainly for two reasons: The first one and maybe the more important one is that we face the same problems. And people who face the same problems have a good reason to work together. What are these problems?

Lothar has already mentioned the development of new sophisticated knowledge-based tools which is a very expensive business while institutes have less and less money. Therefore, it makes sense to share development costs.

Knowledge management is also a key to the efficiency of our expertise and we can do this by exchanging experiences, by exchanging our professionals. We have launched a new programme to mix together our new younger staff and this is proving very successful. So we can together be more efficient in our knowledge management approach.

But may be the worst of the problem is that – as time goes by, thanks to the efforts of everybody, including the experts, there have been no major accidents – we are now slowly entering a new age. May be we could call it the “Post Chernobyl-Era”, in which many people

tend to take nuclear safety for granted. Most of the problems are supposed to have been solved. "There will be no more accidents", is what you hear. decision makers sometimes tend to think that funding research in this area is less important, and that experts, although indispensable could have a less prominent role. This could lead to dangerous situations. It is a problem which we have to face together, although the situations for nuclear industry and nuclear policy are different in France and Germany.

The second reason why it makes good sense to work together is the fact that this actually paves the way – to work also with other European organisations, other partners apart from French and German, and that is paving the way towards the convergence of nuclear safety practices in Europe. Convergence of nuclear safety practices in Europe at the level of experts is only a part of a broader picture which is slowly but inevitably coming to the European scene for very good reasons. There are three other main parts in this overall process: There is or there will eventually be a legislative part of it. The European Commission has proposed and presented at the last EUROSAFE conference a draft package which did not meet the consensus of the Governments in Europe – but the European Commission will not give up easily its ideal and neither should it. And therefore, this package is proposed to be argued, to be discussed and to be refreshed, and perhaps in some years there will be a legal umbrella for nuclear safety in Europe. That is the first step. Maybe not in time but it is the first and at the highest level of what could be a European system in the nuclear safety field.

Then there is the problem of having in practice regulatory convergence, because it is good to have maybe directives in some time in the future. It is good to have standards. But standards will never resolve issues. Therefore, convergence of regulatory practices is as important as convergence of experts' practices. This, I believe, is one of the goals of WENRA, which was already set up some time ago and which is making some progress in its own area.

And finally, there is a third, maybe less talked-about but still very important area for convergence of practices in Europe. I am talking about risk governments. This is more complicated because it involves all the stakeholders, associations, political parties, industry, and the media. This is difficult because of course each country's culture, history and also practices in the nuclear industry are different. And therefore it is difficult in practice to involve stakeholders across Europe in a kind of common thinking on the theme of risk governments, although it is very important if one day we are supposed to have a common vision of what should be the safety objectives. Perhaps the EUROSAFE Forum could become a place where these issues could also be discussed with the general public.

This harmonisation process at the large European level is not merely an option, it is indispensable in my opinion. It is indispensable for two reasons. The first reason is that from a societal point of view, citizens of Europe from East and West, North and South, are totally justified in expecting identical objectives and achievements in nuclear safety. But today, people cannot see whether this is a fact or not, because there are many differences of history, of technology, of habits between the countries, and it is impossible for even a well-informed citizen to actually make a judgement on whether the goals of radiation protection and nuclear safety are identical or not at the European level.

And of course the fact that there are differences is actually undermining public confidence in the organisations of the nuclear sector. Public confidence cannot be gained unless there is progressively a harmonised approach which will also involve the experts present in this room today.

The second reason is more pragmatic and economical. If you look at it coldly, we are today seeing nuclear operators and the nuclear industry in Europe concentrating, becoming fully business-oriented and therefore concerned about optimising investments and therefore considering in their strategy how much should be spent on safety, how much should be spent on energy production and maintenance, etc. etc.

And I believe that if the experts who work as a profession towards nuclear safety get their act together by using the best methods, by not repeating different problematics in different countries for the reason that they have always done so in the past, this will be useful also for the industry by assisting its competitiveness and therefore helping the industry to spend more on safety.

It is not the task of IRSN to help utilities' competitiveness. But if we can work in such a way that the nuclear operators in France, Germany, Ukraine, Russia or wherever we are called for co-operation, are better economic agents, then this is also in the interest of safety.

So, for all these reasons, ladies and gentlemen, GRS and IRSN are determined to contribute to the reduction of differences in Europe and to strengthen the harmonisation process in whatever form over the years ahead.

And for that we propose to promote the EUROSAFE approach. Lothar Hahn will tell you more about our ideas.

EUROSAFE is not a body where we can decide anything, it is a professional forum for the experts mainly from our organisations, from other technical safety organisations in Europe, e.g. AVN and others who are associated in the EUROSAFE approach, but also experts from

industry and from governmental and non governmental circles. Experts are invited to take part in this forum and I hope you will enjoy the five workshops that we have prepared for you for tomorrow.

Because at the end of the day, nuclear safety is all about people. People – yourselves - make safety every day. And this can only be achieved in the long term if you are happy in your jobs, if you think that there is a future, if you think that you are supported by public opinion, by the governments and also by the industry.

And I hope that by discussing these themes at EUROSAFE this will actually help promote nuclear safety in Europe.

Thank you very much.