

Introductory Remarks

**Workshop on Global Safety Culture —
National Factors Relevant to Safety Culture**

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Workshop on National Factors Relevant to Safety Culture. Over the course of the next four days, we will be hearing from and discussing with experts about the influences and impacts of factors that can positively or negatively affect the building blocks of a strong, sound safety culture.

As you know, the IAEA serves as an intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide. The programs of the IAEA encourage the development of the peaceful applications of nuclear technology by promoting nuclear safety standards and security guidance and their implementation worldwide. In the IAEA Safety Principles Fundamentals (SF-1) document, the IAEA calls upon leadership and management to ensure the promotion of a strong safety culture. In addition, one of the outcomes from a recent *International Experts Meeting on Human and Organizational Factors* called for Member States to complement their traditional approach to safety with a systemic approach to the entire array of interactions at all levels among individuals and technology within the organization (ITO).

As scientists and technologists in the various fields of Nuclear Technology, we know that science and technology feed off of one another, propelling both forward. Scientific knowledge allows us to build new technologies, which often allow us to make new observations about the world, which, in turn, allow us to build even more scientific knowledge, which then inspires another technology ... and so on ... Science and technology factor heavily in the development of tools for the betterment of humankind. We rely on them to provide solutions to complex problems. But, we cannot solely rely on them for all of the answers to solve all of our problems, as neither can replace the most important factor in problem solving: the human factor.

Industries such as commercial aviation, oil and gas, and nuclear energy have achieved good safety performance, but not without incidents or accidents. During the investigation of several notable accidents (e.g., the crash of Continental Express Flight 2574 in 1991, the Deep Water Horizon explosion in 2010, and the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986), the lack of a positive safety culture was identified as a major contributing factor, providing dramatic turning points and propelling safety culture to the forefront as an exclusive topic for root cause analysis in system failures, incidents and accidents—its focus: the human factor.

Science and technology supporting nuclear energy hold great potential to help mitigate global warming and contribute to sustainable development; however, the issue of safety culture requires the nuclear community to understand the dynamics of interactions among individuals and technology within the organization so they may properly evaluate their own abilities to produce safety outcomes more effectively.

The IAEA is facilitating this workshop for experts and participants to discuss how safety performance can be improved through safety culture, leadership and management and hopefully gain an understanding of how various factors may influence safety culture.

To be very clear, it is not the role of the IAEA to either comment or make judgments on cultural issues specific to a country. While we do not discourage discussions among experts, references to national culture, comparisons and/or assessments of various national cultures, will not be included in the work of the Agency. So as this workshop commences this morning, I want to reiterate the important message present in the Compendium preparatory to the workshop, and that is:

“...it is of key importance not to reduce the conversation to narrowed opinions or unproductive, inconclusive philosophical debates about the perceived cultural factors of any Member State with regard to their ability to safely use nuclear energy or achieve its safety goals. Such an approach is not only polarizing, but it is also misleading, as the benefit and goal of this workshop to discuss in general the national factors that may influence safety both positively and negatively; the awareness and proactive treatment of such factors is a way of further strengthening the protection of people and the environment from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation...”

Concluding Remarks

So again, we welcome you to this four day workshop and we look forward to thought-provoking, productive discussions and hope to take advantage of the insights and information shared to further progress our knowledge and understanding of safety culture. With that, I wish you a successful workshop.

Thank you again for your attention.