



EUROPEAN NUCLEAR SAFETY CONFERENCE 2013

ENERGY COMMISSIONER GÜNTHER OETTINGER

OPENING ADDRESS

TUESDAY, 11 JUNE 2013

Nuclear Safety in the European Union

Dear Mr Stritar,

dear Mr Hennenhöfer,

dear Director-General Lowe,

dear Mr Echavarri,

Dear Mr Flori,

Dear colleagues that bear a responsibility for nuclear safety,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union faces big challenges in its energy policy. It is the task of all those involved in the energy business today, to ensure that we transform our energy system to become more sustainable, while ensuring uninterrupted supply of energy, at competitive prices for the industry and affordable prices for our citizens.

We need investments in networks, in ICT to add intelligence to the networks, in flexibility, in new, renewable, sources of energy, in low-carbon electricity production, in nuclear safety and in dealing with nuclear waste.

We need to do this in the most efficient way possible. We need to use the opportunities it creates to build up innovative industries, be they in efficient appliances or in nuclear technology.

You know that the European Council some weeks ago came together and discussed energy prices. It is clear that if we do not succeed in ensuring competitive energy supplies, we place Europe at a disadvantage, and we risk isolating Europe, or worse, making it irrelevant.

We are still working too much on a national basis. We still have national support schemes that can change with the wind. We still have national procedures to approve the design of a nuclear power plant. And we have Member States national plans to ensure security of electricity supply. All this is very costly, and it is out-of-date.

What we need is cooperation. We need much more cooperation between Member States so that we make most of one of our most valuable assets as the EU: the internal market. Our markets are already connected. Companies work on a European basis, or even a global basis: their investments and their products cross borders. So Member States need to look across borders as well.

We need more cooperation between Member States to take responsibility for decisions related to what energy sources are used, but at the same time to discuss with neighbours what these decisions mean for one another. More importantly, we need to discuss how we can benefit from one another and create synergies. That is what the internal market is all about.

We need more cooperation between Member States to be able to rely on each other not to pursue some kind of 'beggar thy neighbour' policy and to be able to have confidence that agreements made on a European level are implemented nationally according to the spirit of those agreements.

When we are able to rely on each other, we are able to respect each other, and we are willing to cooperate. All these things are linked.

It is the Commission's responsibility to ensure that Member States cooperate, that they stick to what they agreed, and that they are able to rely on each other.

When this is very relevant for energy, it is even more relevant for nuclear energy. You know very well that this nuclear energy is a controversial topic. At a European level, we are neutral, we are objective, and we are pragmatic. But we work based on a very clear principle: Nuclear safety cannot be compromised.

When I say we, I do not refer to the European Commission only. I refer to everybody in the EU involved in nuclear safety. And I am happy to see

that many of those people are gathered today to discuss how this principle can be implemented in the best way possible.

Only when there is a clear European framework that defines how we ensure that nuclear safety is guaranteed, and how we cooperate to achieve this, then we are able to ensure that Member States can rely on one another and respect each other's choices. And that citizens in different Member States can rely on their neighbours across the border.

You, as national regulators, have worked well together so far, in particular in relation to the stress tests and the subsequent action plans. This was not a one off exercise but will be a key aspect of your responsibility for nuclear safety in your country.

Only within a clear European framework, you will be able to work together as equals when taking on your national responsibility, and when taking on your joint European responsibility. It requires a framework that ensures your independence as national regulators, that ensures transparency, that is continuously improved based on the latest technology, knowledge and experience, and that allows for verification of nuclear safety across borders.

The new Nuclear Safety Directive that the European Commission is about to propose, will create this framework. It is essential for nuclear safety in Europe, but it is a framework. Making it work is a continuous exercise, for all of us gathered here today.

This conference is an outstanding opportunity to discuss how to do this. I wish you every success in this endeavour.