Speech by Agneta Rising, World Nuclear Association, for the World Energy Council General Congress

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Nuclear energy is essential for meeting the world's need for affordable, reliable and clean energy.

We have plenty of energy sources, plenty of ways of making electricity and heat and so on. But there are very few that have a low impact on the environment and nuclear has really good environment characteristics. There are even fewer energy sources that also offer security of supply. Nuclear offer that benefit too.

The World Nuclear Association is the trade body that represents the global nuclear industry, not only reactor operators, but the full fuel cycle. With 200 member companies, WNA's mission is to enable industry cooperation on safety , environmental and economic issues, promote a wider understanding of nuclear energy among the public, politicians and decision makers and to provide trustworthy, comprehensive and easy to access information.

Our Fuel Market Report projects that by 2030 global nuclear capacity will grow from the current 371 GWe to 574 GWe, an increase of 55%. But with more effort we could achieve a global nuclear capacity of around 700 GWe, that's almost a doubling.

Nuclear power is growing globally, but it needs to grow faster if the world is to meet future energy demand and avert climate change. We need better, smarter governance - that will promote safe operations and help achieve this necessary expansion of nuclear generation.

As an example, the safe transportation of radioactive material. The European Association of Competent Authorities is aiming to harmonise transport regulations in Europe. They state that "Compliance with transport regulations is the single most important factor that affects transport safety. But the introduction of more regulatory requirements, particularly variations in requirements in the countries involved in the transport route, does not automatically improve safety; it can sometimes have the opposite effect by making the transport regulations too complex and inconsistent."

One area where greater international collaboration could help the regulatory environment is in the licensing of new reactor designs. The first of a new generation of reactors are now being built around the world. But the same reactor design has to go through different regulatory processes in each country to achieve approval.

We can learn from other industries. In the civil aviation industry air operator certificates, issued nationally, permit aircraft operators to use specific aircraft types internationally. We might not be able to achieve a similar situation where approval for a company to operate a particular reactor design in one country would be recognised globally. But what should be achieved is more standardisation in the approval process, so that reactor vendors need not extensively rework the same information and documentation because different national regulators have different processes for design approval.

We would also like to see greater recognition of prior safety assessments of new reactor designs by regulators in other countries, while still giving due attention to specific national requirements.

Greater international collaboration also extends to communication on safety. We need to build on the good links we already have with WANO and the IAEA, and improve on how we share information and communicate all interested parties, including the general public.

Information does not respect national boundaries. Transparency is important to retaining trust, but it isn't sufficient to simply produce more communications, to release every scrap of data, without explaining clearly the context.

Too often nuclear incidents and accidents are treated differently and disproportionately to their actual impact. It is perhaps remarkable that, although decommissioning Fukushima will be technically challenging, an accident that is seen as having such global significance has resulted in no nuclear-related fatalities or injuries. Most likely it will not be possible to attribute any health impact from radiation in the future, either.

We think there is much to be learnt through an exchange of best practice with other sectors of the energy industry here at the World Energy Council conference. We need effective regulation and governance that will allow us to grow safely and efficiently, as nuclear energy is vital to meeting the world's growing need for affordable, reliable and clean energy.

Safety and transparency are essential for public acceptance, which means the survival of the nuclear industry.

But for public support and a rapidly growing industry we must put public fear of radiation in perspective. Only then can we meet the world's need for affordable, reliable and clean energy.