

No.: S-17-001

January 17, 2016

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**Remarks by Chairman Stephen G. Burns
Nuclear Energy Agency Workshop on
Stakeholder Involvement in Nuclear Decision Making
Keynote Speech
January 17, 2017
Paris, France**

Thank you for inviting me back to Paris. I am always happy to be back in my old stomping ground in the City of Light, and to see again many of my old friends and colleagues.

We are here this week to talk about the very important relationship between the world's nuclear regulators and their respective constituencies – their stakeholders.

There might have been a time in the past when the working of government was less visible and decisions announced as a *fait accompli*. That is not so much the case today when it comes to how nuclear regulators as well as other organs of government go about their business.

In truth, the arc of history reflects global movement toward broadening information flow and participation.

A seminal article by American public policy analyst Sherry Arnstein, written in 1969, presented a ladder diagram to explain the graduated levels of public involvement in government decision making. The ladder has eight rungs that represent varying levels of public “clout,” so to speak, in the decision making process of those in power.

The lower rungs depict non-participation and the middle rungs focus on education and information as well as some consultation. But as you get higher on the ladder – on the rungs that I think we're most interested in this week – you get to partnership.

I do believe that today partnership between stakeholders and regulatory organizations, as well as openness and transparency, are seen more frequently as traits of a good regulator, and are increasingly set out as goals in strategic plans throughout the world.

Today, I believe we do expect regulatory decisions to be made openly and after decision makers have carefully examined all the facts and with input from their stakeholders. But that raises a question not particularly addressed in Arnstein's ladder: Who is a stakeholder?

You've no doubt pondered this yourself and perhaps have discussed this with others in and outside your organization. You might still be having that discussion even today. So let me offer a departure point as we begin our three days together. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary there are three definitions for the word stakeholder.

We can ignore the first definition, though it is rooted in the original page of the term, unless we are avid gamblers. It says a stakeholder is a person entrusted with the stakes of bettors.

The second definition -- one who has a "stake," that is, an interest or concern in an enterprise -- is closer, but it leans too heavily toward those with a financial interest in a business.

Which brings us to the third definition: one who is involved in or affected by a course of action. If I had a bell to ring up here, I would ring it for this definition.

In the context of that definition, then, our stakeholders include those who live near or work in nuclear facilities; those who own or run the facilities; those who govern at the national, regional or local level; those who manufacture the components or the fuel; those who regulate the output or use of the facility; those who benefit from the use of radiological material and nuclear installations; those who might be adversely affected in any way by materials or facilities.

Stakeholders also include the media who convey information to others, and the nongovernmental organizations that represent the views of many individuals.

And we must keep in mind that stakeholders are not only the ones who support your organization and its objectives or who express confidence in what you do, but also those who are deeply skeptical, who offer critiques, constructive and otherwise, and even those who are largely indifferent, except when your organization -- or those you regulate -- receive media attention.

Finally, stakeholders also include regulators around the world who could be affected by events, decisions or issues occurring in your country. You can see stakeholders as consecutive ripples moving outward as your course of action -- your decision -- lands like a pebble in a pond.

Now let me talk for a moment about why addressing your stakeholders, listening to their input and involving them, to the extent possible -- in other words, reaching the rung of participation in decision making -- is simply the right thing to do.

Public involvement is a cornerstone of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's strong, fair regulation of the nuclear industry. The NRC recognizes the public's interest -- their stake -- in properly regulated nuclear activities, and consequently provides many opportunities for individuals and groups to share their views.

And the NRC involves stakeholders early in the regulatory process. They are not an afterthought to the process, but a part of the process. Taking this point of view helps assure stakeholders that the

NRC is making sound, balanced, appropriately informed decisions about nuclear safety. In my view, it underpins their trust in us as a regulator.

I've spoken of the concept of trust in other forums, but I think it is worth revisiting the topic. Researchers have found – and I suggest that we know this intuitively – that trust plays an important role in how we accept and respond to risk. If we don't trust the decision maker – or we don't know them well enough to place our trust in them – we are skeptical of their risk calculations and risk communication.

We won't believe in the reliability of their information or trust their judgment or their decisions. Achieving trust can be very difficult for any nuclear regulator anywhere in the world overseeing a highly technical and complex industry that many people simply may not understand, especially when what we're regulating – radiation – cannot be seen or felt or heard.

To be trusted, one – whether a regulator, a parent, a friend or a worker – must listen to others, listen to fears and listen to solutions. Trust is built on relationships; relationships are built on communication and respect. Respecting your stakeholders, even those with opinions very different from your own, listening carefully to their viewpoint, looking for common ground, considering their input, examining their evidence: all of this is part of building trust.

And when we all do it – all the nuclear regulators around the world – we build rings of trust in all our countries rippling out from that pebble in a pond.

The NRC does more than provide lip service to this concept. The NRC takes seriously its relationship with its stakeholders. We have public comment periods on agency rules and policies, public meetings, workshops, social media platforms, traditional media outreach, open houses, webinars, roundtables, petition processes. We hold hearings, read emails, take phone calls.

Historically, the concept of openness has been part of the agency's strategic plan. Let me quote from our most recent plan: "As an independent regulatory agency, the NRC conducts its regulatory activities as openly as possible with meaningful stakeholder involvement."

Stakeholder interest and expectations across the range of its regulatory responsibilities for nuclear power, use of radioactive materials, decommissioning activities, and management of radioactive waste has certainly not subsided over the years in the United States, nor, I suspect, globally.

The NRC considers stakeholder involvement in, and information about, its activities to be a cornerstone of strong, fair regulation of the nuclear industry. The NRC's interest in and commitment to stakeholder involvement, is rooted in fundamental principles of our democracy and derives from basic structures of governance under federal law. It is enshrined in our Administrative Procedure Act of 1946 and other laws pertaining to governance of the administrative state.

But how the NRC engages has changed significantly since I first joined the agency more than 35 years ago. At one time, posting information in the Federal Register might have been considered sufficient. Now, we've developed and refined our stakeholder engagement techniques to make them

more effective and meaningful, with a greater chance for real partnership with stakeholders. Let me offer some specifics.

The NRC holds hundreds of public meetings each year at its regional office, headquarters and in the field. These meetings may be full Commission briefings, or they may be what we call end-of-cycle meetings about plant performance, issue-driven meetings, or meetings of our advisory committees.

Many of those meetings are broadcast via the web or with a phone bridge so interested folks need not even travel to them. Often, transcripts and sometimes videos of the meetings are then posted on the web. Trained facilitators may be employed to make the meetings even more meaningful. And meetings may be augmented by other activities, such as open houses where one-on-one opportunities are more available for those who want to talk personally with NRC staff.

Stakeholders are also given multiple opportunities to comment as the agency develops its regulations through written correspondence and sometimes via meetings. All comments received on a rulemaking are addressed in the rulemaking proposal that comes before the Commission for a vote. We pay attention to the input we receive. As I've acknowledged before, there is not usually only one right approach and the NRC might not have all the answers.

The NRC also has a process, rooted in general U.S. administrative law, by which stakeholders can submit a petition for rulemaking and ask us to consider undertaking new regulations. So in that way, stakeholders do more than comment, but may suggest a course of action for the regulator to pursue.

Informed stakeholders are an important part of the process. The NRC takes advantage of many opportunities to communicate with stakeholders, to keep them apprised of agency activities and decisions.

We strive to balance the need for transparency in what we do with the need to protect security information. We use not just typical outreach activities, such the web site or press releases, but also use five different social media platforms to communicate directly with the public.

You'll hear more about those platforms later in this workshop. But let me provide some quick statistics: There have been approximately 1 million visits to our blog to read some 700 posts that have prompted 6500 comments. We've also sent out 2500 tweets to some 8,000 followers on Twitter. Our Facebook page has 3500 followers; our YouTube Channel has seen thousands of minutes of video viewing and there are hundreds of photos available for download from our Flickr platform.

The advantage of social media is the ability to communicate directly with stakeholders in our voice, augmenting the coverage of traditional media. Keeping stakeholders informed and aware is an important part of what I see as the unwritten contract of building trust and maintaining relationships.

The NRC works closely with stakeholders in other governments, at the state and tribal level with specially designated staff. We have staff who communicate with lawmakers on Capitol Hill, and we coordinate closely with other federal-level departments, such as the Federal Emergency

Management Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency. They, too, have a stake in what we do and how we regulate.

I know many of you do the same for your myriad stakeholders. For others, these may be new ideas and activities worth considering.

And, yes, I do believe it's important to recall that our independence as regulators does not mean isolation. We can still maintain our independence while listening and considering the opinions of others and cooperating as appropriate in achieving our regulatory objectives. In the end, sensible regulation is based on the appreciation of our own technical expertise and experience, coupled with being open to outside ideas and concepts – and then making decisions that are consistent and well supported.

While regulators must listen to input on all sides, they must also guard against indecisiveness. After we listen, engage and debate, we must make the decision. And it may be a decision that does not make all stakeholders happy. That is the burden of every regulatory body. We are responsible, when all is said and done, for making a clear decision that we find is the best – not necessarily the one that is the most popular.

I look forward to hearing case studies, good practices and lessons learned by the regulators here today, and also look forward to hearing the perspective of stakeholders.

Let me close this morning with a challenge to the regulators here. While listening to the presentations and talking afterward in small groups, continually ask yourself these questions:

- Why are we seeking stakeholder participation?
- What do we expect to get from that participation?
- How can we leverage that participation into better decision making?
- Where have we fallen short in our attempts at stakeholder outreach and have more to learn?
- What else can I contribute to this conversation?

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you. I look forward to your panels.