

ASEAN Regional Roundtable
Achieving a Safe and Sustainable Nuclear Future
2 March 2009
Traders Hotel, Singapore

Welcome Address
Mr Khoo Chin Hean, Executive Director

Good morning.

To all our guests who have come here from so many different parts of the world, welcome to Singapore and to this Roundtable.

And to all our guests from Singapore a warm welcome too to this Roundtable.

The Energy Studies Institute is a think tank of the National University of Singapore. Its objective is to carry out research with a view to anticipating and pre-empting issues relating to energy. The ESI sees its clientele as comprising not just the academic sector but also the industry and government sectors.

Issues relating to energy are multi-faceted. They include security, economics and the environment.

Indeed all three elements are fast converging if not already. When oil price surged through the roof last year, many were concerned about peak oil and whether the world will run short or even run out of oil.

We now enjoy a reprieve. But is this the temporary lull in the eye of the cyclone? The Chief of the IEA, Dr Nobuo Tanaka thinks so in a recent speech he made in February 2009.

Looking ahead a new US President looks set to push the climate change agenda.

Put together, these suggest we have to be prepared for a possible change in the energy landscape.

But the alternatives to fossil fuels are not readily available or adequate for many countries either because of size, geography and climate.

Under the circumstances, it would be prudent for all options to be put on the table and to be considered. This includes nuclear energy.

The question regarding nuclear is not whether nuclear energy be used. The question should be how nuclear energy can be harnessed safely? This raises two issues, both equally important. One is how to ensure the design of a nuclear facility is safe. The other is how to ensure the people who have to maintain and operate the nuclear facility will continue to carry out their tasks over time in a manner that preserves the integrity of the design.

Nuclear energy has a long and proven tradition.

Unfortunately the excellent safety record the industry had achieved in the last century is all too easily washed away in the wake of the potentially large and extensive impact of a failed nuclear plant. And such an event had happened in the last century.

If we keep things in perspective we should remember too that there are many other nuclear plants that had safely withstood earthquakes in Japan and plants that had operated safely for a long time in Europe, US and Japan because of the multiple layers of safety engineered into their design.

We bear in mind too that nuclear technology has not stood still. It continues to evolve with newer and smaller inherently safe designs coming into their market.

A nuclear future is sustainable and must remain so. For this to happen safety is paramount.

The ESI had therefore felt it is timely to organise this Roundtable on "Achieving a Safe and Sustainable Nuclear future".

We have assembled an international panel of nuclear energy experts from around the world and from our part of the world viz ASEAN. We hope they will not only just exchange ideas about the latest developments on harnessing nuclear energy, but will eventually form a network of nuclear experts who will help each other in convincing and informing the nuclear debate.

I would like to thank Dr Konstantin Foskolos and Dr Dennis Berry for their strong support and help in working with us to put this event together in a super short time. Their ardent passion for and belief in nuclear energy underlies the theme of this event.

I would also like to thank the speakers Dr Wolfgang Krueger, Dr Abel Julio González, Dr Richard Meserve and Dr Thierry Dujardin.

I would also like to thank all the participants for having taken the time off busy schedules and work to come here to this Roundtable.

Finally I wish all participants gathered here today fruitful discussions and networking at this Roundtable.