

Gulf Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Institute (GNEII) Symposium

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Keynote Speech

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Hamad Alkaabi,
Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the
International Atomic Energy Agency

Your Excellency, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to address you today at this important event, the 2014 GNEII Symposium.

I would like to begin by highlighting the importance of human capacity building in the nuclear industry. Education and training of future staff of this sector is an aspect of nuclear power development that needs to be given top priority at all times, in order to achieve sustainability and success in the long term.

Even though with the small slowdown of nuclear expansion in some countries, there is no doubt surrounding the global demand for nuclear energy and its important role in the future energy generation mix.

In 2010, I had the honour to preside over the first major International Conference on Human Resource Development for Introducing and Expanding Nuclear Power Programmes, in Abu Dhabi and in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. And just last week I spoke at the 2nd International Conference on Human Resource Development for the Nuclear Power Programmes in Vienna.

My observation, and four years later since the first conference in 2010, it is clear that nuclear industry is still facing the challenge of acquiring and maintaining a proportionate high-competency workforce to design, build, license and operate nuclear power plants.

We must consider the importance of nuclear professionals throughout the entire life cycle of a nuclear power programme and across different disciplines; from its initial inception all the way through to its decommissioning.

To cover all of these aspects, capacity building to the highest standards is indispensable.

This is particularly important at this point in time, as the industry's current professional workforce, which has been responsible for building the foundation of nuclear power over the past 50 years, is now approaching retirement age. There is thus an urgent need to fill this gap and replace these experts appropriately.

This is on global view but on more specific cases, for countries that are embarking on new nuclear power programmes such as the UAE, it is essential that they seek to establish a domestic expertise and skills base. They should not, for example, rely exclusively on the human resource support from their technology supplier as a long-term strategy.

Another important point is the importance of the integrated approach in training and building human resources.

To this effect, I would like to highlight that the UAE has been utilizing an innovative model to build its workforce based on international experience while at the same time developing local expertise through multiple integrated initiatives, including GENII programme.

I still remember, less than 4 years ago, when the first idea of forming GNEII came along. UAE entities along with their American partners have initiated the GNEII programme to become today a regional leading example for bolstering indigenous nuclear energy infrastructure knowledge and increasing expertise in nuclear energy safety, safeguards and security.

The regional aspects of this programme are significant because it allows neighboring countries, who are facing similar challenges, to learn from each other's' experiences.

I am pleased to note that 64 participants have completed the GNEII Pilot and Fundamentals Courses since 2011. Of these participants, 49 are from UAE, 11 are from Saudi Arabia, 2 are from Kuwait, 1 from Qatar and 1 from Jordan. This consistent with the vision outlined for GENII at the time of its establishment.

The success of the GNEII programme demonstrates the commitment that the UAE places on the integrated approach of Nuclear Security, Safety, and Non-proliferation.

UAE's Nuclear Sector main stakeholders: namely the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation, the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation, and the Critical Infrastructure and Coastal Protection Authority continued their commitment and participation at GNEII. From these three entities, 12 Fellows have joined GNEII's 2014 Course.

Allow me to also recognize the hard work done by the key implementing partners of the GNEII programme, namely Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) and the Texas A&M University's Nuclear Security Science and Policy Institute in conjunction with the US Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration Office of Non-proliferation and International Security, the US Department of State's Partnership for Nuclear Security and of course our gracious host Khalifa University.

Their continuous efforts and commitment have been invaluable to the fulfillment of GNEII's mission and objectives.

I am pleased to note that GNEII has evolved into a successful regional, education-based institute, serving capacity building efforts. The programme's diverse technical expertise has been essential to its reputation as a well-respected establishment. GNEII Fellows represent the Human Resource Development output who, along with the Mechanical and Nuclear Engineering students and other training programmes, is underpinning the UAE's nuclear energy programme.

I expect to see continued interest from national and regional professionals in the GNEII programme, as we build a robust human resource base to ensure a successful and sustainable nuclear sector in the long run.

There is a lot of great work that has been done and plenty more is expected ahead of us.

I thank you for your attention.