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Opening Statement to ICTP/IAEA School of Nuclear Energy Management

by Alexander Bychkov

IAEA Deputy Director General, Head of the Department of Nuclear Energy

Professor Quevedo, dear participants and colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very glad to be here today and to welcome you to the second School on Nuclear Energy Management. First of all, I want to thank you, Professor Quevedo, and your staff for an excellent cooperation in facilitating and hosting this event. I also want to thank the Italian government, which is a major funder of this Center.

The Abdus Salam International Center for Theoretical Physics and the International Atomic Energy Agency have a long-standing cooperation. Already in 1963, the General Conference of the Agency endorsed an agreement with the Italian Government to establish the ICTP in Trieste as a center that provides continuing education and training to scientists from developing countries. For many years, the ICTP and the Agency have been cooperating successfully across a range of activities.

Jointly, the two organizations conduct workshops and scientific events -- for example on nuclear energy systems, nuclear knowledge management, on physics and technology of innovative reactor systems - and now on the effective management of nuclear energy. With these activities, we want to enhance the expertise of researchers and professionals from developing nations around the world. ICTP offers an excellent environment to achieve this goal.

All applications of nuclear technology are based on nuclear knowledge. Helping Member States - especially those considering or starting national nuclear power programmes - to obtain and manage this knowledge is an essential responsibility of the IAEA. The School of Nuclear Energy Management plays an important role in meeting our responsibility.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is an exciting day for all of us. It is the start of an intensive three-week course that covers a wide range of important topics in the nuclear energy sector.

You - the new generation of nuclear energy leaders - will have the unique opportunity here to learn and benefit from the specific knowledge of the Agency and its senior experts in nuclear energy, nuclear safety, nuclear security and nuclear safeguards. You will be able to gain a broad international perspective on many issues related to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. And you will be required to take an exam at the end. This will help you - and us - to confirm that you will have understood the lectures and group work, and that it will be sustainable knowledge. Getting to know and working with peers from around the world - and maybe making friends for a life time - is an extra bonus.

Many countries are concerned that they will not have enough skilled professionals in the nuclear field in the coming decades. When you return to your countries after these three weeks, you will be better prepared to contribute to building and managing nuclear power programmes responsibly, safely and sustainably.

Nuclear energy has played an important role during all my life. I call myself a "nuclear man".

For the past 30 years, I spent my professional career at the Research Institute of Atomic Reactors - or RIAR - in Dimitrovgrad, where I started as a young engineer and researcher.

When the former Soviet Union collapsed twenty years ago, many scientific institutes were faced with a long period of crisis. At that time, my scientific boss, Professor Skiba, and the Director of our Institute, Professor Ivanov, asked me to head my Laboratory. This was a great challenge. We and some other groups worked in the field of new pyro-electrochemical technologies for fast reactor fuel recycling. We wanted to preserve existing knowledge and develop new one. I encouraged my team to look into the future. It was an opportunity to turn a crisis into a challenge for which solutions could be found. We started to cooperate on an international level. My team played a key role in experimental research and development of the new technology and established its place in the international community. Today, pyrochemical approaches for fast reactor fuel recycling are one of the promising innovative technologies.

Before I joined the Agency last February, I was Director General of the Institute for the past five years. It was a difficult and challenging time. Sometimes we were not able to pay salaries on time. But we worked very hard, and we managed to restore the stability of the work, enhance productivity and increase safety. In the end, we have been able to prove to the government that the Institute is the best place for some new, innovative technology projects in Russia.

Why do I underline these episodes? I want to emphasize that my own development as a nuclear manager continues all the time. The nuclear field is very high-tech and not without potential danger. It is my firm opinion that the nuclear manager of the 21st century must be three things:

- first, a good specialist in one of the nuclear areas (such as fuel cycle, reactor technology, reactor physics or others)
- second, he or she must have broad knowledge of all nuclear branches, and
- third, a basic understanding of economics, social science and psychology is required.

If you constantly continue your professional development and add to your pool of knowledge, you will understand my slogan:

"There are no problems, only engineering and scientific challenges that are awaiting our decisions."

These challenges are also faced by the IAEA Department of Nuclear Energy which I lead. The Department has principal responsibility for all aspects of Nuclear Power, Fuel Cycle and Waste Technology. Our work can be described in three brief words: support - catalyze - build.

We support existing, expanding and new nuclear power programmes around the world.

We catalyze innovation, through services and advice to Member States in developing advanced nuclear technology and fuel cycles for the long term, for example through INPRO, the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles; and

We build national capacity in energy analysis and planning, and in nuclear knowledge management.

The Nuclear Energy Department has a very important role to play in supporting countries who wish to establish national nuclear programmes. The Agency can help newcomer countries build a national nuclear infrastructure, and we have methodologies to support Member States in developing their energy policies as a whole. A key task is to encourage the distribution of best practices, such as in radioactive waste management, and to ensure safety while encouraging the sharing of technologies.

Today, the nuclear industry is faced with new challenges. The accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was caused by an unprecedented natural disaster. As the Director General of the IAEA, Mr Amano, pointed out, many lessons are being learned internationally. The Agency will continue to support Member States in all aspects of the peaceful uses nuclear energy, including strengthening the safety of nuclear power plants. It is my firm belief that nuclear energy - when managed safely and responsibly - has a major role to play in meeting the world's energy needs sustainably.

In closing, I wish you all a stimulating and productive time here in Trieste. I encourage you to take maximum advantage of the opportunity this course offers to you, to study hard and do well in your final exam.

You have been chosen to participate in the School for Nuclear Energy Management because you all are promising young professionals, with a bright career ahead of you in different nuclear organizations. As future managers of nuclear power programmes you have to be knowledgeable about the entire area of nuclear energy. You must understand that all aspects of nuclear energy - the technical elements and the management elements - have to be considered as one unified system. Only then will you succeed as effective nuclear energy managers.

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