

## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION ON NUCLEAR SAFETY IN CHALLENGING TIMES

11 OCTOBER 2022

13:15-15:00 (GMT+2)

*Filmtheater Sendlinger Tor, Sendlinger-Tor-Platz 11, Munich*

After his welcome message, Uwe Stoll, President of ETSON, recalled the profusion of issues that ETSON members are currently facing, the last-minute decisions with regards to operation of nuclear power plants in some countries (Germany, Belgium), the question of new fuel assemblies for VVER reactors, the development of SMRs, all of this in a context of war and monitoring of the situation of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. A message from Ihor Shevchenko (president of SSTC NRS) was broadcast during the impulse speech on the theme "*Nuclear Safety in Challenging Times*". The director of SSTC NRS emphasized that the 7 safety pillars of the IAEA have been constantly violated since the beginning of the Russian aggression. He said that despite the extremely difficult conditions, the Ukrainian TSO continues to perform its functions in support of SNRIU. Ihor also requested that it is essential that European countries exempt themselves from importing Russian energy products, and that the scientific community suspend its activities with Russian organizations in international forums. Finally, Ihor thanked ETSON and its members for having reacted quickly and condemned the Russian aggression.

In the framework of the round table, Cyril Pinel invited Massimo Garribba (DG ENER) and Anna Bradford (Head of the Directorate of Safety of Nuclear Installations at the IAEA) to present the initiatives of the European Commission and the IAEA with regard to safety in Ukraine: in addition to field visits and the provision of equipment, the IAEA has sent four of its staff to the Zaporizhia site. Anna Bradford stated that the IAEA is considering whether it should revise the IAEA standards to take into account the issue of safety in war situations. Massimo Garribba also raised the question of the adequacy of current international legal instruments with respect to the risks to nuclear safety during armed conflicts. Leon Cizelj (JSI) took the opportunity to recall the summer of 1991 when the Krško plant in Slovenia was also in the threat of war. The discussion then turned to the current energy crisis and the decisions of certain States (Germany, Belgium) to extend the operating period of nuclear power plants. Michel Van haesendonck recalled the situation in Belgium for the Doel 1 & 2 plants and the consequences of changing decisions on the work of TSOs and safety authorities. In this context of increasing challenges, especially external ones, Uwe Stoll reminded the audience that ETSON should continue to provide technical support through the participation of its experts in various organizations that have taken up these issues (IAEA, OECD/NEA, HERCA/WENRA). Finally, the discussions focused on information about nuclear energy, and how TSOs have a role to play in communicating clear and neutral information to as many people as possible, in order to explain essential scientific concepts on nuclear safety.

From these rich discussions, ETSON draws some conclusions and highlights a few challenges:

- First of all, even in these challenging times when there are tensions on the energy supply, safety of nuclear installations must be fully taken into account.
- In this context it is the responsibility of TSOs to provide national and European decision makers with all the technical elements and scientifically based expertise, to enable them to make a safety informed decision for the operation of nuclear facilities.
- TSOs should also provide the public, in a transparent manner, with intelligible information about safety challenges, specially in the context of the ongoing energy crisis.
- TSOs should also contribute, at technical level, to the ongoing reflection on the safety of fuel supply, including for VVER reactors; TSOs should enhance their cooperation for possible support to the licensing process of alternative fuel supplies to VVER reactors in Europe.
- In this overall context, international cooperation with major organisations (IAEA, EC, OECD/NEA, ENSREG, WENRA), shall remain a first priority for further improving safety assessment of nuclear facilities in Europe.