



ENEN President's speech at the EMSNE Award Ceremony

Vienna, IAEA Headquarters, September 17th, 2015

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests and Excellencies, Dear New EMSNE Alumni,

We are here today to celebrate a new group of Nuclear Engineers whose curriculum studii has been found compliant with the by-laws of the EMSNE Certification. For a whole decade, the European Nuclear Education Network has granted this certification to those who have completed their studies in Nuclear Engineering with a good level of coverage of basic matters and a clear European or International dimension in their studies. It is for me the third time I have the honour and the pleasure to act as President of ENEN in these Ceremonies.

Today we deal with **26** Nuclear Engineers who fulfilled the requirements of the European Master of Science in Nuclear Engineering: it is a record number for us, being also the result of the renewed momentum that the ENEN Association put in encouraging students to follow our rules and apply. This partly testifies for the commitment that ENEN assigns to attracting students to nuclear careers, a real need likely to become an emergency in the future, unless proper provisions are taken.

These engineers, in particular, enrolled in their nuclear programmes before the Fukushima Daichi accident. As such, they indeed passed through the period of excitement of the so-called “nuclear renaissance” that revealed later on to be quite frail. At the time when they enrolled, in most industrialised Countries there was a rush to build or re-build competences in the nuclear field which were at different extent lost. Even Master Courses to nuclearize non-nuclear engineers were set up at a very fast pace, to recover the time that got completely lost in a period of nuclear market starvation. Just a few years later, the public perception of nuclear energy as a source of power degenerated again because of an accident that apparently worsened the huge devastation due to the natural disaster caused by the combination of the earthquake and the tsunami in the Eastern coast of Japan.

After few years from the accident, we are quite relieved in appraising that “UNSCEAR [United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation] found that the exposure of the Japanese population was low, leading to correspondingly low risks of health effects due to radiation later in life” (from the factsheet of the report). Of course we cannot disregard the huge problems caused by the meltdowns occurred in that occasion in terms of evacuation of people and subsequent fear of radiation. As all the technologies, in front of failures we have a sound lesson to learn. However, it is now time to start putting things into the right perspective; far from being blind advocates of nuclear energy, we need anyway to assure a constant attraction of new generations to nuclear studies, fighting the volatility of decisions about nuclear energy and spreading a better awareness of the benefits that nuclear energy can provide now and in the long term.

Attracting young people: it is a commitment of many organisations working in the field of nuclear Education and Training, including IAEA and ENEN. We need transferring knowledge and skills to new generations to avoid gaps in the future workforce that will develop new designs and will take



care of the existing plants in all the phases of their life. We need also transferring “attitudes” and “passion” as well, in order to nurture generations of persons having a vision of their job because they have a vision of their life, as a passionate commitment for the common benefit. Actually, we see in our everyday life with students that many of them are quite passionate and responsive to the fascination of our matters, so that they eagerly involve themselves into our studies, if we give them the opportunity.

We need of course to provide a more correct image of the benefits that nuclear energy may bring to mankind than the one usually deployed by media. IAEA since the beginning is doing a lot in this field, showing a full range of applications of nuclear energy well beyond the very useful one of electricity generation. ENEN, on its side, is at the moment trying to better coordinate the efforts made at European level to maintain and develop nuclear studies in the field of nuclear safety, radiation protection, waste management and geological disposal, also undertaking actions of information specifically requested for spreading awareness about nuclear safety culture. An exciting pattern of cooperation is presently developing around ENEN, with the cooperation between ENEN and IAEA being one of the strongest pillars.

So, let me thank again Mr. Chudakov and all the friends of the Nuclear Knowledge Management Section of IAEA for organising this event that is for the fourth year repeated in the wonderful frame of the Atoms for Peace Agency. I also thank you all for kindly participating in this event and for the warmth of your presence. We are sure that this is quite inspiring for our young colleagues being awarded the EMSNE Certification.

Let me close this speech as I mostly do in short conferences to secondary school students about nuclear energy, by quoting a beautiful poem by Pablo Neruda, the Ode to Atom. In this poem, Neruda first describes the horrors of nuclear weapons and then concludes wishing that nuclear energy be used for peaceful purposes, to become a “hope of morning, gift to the earth” (“matutina esperanza, contribución terrestre”). This is the image of nuclear energy we like, the one that must be conveyed without rhetoric emphasis, because it is the deepest inspiration of our common work in this field.

Thank you for your attention and Best Congratulations to the new EMSNE Alumni!

Prof. Walter Ambrosini

President

European Nuclear Education Network Association