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Safety and Reliability –Challenges for Change and Progress: IRPA's Engagement in the System of Protection

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Energy, environment and climate are seen by the public as essential elements for a secure, affordable and socially acceptable future. Whereas the climate is seen in a more distance, the impact of energy and environment is highly present in the daily life today and tomorrow. Particularly evident is the lively debate on nuclear energy, and also on other nuclear applications which show clear benefits for society, e.g. in the medical application. The use of ionizing radiation in industry, medicine and research is increasing remarkably throughout the world and is involving more and more complex systems. We are now facing a situation which offers challenges in radiation protection in a wide range of applications. Many factors influence this situation such as the growing globalization, which is escalating the importance of economic cross linking, the global proliferation of new and more complex technologies, as well as living in a changing society which poses new challenges for the implementation of an effective protection system. Also the System of Protection with the three fundamental radiation protection principles justification, optimization and application of dose limits as recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) has become more and more complex and its effective implementation needs an increasing governmental and professional attention. A clear understanding of radiation risks is an increasingly emerging concern. Today, people are more concerned on the same level of risk even with low level of risk! Particularly the lessons to be learned after the Fukushima accident have demonstrated the necessity to review the system of protection and taking into account that an alignment on today's societal conditions is essential. The practicability of the system of protection depends not only on its scientific stringency but also on the extent to which it is in line with accepted ethical values in society as well as with given political and social values which is a primary issue for the sustainability of the system of protection. IRPA is working closely with ICRP and other international organizations on these experiences, e.g. on the underpinning ethical basis of the system which includes a series of IRPA-sponsored workshops around the world. Conclusions from the views of practitioners will be presented. Emerging aspects are communication and understanding of radiation risks in context to other risks (technical, environmental, economic, political, social...) by professionals and public. Based on the above mentioned considerations IRPA started a discussion on how could the system be improved to meet the challenges and keeping the system fit for purpose, ethically based and appropriately comprehensive. Potential core questions will be presented for discussion.

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