



World Nuclear Association Annual Symposium
5-7 September 2001 - London

Opening Remarks

John Ritch

Ladies and Gentlemen: I join Agneta in extending a cordial welcome to you all. This event represents a valuable tradition. But I want to emphasize how eager we are to adapt the format to ensure that it remains valuable to you each year. As we talk during these two days, please give us your ideas as to how we can do so.

Agneta mentioned our hard work. When that subject comes up, I sometimes recall a small incident that occurred when I was serving as American ambassador to the UN organizations in Vienna. I arrived in Vienna some eight years ago with a focus on nuclear proliferation, and it was there, by the way, that I fell under the spell of Hans Blix and ended up as an apostle for nuclear energy.

In Vienna, I had a good and trusty driver named Fritz. Fritz was an Austrian who spoke English quite well - but not perfectly. One morning when I was still new in my job, I came out of the official residence headed for the IAEA to see Hans Blix and, as usual, Fritz was waiting. I got into the car, and as we began driving toward the UN Center I discovered that I was still perspiring from my morning workout even after taking a shower. I was wiping my brow with a handkerchief, and I said to Fritz, "You know, Fritz, I'm going to have to adjust my schedule and exercise earlier, because I'm still sweating even after my shower." Fritz looked at me in the rear-view mirror and he said, very reassuringly, "That's all right, Mr. Ambassador. After all, if you don't expire, you haven't been working hard enough."

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to report that we on the secretariat have not expired yet. But we have indeed been working hard and with a strong sense of purpose.

One key capability we want to build is advancing the nuclear message worldwide, and we want to develop ways to help you promote that message among constituencies that matter to you.

Agneta mentioned our efforts to build a [world-class website](#). (Shown on screen)

What we aim to convey is not just information - although we want our information to be comprehensive, reliable, and accessible. We also want to convey, by style and graphics, the aura and feeling that should surround nuclear energy - a sense of the modern, of the

magic of this technology, of the future, of the fact that this industry is prepared to take the world into that future.

Our basic premise is that the facts speak for themselves. But we are certainly looking for ways to help those facts speak clearly and persuasively.

We all know how difficult it can be to penetrate the strong psychological barriers people have erected against nuclear - and how hard it is to replace misinformation with real information.

We all know how long it takes - and how many diversions there are - as one tries to build a coherent case in the mind of a listener. There's Chernobyl; there's waste; there's transport; there's confusion about radioactivity; there's uncertainty about climate change; there's little understanding of where electricity even comes from; there are widespread illusions about solar and wind; and there's a thorough ignorance about how this industry is run, how far it has come and how superb its record of safety and progress really is.

That's a big package to cope with, and all of us have emerged from such conversations with a weary sense of frustration, thinking to ourselves, "If they only knew what I know; if only they could see what I see."

We all know that some anti-nuclear sentiment has become theological and defies all reason. But most people are open to reason. A good number of my own friends, for example, are journalists and I know that most of them, though generally well informed, just don't know the case for nuclear as well as I would like them to.

So I have asked myself, over a period of many months, "Just what is the essential argument for nuclear energy? What is the briefest, most persuasive sequence of facts and logic that might make an impression on an intelligent person with an open mind who wants to know more?"

The result of this effort has just been placed on our website. We invented a name: we call it an "[Auto-Essay](#)." It lasts 10-12 minutes and can be viewed by pressing an Auto-play button. Or one can click through it manually, at one's own speed.

This is a work in progress and always will be. But we have given it some early road tests with encouraging results that make me think this may be a useful educational tool, and I'd like to show it to you. I got an email yesterday from one of my testees who called it "informative and educational, but not dry or stuffy." I'll be interested in hearing your reactions. (Auto-Essay shown on screen)

Now let me be quick to emphasize that we have no illusions that any such presentation can work wonders. But we do think this tool can be valuable.

- First, it's brief, reasonably entertaining, and it has the wonderful virtues of being very patient and being willing to repeat itself. Indeed, it is tireless – available 24 hours a day and ready to offer its message anywhere in the world at any time.

- Second, it is versatile. Any of you here can refer people to it, or you can download it and use it in a presentation on nuclear that needs to cover the basics. I myself intend to use this presentation when I appear before certain kinds of groups – for example, students or business leaders – as a way of jump-starting the discussion. It gets a lot on the table quite quickly.
- Third, the Auto-Essay is adaptable linguistically. One advantage of getting the nuclear argument into this form is that it translates so easily into many languages. Our goal now is to offer the Auto-Essay on the WNA website in 10 or more languages so that this basic tool will be available for educational use with all journalists, policymakers, and audiences everywhere.

Because the argument is carefully nuanced, it will require first-rate translation, and in that regard I will welcome assistance from some of you in helping us ensure that we've got the words perfect in every language.

We truly aim to be a World Nuclear Association.

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It is now my pleasure to introduce our first speaker and our honorary chairman.

Later this morning, we will present an award for distinguished service to the global nuclear industry. Four years ago, the recipient of this award was Hans Blix, who was cited for his long and brilliant service in strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency and building its role as a great multilateral institution.

Today - with much credit due to Hans - the IAEA is an indispensable pillar of the international security system and of the world nuclear industry. By promoting safety globally and ensuring that nuclear technology is used peacefully, the IAEA provides the basic guarantee that underpins nuclear commerce worldwide.

While building that system, Hans also did much to build understanding of nuclear energy around the world. He is an educator by nature, and I look forward to the day – not many months away - when Hans has retired from his service to the United Nations in New York, so that the World Nuclear Association can benefit from a fuller share of his time and valuable energy.

Meanwhile, we are fortunate to have him with us today. Ladies and gentlemen, a man who truly qualifies as a statesman in the world of nuclear energy: Hans Blix.