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2000 In Perspective

Events in 2000 in the international energy market reminded us that reliable supplies of energy at affordable prices are not a given, and that the public and private sectors need to work together in order to help provide a reasonable balance that is beneficial to all.

Fortunately, there are some energy sectors – and nuclear energy is one of them – which benefit from stable prices and are largely immune to supply disruptions. In addition, nuclear energy has the added advantage of not contributing to climate change because it emits virtually no carbon dioxide.

It is nevertheless very important to ensure that proper attention is paid to infrastructure and technology issues in the nuclear energy area. Regardless of the future of nuclear power, high-quality, nuclear-related competencies will be required for a long time to come, whether it be for making sure that operating plants work safely, or that plants being decommissioned are done so fittingly. Preservation of knowledge acquired over the years will help support the work of the next generation of engineers, who were not present when the industry was getting started. Continuous funding of research and development is necessary to improve current technology, including its safety and cost, and to develop new technologies and working methods.



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The nuclear power sector also continues to face a number of other challenges. In particular, scientific and technical arguments alone have been found insufficient to gain wide public confidence and support for this energy source. The good nuclear safety records in OECD countries have often been unable to carry a sufficiently convincing message, and the management of nuclear waste remains a sensitive area for the public, in spite of the confidence expressed by the experts that solutions exist.

With this in mind, it has been found that greater public participation in nuclear energy decision making can contribute to improving mutual understanding among the various groups concerned – industry, government, civil society. The NEA has been working to help facilitate exchanges of information and experience in this field, as readers will see in the following pages.

At a time of ever-tighter government budgets, it is in Member countries' interest to pool their efforts in order to obtain maximum cost-effectiveness in relation to the investments made. Throughout 2000, the NEA strived to meet its primary objective of assisting its Member countries in maintaining and further developing, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal bases required for a safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Our efforts have yielded positive results, which we will continue to pursue in future.

