

THE 10TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE PACKAGING AND  
TRANSPORTATION OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS (PATRAM) '92  
-WELCOME ADDRESS-

Kenichi Murakami  
Deputy Minister for  
Science and Technology Agency

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of our Science and Technology Agency, the Government of Japan, I extend our sincerest greetings to all of you here today. This is the 10th international Symposium on the Packaging and Transportation of Radioactive Materials, or PATRAM '92 as it is called, and it marks the first time for it to be held in Japan. All of 400 participants have gathered, representing 16 nations and 2 international organizations, and it comes as an honor to be able to welcome so many of you to Japan.

More than thirty years have passed since the development and use of nuclear energy saw its real start. During those decades, nuclear power generation has steadily advanced, and as of July this year it accounted for fully thirty percent of the total electrical power generated in Japan, or approximately 33 million kilowatts as produced by forty-one nuclear power plants. As a result the transportation of nuclear fuel has experienced a marked increase. In 1991 alone something like nine hundred tons of uranium in the form of nuclear fuel assembly, and about five hundred tons of spent fuel were transported. Moreover, the number of users concerned with radio-isotopes is growing every year. Last year about 140,000 radio-isotopes, packages were transported.

As we all know, the movement of radioactive materials is not necessarily a domestic affair; it often involves two or more nations and requires several modes of transportation, land, sea and air. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), among whose goals is the realization of safe, trouble-free movements utilizing these various modes of transport, drew up a set of regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials based on the considerations of experts from many countries. These regulations have been incorporated in domestic regulations and so are in Japan.

Let me say again.

For safe and smooth transportation of radioactive materials, IAEA, together with other interested parties and experts that have been, is now drafting international standards to be observed in each country affected. Against this background, the role of PATRAM, I believe, is truly significant, as it provides a forum for experts working in various fields of endeavor throughout the world to exchange professional opinions concerning the transport of radioactive materials.

Until now PATRAM has convened only in the United States and Europe. When I was serving as the Director-General of Nuclear Safety Bureau, of Science and Technology Agency, three years ago, it was suggested during the 9th PATRAM assembly that the next symposium take place in Japan. And that suggestion has become reality. It gives me great pleasure - and I am most thankful - that Japan has been given an opportunity to host this important event. In this context I commend Prof. Aoki, chairman of the organizing committee and Japan's foremost authority on the transportation of radioactive materials, as well as his many colleagues for their hard work in bringing PATRAM'92 to fruition. In addition, I wish to thank the high officials and experts from abroad, including Mr. Voelker of the US Department of Energy, for their wholehearted cooperation. My sincere gratitude also goes to the Nuclear Safety Technology Center of Japan for its splendid performance as the symposium's secretariat.

At present in Japan construction of a nuclear fuel cycle facilities is under way at Rokkasho Mura, in Aomori Prefecture, some seven hundred kilometers north of here, for which an enrichment plant started operating this spring. Transportation of natural uranium hexafluoride has also begun. Domestic transport of mixed oxide fuel has got under way to our "Monju," a prototype of fast breeder reactor having an electric output of 280 thousand kilowatts which is expected to attain its criticality next spring. In addition, plutonium deliveries from France have been scheduled. Thus, under the current situation where new modes of transport are being introduced one after another, it becomes even more necessary for us to win the consensus of society regarding the safe transporting of radioactive materials.

It is most opportune that PATRAM'92 is being held in Japan. This symposium will feature a number of important presentations and an active, certainly valuable exchange of opinions. I am confident I speak for all of us in expressing the hope that public understanding of the safety of transporting radioactive materials will greatly improve as a result of this gathering.

In conclusion, I wish this symposium every success and that all of you will return home with a deep sense of satisfaction that your time was well spent. As for those of you from abroad, I hope that you can apply this get-together to deepen international friendship and, if possible, to acquaint yourself with our Japanese culture.

Thank you.