I’m thankful to the Japanese Health Physics Society (JHPS) giving me the opportunity to contribute with some thoughts on the last AOCRP Congress and on future topical issues in radiation protection.

The 4th Asian and Oceanic Congress on Radiation Protection – an International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Regional Congress – has been organized by the Malaysian Radiation Protection Association (MARPA) in Kuala Lumpur in May 2014.

The Executive Council (EC) of IRPA was invited to hold its 66th Annual Meeting in connection to this congress, which was kindly accepted. The IRPA President, R. Czarwinsk i, as well as the EC members used the opportunity to attend several sessions with presentations and participated actively in many discussions on important aspects in radiation protection.

More than 300 radiation protection professionals from 34 countries worldwide attended this congress and they experienced an interesting program. In her welcome speech the president appreciated the presence of Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Malaysia who officiated the congress and confirmed a strong governmental interest in radiation protection matters in particular for the public in Malaysia and the Asian region.

Asian regional congresses are an essential element in strengthening the cooperation and communication between radiation protection professionals coming from different countries in the Asian region and serve as a constructive scientific platform to exchange of information, knowledge and experiences in the field of radiation protection, nuclear safety and connected sciences.

It was recognized in presentations as well as in many discussions that an emerging concern in radiation protection is the clear understanding of the radiation risks. Public understanding of risks and also risk communication are therefore essential topics in IRPA’s work currently and in the next term. Appropriate communication has to be extended beyond traditional stakeholders in radiation protection, and also reach the general public effectively. It is the task of practitioners to reach the public and stakeholders because they should be the facilitators of understandable knowledge. During the conference several presentations were given on lessons learnt from Fukushima – an accident which gave us a lot of lessons to be learned whose implementation is essential for the understanding of the system of protection. The congress devoted a special session to the vision of IRPA to be the “voice of the radiation protection profession in Asia and Oceania”. T. Kosako, President of the Asian and Oceanic Association for Radiation Protection (AOARP), elaborated radiation protection issues learned from the Fukushima Accident, and he reported on actions undertaken by the Japanese Health Physics Society (JHPS). JHPS provides a website with questions and answers in communicating with public and experts as well as with recommendations for the future management of radiation protection issues to be prepared for an “after emergency life” but also for the “normal” use of ionizing radiation. These recommendations and their discussion are seen by IRPA as fundamental and progressive for a revised, understandable and sustainable radiation protection regime in future. IRPA and its associated societies like the JHPS are providing the platform for such communication with professionals and public as well as for scientific discussion.

The Congress in Kuala Lumpur gave IRPA the opportunity to organize a special IOMP-WHO session focusing on roles and responsibilities of healthcare providers in the area of radiation protection. M. Perez (World Health Organization (WHO)) emphasized the publication of the latest international Basic Safety Standards on Safety of Radiation Sources (BSS) with focus on radiation protection in medicine and presented the conclusions and actions decided during the December 2012 IAEA conference in Bonn which was jointly sponsored by WHO. The use of ionizing radiation in health care is by far the largest contributor to the radiation exposure of the general population from artificial sources. Safety and quality in the use of radiation in medicine aims to reduce unnecessary radiation risks while maximizing the benefit. The implementation of the new BSS and the actions decided during the Bonn conference currently represent a priority for all international institutions and the medical community. K. Y. Cheung (International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP)) emphasized the need to come up with a radiation safety culture in health care and on the role each and every health care provider should play, be the health physicists, physicians or manufacturers.

N. K. Hoong indicated the challenges and opportunities for improving radiation safety in healthcare in Asia and oceanic countries. In particular, the Asian Oceania Federation of Organization in Medical Physics (AFOMP) has emphasized the education and training needs of RP in medicine. RP professionals within an organization must take the central role in supporting management to drive and embed radiation protection culture throughout the organization. Developing a “field culture” in addition to the science, engineering or medical culture is a way to anticipate problems and to obtain the commitment of all employees.

IRPA took advantage of the IOMP-WHO session during the Asian IRPA Congress to think about a new step, a new cooperation between IOMP, WHO and IRPA for joint production of a new guiding principle focused on safety culture in the medical sector as part of the IRPA series of guiding principles for establishing a radiation protection culture. Radiation protection culture is a universal learned way of life.

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