

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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34TH REGULATORY INFORMATION CONFERENCE (RIC)

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SPECIAL PLENARY SESSION: WOMEN BELONG IN ALL PLACES
WHERE [NUCLEAR SAFETY] DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE

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WEDNESDAY,

MARCH 9, 2022

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The Plenary Session met via Video-
Teleconference, at 10:45 a.m. EST, Christopher T.
Hanson, Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory
Commission, presiding.

PRESENT:

CHRISTOPHER T. HANSON, Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory
Commission

BROOKE CLARK, Deputy General Counsel for Licensing,
Hearings, and Enforcement, Office of the
General Counsel, Nuclear Regulatory Commission

RUMINA VELSHI, President and CEO, Canadian Nuclear
Safety Commission

P R O C E E D I N G S

10:45 a.m.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Good morning, and welcome to a session I have really been looking for to.

Our session title, *Women Belong in All Nuclear Places Where Nuclear Safety Decisions Are Being Made*, is derived from a well-known quote from the late Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who said women need to be in all places where decisions are made.

This statement rings especially true in the nuclear safety arena, as the best safety decisions are made when the deliberations involve the first and inclusive groups of professionals sharing a wide variety of views.

Today we're joined by the distinguished Rumina Velshi, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission since August of 2018.

In addition to her day job as Canada's head nuclear regulator, she also serves as the Chairperson of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Commission on Safety Standards.

Her expertise in the energy industry encompasses technical, regulatory, and adjudication areas. Ms. Velshi was one of the first nuclear female energy workers in Canada and has worked in various capacities at Ontario Hydro and Ontario Power Generation.

She also previously served as a Board Member of the Ontario Energy Board, the economic regulator of the conference's electricity and natural gas sectors.

President Velshi's reputation as a regulator of the highest order precedes her and I'm honored to have her speak with us.

In addition to her incredible work in various other areas, President Velshi has been a force for change on the international stage for the promotion of gender equity in the nuclear field.

In September of 2020, President Velshi, along with Canada's Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the IAEA's Director General, established the International Gender Champion's Impact Group on Gender Equality in Nuclear Regulatory Agencies.

The group seeks to identify and implement

policies to recruit and retain women, promote a diverse workplace and promote gender parity on international panels and delegations.

I have former Chairperson Kristine Svinicki to thank for answering President Velshi's call to action in accepting the invitation to join the International Gender Champion's Impact Group. And it's my great honor and privilege to continue this important work.

Promotion of gender equity plays a key role in the future but I am voting for the NRC. And it's my absolute pleasure to help set the stage for a conversation between President Velshi and our very own Brook Pool Clark, the newly designated Secretary of the Commission.

Ms. Clark previously served as the NRC's Deputy General Counsel for licensing here in Enforcement.

She also previously served as the Director in the Office of Commission Appellate Adjudication, where she was responsible for preparing recommendations and adjudicatory opinions for the Commission in support of its quasi-judicial function.

In addition to her new role as Secretary

of the Commission, I'm excited to announce that Ms. Clark will be serving as the NRC's gender champion, providing executive level oversight of the Agency's participation in international gender-related activities.

And to champion good practices and lessons learned related to promoting diversity and gender balance in the NRC workforce.

In her role as Secretary of the Commission, Ms. Clark will be taking over for the illustrious, the amazing, indeed, the legendary Annette Vieti-Cook, no pressure, Brook.

And I'd like to take just a quick moment to acknowledge the contributions Annette Vieti-Cook has made to our Agency's important mission.

Annette, you've made an incredible, incredible impact on the NRC and I'm so very grateful for your many years of service to the Agency, and so grateful that our paths crossed.

With that, let's begin.

MS. CLARKE: Thank you so much, Chairman Hanson. Again, welcome President Velshi. It's so exciting to have you here with us today.

I was fortunate enough to hear you speak

in person three years ago at our Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee luncheon, which also took place during RIC.

We spoke then in a very powerful way about gender balance in terms of candlelight. When we use one candle's flame to ignite another, the original flame does not diminish, but instead there is twice as much light.

The more light that is shared, the brighter the room becomes.

We've had three years since then to enlighten and be enlightened, and to promote a sense of belonging in our workplaces. And we've come a long way, as can be seen in many examples.

The fact that we're holding this special plenary session is one.

MS. VELSHI: I couldn't agree more with you. First of all, thank you so much, Chairman Hanson and the U.S. NRC for inviting me and giving me an opportunity to talk about something that is definitely near and dear to me.

So, yes, lots has changed for the better over the past three years certainly when it comes to gender equity in the nuclear sector, and Brook, as

you said, this session really exemplifies the change in my mind.

Three years ago, it was a side event, it was part of the Women's History Month and we had fairly decent attendance, 150 or so people, a few dozen men, in there. But look at three years later.

One, now I'm chairing the stage with Chairman Hanson which to me shows a couple of things, visible leadership and also that this is not a women's issue, this is a societal issue that requires everyone to be part of the solution.

So, Chairman Hanson, I thank you for your visible leadership. The second one is that that is no longer a side event, this is part of the plenary, it's part of our core business. So, again a great recognition of that.

And thirdly, Brook, congratulations on this new role that you have taken on because this cannot be done from the corner of someone's desk, this requires attention, it requires oversight, it requires resources to make real progress.

And so I think just this one session and some of those examples is an indication to me on how far we have come. But perhaps maybe to set the stage

for our conversation, Brook, I'd like to share a short video with the audience.

This is an initiative that was launched in the Canadian nuclear sector. One, the regulator was the catalysts on how do we drive the advancement of women in nuclear?

It's all done, and maybe what I'll done is get you to show the video and then pick from there on why we have launched it and what are some of our aspirations and challenges that go with that.

So maybe if we can roll the video, please?

(Video played.)

So I hope you found that video inspirational and it's an example of how the entire sector has come together to address this very, very critical area of importance to all of us.

And yesterday was international women's day and I watched what was happening in the Canadian nuclear sector, how the day was getting commemorated, the celebration of the contributions of women, and a recommitment to where we will need to get to.

So, Brook, maybe I'll turn it over to you and you can pick on a few threads from here.

MS. CLARKE: Wonderful. President Velshi, among many other things, you've taken a leadership role to look at issues impacting gender equity in a global context.

To name just one effort, although a significant one, you are the Co-Chair of the International Gender Champion's Impact Group, as Chairman Hanson mentioned, which aims to take collective actions to advance gender equity in the nuclear regulatory community.

Can you tell us more about your work in the impact group and other international initiatives that you're working on, and why are they important to us as regulators?

MS. VELSHI: Maybe I should start off with why is gender equity important to me, to society, to us as regulators? And some of this really doesn't need much saying, I think we all agree it's the right moral thing to do.

There is just a plethora of evidence that this is a smart thing to do, it's good for the bottom line, it's good for productivity, it's good for innovation.

And we heard from Chairman Hanson how

important it is to have diverse perspectives around the table that for us as regulators, we want to make sure there is a groupthink, that there is an environment that welcomes different viewpoints, that challenges the status quo.

And that ultimately leads to better, safer outcomes. And when we improve the working life for women, we actually improve it for everyone in our workplace.

And frankly, for us, our public expects us, when we talk about the need for enhanced trust and confidence of the public and then regulator, they want to look towards us to say are we reflected in your makeup in how you make your decisions?

And so I think it's very important from that perspective as well. And regulators play, I believe, a very special role because we have the opportunity and the platform to influence the entire sector.

In the Canadian context, soon after I took on my role it was very common at all our public hearings and proceedings that I would ask the licensees, so, how are you managing your talent, what's the representation of women, how are you

changing that, what does your board look like?

And now they all come prepared with those answers and they have brought some really firm concrete plans. And so I think, as you saw with the dawn video, the regulator can multiply actually exponentially grow the impact that we have.

So, it was with that in mind that we thought having this international gender champion group, these are diplomats that get together on driving gender equity, and I was asked if it would make sense to do that with the regulators.

And we started off, there were seven of us, Chairman Svinicki was one of the founding partners in this and we have Director General Grossi from the IAEA and the Director General Magwood from the OECD's NEA, both as strong male allies for gender equity that I have seen.

And over a year and a half we've now grown to almost 30 members and our key objective, one is each member has to make the pledge that they are committed to striving for gender equity, that we agree to share best practices with each other.

And we're putting a compendium of these best practices and really, at our last meeting we

agreed that we need to develop a framework of metrics of indicators, both qualitative and quantitative, that would allow us to measure how we're doing, to track progress, to aggregate and synthesize and do a better comparison, et cetera.

And so we're making progress and perhaps if you give me a minute, Brook, I'd like to share a couple of best practices that have been shared. One is by the United Arab Emirates regulator, FANR.

I think the UAE puts the rest of us to shame in how much advancement they have made in gender equity. For a new nuclear company, they have pretty much got to equity and they also have a very strong pipeline.

So, you heard in the video in Canada we are at about 25 percent, which is pretty much the same across the globe generally. But what's of greater concern to me is that when we look at our universities, enrollment in STEM programs is still in the low 20 percent.

So, if we just left it to time to take care of things, it won't.

And what FANR and the UAE has done is more than 50 percent of their STEM students are women,

is how they have driven this culture, this policy direction on how we need to greater equity, we need greater diversity.

You actually see that from the moment you arrive at the airport with the posters and their messaging, and so that was shared with us.

Canada shared, one that I'm really proud of, is we had one called GBA Plus, gender-based analysis, and the plus is that we started with gender but now go through all other designated groups, whether it is persons with disability, persons of color, indigenous community members, et cetera.

And it's a tool that forces us to take a lens to all our programs, all our processes, all our policies and see have we addressed any unique needs that may exist for these folks?

And we have found, much to our chagrin, certainly even in our regulatory framework, where we have introduced systemic biases unbeknownst to us that have actually precluded women from participating fully in our sector.

And so I think that GBA Plus is a great tool. So, the international Gender champion impact group, a great, great forum for regulators to get

together and in the audience if there are nuclear regulators who have not signed up for it, I strongly encourage you to do so.

Reach out to me and we will embrace you with open arms.

I don't want to steal the thunder from Ms. Magwood but the OECD's NEA has been doing phenomenal work when it comes to gender equity, and right now they are in the midst of putting together a pretty comprehensive policy framework that they're hoping that OECD countries would adopt.

And it looks at attraction, retention, and advancement of women in the nuclear sector.

I've been part of their Advisory Committee on this and, again, I think it requires us addressing this issue at many levels from all fronts in a very collaborative way for us to make real, lasting difference.

So, I'm really happy with the great progress that has happened in the last little while.

MS. CLARKE: We talked about barriers, we'll definitely come back to that but let's talk a little bit about the pipeline which you also mentioned. Here at the NRC we are continuing to

restructure the workforce to support our mission.

And as a result of our strategic workforce planning process, we anticipate a considerable increase in external hires to replace the loss of staff in critical positions. Many of these are STEM positions.

To build our pipeline, we do much of this through entry-level hiring, including our recently refreshed nuclear regulator apprenticeship network, and I have to mention, near to my heart, the Under Law Graduate Program for Attorneys.

We also feed our pipeline through our newly established university nuclear leadership program. These and other programs support our efforts to recruit a diverse highly qualified workforce design to support the Agency's needs and our transformative environment.

Our recruitment activities will help to develop a diverse candidate pipeline as we focus not only on women but also minorities, veterans, individuals with disabilities.

Where do you think the nuclear sector, and you've given a few examples, including the regulators have done well? And how do you think our

recruitment efforts can be better focused?

MS. VELSHI: I think some of the things you have talked about, what the NRC is doing, and I applaud you for that because I think those are some of the best practices that are out there.

Our demographics are probably similar to yours, we have many folks close to retirement age.

And the labor market is very competitive, and for us at a sector level it is difficult for the regulator to compete with industry when it comes to compensation, however, our mandate is phenomenal so that's what attracts people.

It's people who really want to join public service and make a difference so the mandate helps. But the other part is our working conditions and what kind of a work environment and what kind of expertise and people that exist at the work? Because that is also a magnet to bring in the top talent that we want to.

So, with my leadership team we have increased our presence and our profile at the various different universities to talk about not only what we're doing but what is the culture in our organization and the kinds of values that we uphold.

We have with a great deal of engagement of our staff come up with hiring goals and I truly believe that you've got to set goals, you've got to have a roadmap, you've got to measure, you've got to be held accountable to those things.

And we have set those hiring goals for those different groups and using the labor market availability to try to normalize our goals, and be very transparent about it.

And as I said, we've done it in a very inclusive way. And one of the benefits from the pandemic that has come about is, just for everyone around the world, it has shown how effective it can be in a hybrid work environment.

And this has allowed us to extend that talent pool whereas it would be in the national capital region in Canada for the most part to really truly make it national.

And so over the last couple of years, we've been hiring people from across the country. And that increased talent pool has really helped. I think our hiring process is very similar to yours.

We've tried to make sure that we've tried to exclude any systemic biases, that we've got panels

that are representative, that we don't all hire in our own world, so to speak.

And some of the other interesting things that I've seen and some that you've talked about, there are court programs, internship programs guaranteeing a job if you meet the requirements.

And something that I know that some of our licensees and folks in the industry do is sometimes they will make up funding that they make available to universities, for instance, conditional on the days that have X percentage of students that are of a different minority.

So, I think what we see, again, is a multi-faceted approach and we're seeing progress.

MS. CLARKE: Excellent, so once we've recruited the top talent, we have to focus on retention and have a news for progression. At the NRC, for example, we've done a variety of things and we continue to work on it.

One example is the Commission approved changes last year to the resident inspector program to help recruit and retain highly qualified residents and senior residents.

More broadly, our Chief Human Capital

Office has created an employee journey platform that provides opportunities for Staff to explore career paths at the Agency.

Another area of focus and really keen interest is identification first and elimination of barriers to horizontal and vertical movement that we have inadvertently created over time.

One example is classifying positions, a uniquely governmental bureaucratic thing, but we classify positions in certain employment areas. We may now find, though, that we can be more fluid in this area.

For example, a Branch Chief in a technical office in the past maybe had an educational requirement unassigned to a certain engineer, maybe that position could be reclassified to allow for a greater diversity of candidates who have learned on the job?

Even in OTC we've made an effort to change prerequisites for some of our non-lawyer jobs to allow training on the job so that folks can move between employment areas and climb ladders for progression.

As a result, we're seeing improvements in

generic balance.

To give you just one example, we've increased our percentage of women in the senior executive corps a little bit from 28 percent to 38 percent over the past 5 years and in diversity writ large.

So, we have seen some good improvement and are on the right track. But where do you still see barriers to women and others, whether horizontal or vertically?

Do you feel like a conscious bias plays a role in there? How do you think we can squarely address these barriers?

MS. VELSHI: Again, my comment is to the great work that's happening at the U.S. NRC, and I can't take much credit for this at all but even at the CNSC we are pretty much at parity at all levels.

Even on my senior leadership team of the 6 of us 3 are women, and further down as we go into the organization. So, where are some of the barriers? I think some of them are fairly fundamental.

It's in working conditions, it's something we actually just stumbled on in the last

little while. Our sister regulator, the Canadian energy regulator, found that some of their inspectors when they're out in the work environments have to put up with working conditions that are simply unacceptable.

And when they shared those with us, they said we never found out from our -- it's fine at the large nuclear facilities, there are no issues, these are very enlightened employers with very strong zero-tolerance harassment policies and programs.

But for the moment, small operators and industrial applications, what are some of the barriers that our inspectors encounter?

And we found it's really tough, it's anything from intimidating comments to pornography posted in the workplace to hotheads that have got all kinds of suggestive comments on that.

Just to make life uncomfortable and again, convey the message that you don't belong here.

And so we have, along with our other regulators, established this why are women in regulatory enforcement come together and see how can we make the workplace more conducive?

How do we make sure we let our licensees

know what are expectations are? Because when our inspectors are there, that's an extension of the workplace.

But to your point about the systemic biases that get introduced, I want to share something with you because it was just shared with me very recently, we do, as I'm sure you do, semi-annual reviews of our talent pool and certainly those from leadership positions.

And at our last meeting, our HR person had come and given us a refresher around unconscious bias. It's mandatory training for all of us but again, more of a reminder that as you're reviewing this candidate, be aware and listen to it, call it out when you hear it.

And I was sharing this with a colleague of mine and she says this week we are going through that same exercise. It's an international company, she's a general manager of one line of business, and I'll share with you what happens at our forum.

Because they too have gone through this unconscious bias training. And she shared with me a screenshot and these were the adjectives that were used to describe the two dozen or so women in that

senior leadership pool, and I want to share these with you.

Shrill, bossy, hysterical, ice queen, moody, high maintenance, feisty, pushy, aggressive. And I think most of us have heard that before. And only to say that this was said, these gender bias terms, without anyone calling it out.

And I think some of this is so insidious in our workplaces that we almost become oblivious to it and every now and then we need to get shaken up and say watch out, look out and be aware.

So, I wouldn't want us to even for a moment think that we don't have challenges to be addressed.

MS. CLARKE: Finally, we've spoken previously about all this mindfulness and this all goes back to early childhood.

An example that you've given in the past that really stuck in my mind was the example of a teacher in a primary school, maybe kindergarten, giving boys a robot picture to color but giving girls a clown.

As the regulators, I think we are looking for opportunities where we can educate and excite

student populations about regulatory careers and about STEM careers. Our efforts are focused in the main at the university level.

We have university champions, the coop program, internships, as you've discussed. These efforts help bring students to our agencies and to the nuclear sector to experience the work.

How do we better focus on youth education from childhood all the way through to university?

MS. VELSHI: So, again, I think it's fundamental that we address it right at the early stages of building that pipeline.

And research has shown that for some reason when girls get to their early teenage years, suddenly something switches in their brain and science and math is not quite as attractive as it used to be and then they opt out from STEM programs.

And so that is Grade 8 but it's the 12 to 14-year-olds, to me it's that critical age that some intervention is required. What we're doing at the CNSC as an example, we have a women-led STEM initiative.

I have a gender champion like you, Brook, in my organization that are running a whole lot of

great programs and one of them is our outreach program where we want to reach out to younger students, boys and girls, to talk about STEM careers, but mainly to be role models.

What has become very evident is the importance of role models that if I can see her I can be her, and we need to have that greater visibility by our younger engineers and scientists.

And the NEA has got these mentoring workshops that they hold for young girls. I have been a mentor fortunately for many of those sessions.

Again, extremely successful but I think it needs to start at a young age, and that example of the clown and the robot is classic because the teacher probably thought, well, at least I didn't give her a doll to color and that's progress.

But yes, we've got a ways to go but we've got some good things happening as well.

MS. CLARKE: Thank you so much, President Velshi. it looks like we have a little bit of time to take some questions. I have some for you, I have a couple of that will also include Chairman Hanson.

I think I'd start off, we're hopefully coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic a little bit and

returning to our new normal in the workplace, the hybrid workplace, and you talked about this, the benefits that we've realized from hybrid work.

Here's a question for you both. There has been a change in how management views telework as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations, including both of ours, have implemented new workplace flexibility guidelines.

How do you think these new guidelines will impact, have impacted, will impact the advancement of women?

MS. VELSHI: Should I go first?

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Sure.

MS. VELSHI: I think for our organization and just overall, I think it's a very, very positive move to provide this greater flexibility, especially for women but everyone benefits.

And my organization has really tried to maximize the flexibility, let the teams decide on how often we need to come into the office.

And so not only has it increased the talent pool, I think that flexibility allows greater work-life balance and again, from the pandemic we've heard some horrendous numbers, like 40 percent of the

women want to leave the workforce.

We're not seeing that in ours and I think that flexibility goes a long way.

The other thing that has come up from the pandemic that I just want to highlight is the different leadership styles that have been appreciated a lot more and certainly, the empathy angle has been such a critical part of helping us become resilient and get through it.

And these tend to be the more softer side of leadership skills that women sometimes have an advantage at that.

And I think more importantly than the advantage, I have seen even in my organization just a greater confidence amongst the women leaders on how supportive that can be for folks and how they can help bring out the best in their staff.

So, I think all this bodes very well.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Absolutely, a couple thoughts, and I want to pick up on a couple of themes that President Velshi mentioned.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an opportunity to reset how we think about work and I think maybe before the pandemic there was a bit of a

career penalty with telework.

And the sincere hope on my part is that with the pandemic and the pervasiveness now of telework, that penalty has gone away. And we have to be careful as we move into these new modes of working together that we don't unconsciously reinstitute that. And so there really is an opening here for more creativity about how to work together.

And to pick up on a theme President Velshi mentioned, the notion of presence and intentionality in online and hybrid work really takes on a greater importance.

And there is, I hope, more of an appetite for a bigger diversity of management styles going forward.

So, I'm really optimistic and hopeful that some of the changes that we're going to be grappling with going forward provide more opportunities for women participation and women leadership in the workforce.

MS. CLARKE: Thank you both. Here's a question for President Velshi.

In your opening remarks you mentioned

that gender equity is problem for society as a whole, not just a women's issue.

Could you expand on that? How do we bring more allies into the fold?

MS. VELSHI: Thank you for that question. One of the biggest challenges that we face with what we're trying to achieve is some folks think this is a zero-sum game, that if women were to advance it's at the expense of men.

And so, Brook, I really appreciated in your opening comments where you talk about my candlelight analogy.

And what we have found is when you have men joining, of course as you saw in the video too, you've just got that much more momentum that's being built.

And we are really preparing our work environments for the future where we want to make sure that our workplaces are welcoming for everyone, that there's a sense of belonging and that we enable and empower everyone to reach their true potential.

And so men need to be part of that. As I said, it's not a women's issue only. It makes everyone's lives better and we are all brothers and

fathers and husbands, and so there is also that personal interest in this.

And when we're seen by women, it just puts it as a side issue that needs to be handled by women. This is really for society to benefit and as I said, the results have shown it is society that benefits from greater involvement of women.

MS. CLARKE: Another one for you, President Velshi, and this one I think is a really critical one.

As a woman in nuclear, I often find I have to work ten times as hard as my male counterparts to gain and maintain my credibility and I am judged far more harshly for minor mistakes or errors that my male peers aren't.

And at times I feel my contributions are ignored in favor of a male perspective where credit is given to males over me. In environments such as these, it is difficult not only to stand out from my peers but to remain competitive for advancement in my own career.

What advice would you give women who face barriers to advancement as a result of conscious or unconscious bias in the workplace?

MS. VELSHI: I hear that question often, sadly, I still hear that and it is a reality for many. I too have encountered that, I'm happy to say I don't as much now, but I certainly have in my career.

And so in that video, the first theme that we picked on was around the confidence gap because that just erodes one's confidence that every time you say something and then someone speaks over you and someone says, oh, what a great idea, when he said it as opposed to you said it, and you go, oh, did I not make myself clear, did I not convey it?

And it's always looking inwards to say what could I have done better as opposed to say, frankly, it's probably not you at all.

And so one is don't be harsh on yourself, be kind on yourself but I did where ownership comes in, that people can't be bystanders.

If any one of us hears that, men or women, in a meeting where someone talks over someone or someone picks someone's idea and presents it as their own, it behooves the rest of us to speak up about it.

And I was at an International Women's Day event yesterday where I was speaking, and one of the questions I got, it's kind of in a similar vein, but

I want to share it with you because it was a very painful question to me, where a woman said she and other women often hear in meetings if you just smile he will do it.

And how do I respond to that? Again, the message being that all a woman has to do is look pretty and be nice and that's all she can actually do, that's all that's expected of her.

And it just erodes our self-worth and our confidence immensely, I don't think anyone appreciates the price we pay for that. And to the men it may be, oh, I'm paying her a compliment, well, it's not a compliment, buddy, it isn't.

So, again, I think it's so important that these micro-aggressions, when we speak about these at different forums, we come forth with those kinds of concerns, give our side of it and let people appreciate what this is doing to us and the impact that it does.

It's those paper cuts, right? And over time suddenly you say I can't take this anymore, I'm out of this and you've got prevent that. It is a real issue and it requires all of us to address that.

MS. CLARKE: And I think we have time for

one more question before I turn it over to Chairman Hanson, and this is a question for both of you.

What are some of the ways the leaders in regulatory agencies with strong female representation can influence other organizations in the nuclear sector with lower female representation, especially when little change to those numbers has been seen over a period of years?

MS. VELSHI: You go first, Chairman Hanson.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Except that I'm on mute like everyone at some point in this pandemic. So, what can we do? I think that's a great question.

When I talk inside the agency, I talk about diversity inclusion and its importance and the importance of women in the Agency.

But I try not to just do it when I'm talking to NRC employees. I actually try to do it when I'm actually out talking to industry groups as well.

So, when I go talk to the nuclear strategy industry, whatever it is, NSIAC, as part of the U.S. Nuclear Energy Institute, I also talk about the importance of diversity and inclusion.

And that prompts them often times to then turn around and tell me what they're doing as well. And so I think sometimes having that outside the Agency, having people know that's a priority for the NRC and for me personally, I have some hope, hopefully not Pollyannaish, but some hope that makes a difference.

MS. VELSHI: And maybe just to build on what Chairman Hanson has said, I have been frankly quite aggressive about this.

Even before I started this role, I made it known that this was of critical importance to me as we build our talent and look for safer outcomes.

So, I do the same when I meet with industry, when I meet with the Board of Directors, when they appear in front of us at the Commission, I will ask, I will challenge.

And maybe I'll just give one example on the difference it does make at a very working level.

We had at a license renewal hearing one of the employees from one of our uranium mines who is a system operator, the first woman in the world and maybe the only woman in the world.

And she was there to talk about the great

culture they had in the organization, the support of the leadership and so on.

And I asked her, I said if there was one thing that your management can do to make your workplace more conducive, what would it be? And her answer was a women's washroom underground would be kind of nice.

And I went, oh, my God, I thought that 40 years ago and today some fairly basic things are not available. But here's the difference today compared to when I had to struggle with this 40 years ago.

The very next day we got the licensee's commitment that work was underway to build the washroom, and yesterday I was speaking to that particular employer and I want to say it was at the regulator's nudging that they realized this was the right thing to do.

I think we can make a huge difference as the regulator and we should exercise that.

MS. CLARKE: Thank you, that's a great note on which to end. Thank you so much, President Velshi. Chairman Hanson, I turn it over to you for closing remarks.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thanks, Brook, and

thanks to you both for what has really been an incredible conversation. I could sit and listen to you both talk all day long.

Even though I think as you both really brought to the fore and amply indicated that listening is not sufficient, there's a lot of work to do and we need to get to it.

I'm glad we're doing this the day after International Women's Day, International Women's Day I think is a really important event globally to highlight these issues.

But it's just one day and I think what really matters is what we do the next day and the day after that.

So, I was glad, at least I thought, oh, we should be doing this on the 8th but no, I think today is actually the perfect day and in fact, every day is the perfect day for an event and a conversation like this.

There are so many themes to pick up on, I'll just bring one. I loved, Rumina, your word association a little bit and it reminded me to be really careful about the B-word in the workplace and that B word is bossy.

Bossy is just fine because that's often times how things get done and so forth. Before we go, I know it's 11:30 a.m., I want to put in a plug for the event this afternoon.

There's a session this afternoon, the Federal Women's Program Advisory Committee here at the NRC as well as our Office of International Programs will jointly host a panel called Making a Global Impact: Women in International Nuclear Policy to highlight the roles women are playing in international nuclear policy and engagement activities.

They have an incredible lineup including some of my favorite people, Margie Doane and Joyce Connery around that panel and I think it promises to be a fantastic event. I hope you will all return and join us then. Thank you both so very much.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went off the record at 11:31 a.m.)