

IRF 2011 SUMMIT CONFERENCE

OFFSHORE SAFETY: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

IRF COMMUNIQUÉ

31 October 2011

The first International Regulators' Forum (IRF) offshore safety summit was hosted by the Petroleum Safety Authority Norway (PSA) in Stavanger, Norway, on 4 and 5 October 2011. This conference offered an opportunity for regulators and other industry players to come together for an open and frank dialogue about offshore safety issues in the wake of the Montara blowout in the Timor Sea in 2009 and the Macondo blowout in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

"These two disasters have seriously impacted all kinds of petroleum activities as well as all players in the international offshore sector," Magne Ognedal, director general of the PSA and chair of the event, told delegates. "They must lead to improvements in the petroleum industry as a whole."

He emphasised the fact that a number of international players look to the IRF as an important organisation in the work of sharing experience and strengthening the global focus on petroleum safety.

"The IRF is willing to accept this challenge," Mr Ognedal has declared.

Discussions

More than 200 delegates representing the industry, academia, the workforce and regulators attended this important international meeting and took part in its round table discussions. The packed programme of presentations and productive discussions covered a range of current offshore industry and safety regulation issues.

Key speakers at the summit included Michael Bromwich, head of the recently created US Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), which is also an IRF member. He addressed the response of US safety regulators to the Macondo incident.

Steve Walker, head of the offshore safety division (OSD) at the UK Health & Safety Authority provided an overview of responses by safety regulators around the North Sea.

Kevin O'Carroll of Ospar, Dr Valery Sorokin of the G20's GMEP expert group and Jan Panek from the European Commission spoke about the way their international bodies are currently approaching petroleum-related safety challenges.

IRF regulators and professional international experts in the areas of BOPs, well control and integrity, standards development, safety culture and the fitness of companies to operate outlined the challenges which now face regulators as well as all industry players.

Lars Herbst, director of the BSEE's GoM office and also a member of the IRF, concluded the summit by summing up its results. He said stakeholders must now obtain and maintain an understanding of the lessons emerging from the Montara and Macondo disasters, and the "avalanche" of responses from industry, trade associations, regulators and other government bodies.

Furthermore, he observed that it is now necessary for everybody to grasp the links between safety integrity and environmental protection, and to identify the gaps which should be followed up.

He challenged the audience: "Now that you have received this updated information, use your influence as a representative of industry, trade association, or regulator to push for our common agenda of safety."

After the summit, Mr Ognedal said he thought it had been a success. To his mind, the trend seems to be that many who are now involved in the industry want to see an improvement and understand that safety matters.

Conference presentations and other relevant information can be downloaded from IRF's website at <http://www.irfoffshoresafety.com/conferences/2011Summit/>

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