

CLOSING SUMMARY – JUSTIN McCracken

[ADD YOUR OPENING REMARKS]

I now have about fifteen minutes to sum up the whole of the last two and a half days! I shall do my best to give a brief summary of the following –

- What are the common issues & concerns ?
- How should we move forward ?
- How can we network in practice ?
- Should we arrange another conference ? And if so, when ?

On the first question, there seems to be strong agreement that health, safety & environmental challenges are much the same worldwide. Though there are of course some important regional variations. And there can be more significant cultural impacts on the way these challenges are met. There is a pressing need to ensure information is exchanged. This applies both between different national regulators and between regulators as a whole and the industry. But it's often important to adapt this information to local needs to be used effectively.

In essence, these key challenges include –

- Ageing infrastructure – even if new now, platforms and pipelines must be maintained as they age;
- Weather conditions – the full range that the world offers – or may offer in future;
- The dangers of ship collision and helicopter accidents;
- How to ensure an effective safety culture;
- Competency and training issues – and ensuring the workforce is fully involved in decisions which affect their health or safety;
- And last but not least, the need for consistency in developing and applying standards – and in how they're monitored.

I could go on, but what's more important is how we tackle these challenges.

There is – perhaps inevitably – less consensus on this point. But there are clear points of agreement-

- I've mentioned the universal desire to exchange information, to learn from experience and share knowledge and understanding;
- To do this everyone agrees on the need for more and better networks, involving regulators, trade associations and the trade unions;
- But we must avoid the dangers of being too ambitious. Let us identify a few relatively modest – but nonetheless beneficial - things that we can and will achieve.

So how can we network better in practice? This seems to be the key question for us all. Most people here will agree with the need to start small and build. There are broader questions – and diverse views – about the future of IRF. These will need to be considered further and I know they will be on the agenda when the IRF has its next meeting. But progress does not depend on the future shape of IRF.

Based on those of you attending this conference the organisers can already provide a network of e-mail addresses in the follow-up material. A wide, informal network that would meet most people's initial preferences. These addresses will be available on the conference website. We will look into the feasibility of keeping that website open, at least for a limited time, to provide the focus that many of you have asked for. It would be able to give links to important relevant websites including IRF member sites.

This website could be the place to publish and share the outputs of the current IRF programmes on performance measurement and on mechanical lifting. It could also provide the opportunity to get feedback on the value not only of these specific products, but on this kind of network. Because a network is only good if it is used. In a year or so we can evaluate the response and consider whether to move to a more permanent basis. But in any case we will ensure the outputs of current IRF programmes are made available to everyone.

And I'm certainly not forgetting the pleas, particularly from industry representatives, for better communications all round with regulators. This is something we can all aim to do immediately.

As for whether we should have another conference, the answer seems to be yes. You have found this one to be very useful, if for different reasons! Another conference should not be just to repeat this unique inaugural event, much as we have enjoyed it, but to move to a different stage. A conference would evaluate the effectiveness of the new network and of the other outputs I've mentioned. It would then be in a position to assess the will and the feasibility of the options for going forward. Given the need to get these products into the public domain, to get feedback – and not least the need for time to plan another conference – suggests a follow up conference might take place in about two years.

Finally, you'll recall the challenges laid down throughout this conference – from Johnnie Burton, from Timothy Walker and from others: To identify **specific** areas to agree common standards within a realistic time. At least two of these areas should come out of the work that IRF is already doing on performance indicators and on mechanical lifting. And this conference has started to propose candidates for other areas. The IRF will be giving this a top priority after this conference.

But we as regulators will not only **accept** challenges. We will also **make** them. For example we would like ISO to develop a standardised approach to assessing

life extension problems on main structures and on pipelines. And working in partnership with industry will not stop us continuing to challenge them too, when necessary!

So to sum up what this conference will deliver –

- A commitment to build a global network of regulators and industry bodies dedicated to the common cause of raising health, safety and environmental standards offshore;
- A commitment to deliver, within a year, some real examples of common, global standards in areas of practical value to the industry worldwide, in areas such as lifting and performance measurement; and
- A commitment to build on these achievements in the longer term by identifying – and delivering – other products essential to delivering this global partnership. At its next meeting the IRF will be considering what these products should be, as well as all the other messages we have taken from this conference.

We have given ourselves much food for thought. There is a clear wish for global partnerships in tackling offshore health, safety and welfare challenges. This conference has raised expectations. They may actually be too high. We cannot achieve everything overnight. But we will take some practical steps in the short term. And we will look hard at how to build on these steps in the longer term.