

IRF Conference Summary

Offshore oil and gas industry regulators and industry representatives from around the world, met recently in London to focus on identifying practical steps to achieve offshore safety improvements and to address international health and safety regulatory issues. This first International Regulator's Forum (IRF) conference has announced a commitment to producing common standards and further cooperation in the name of global consistency and improved international health, safety and environmental performance.

Keynote speakers included Gale Norton, Secretary of the US Department of the Interior; Dagfinn Hoybraten, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Norway; Malcolm Brinded, Executive Director Exploration and Production, Royal Dutch/Shell Group; Tony Hayward, BP Exploration & Production CEO; and officials from Europe, the Americas and Australasia.

There was strong agreement that the health, safety and environmental challenges were similar worldwide; however it was recognised that there were important regional variations and cultural impacts on the way in which these challenges are met. The conference focused specifically on

- The benefits of a strong health and safety culture
- How collaboration can work in practice and achieve improvements in safety and operational efficiency
- Identification of common issues
- Sharing of performance information
- Building a community of global regulators to work together and support each other on common issues

Keynote speakers laid down some specific challenges for the conference – in particular to identify specific areas in which to agree common standards within a realistic time. At least two of these areas should come from the work that IRF is already doing on performance indicators and on mechanical lifting. The Conference also challenged ISO to develop a standardised approach to assessing life extension problems on main installation structures and on pipelines.

At the conference, members of the IRF committed to:

- building a global network of regulators and industry bodies dedicated to the common cause of raising health, safety and environmental standards offshore;
- delivering, within a year, real examples of common, global standards of practical value to the industry worldwide, in areas such as lifting and performance measurement; and
- building on these achievements in the longer term by identifying and delivering other products essential to supporting this global partnership.

The development of a wider network will assist regulators to share and to gain the information and knowledge that is needed to prevent incidents and secure the long term future of this technically innovative global industry