

WORLD ENGINEERS' CONVENTION

Inclusive work practices explored

By Marlene Kanga

With the focus on energy at the World Engineers' Convention, the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO) Committee for Women in Engineering held two panel discussions on the role of women in energy and the importance of inclusive work practices for the retention and support of women in engineering. The panel discussions included leading women from major global companies in the energy sector.

Nathalie Hardyn, deputy director of the Geneva Chamber of Industry and Services spoke of the debate over nuclear energy in Europe following the recent tsunami disaster at the Fukushima reactor in Japan. Currently 38% of energy in Switzerland is generated from nuclear reactors. In addition, Switzerland is at the heart of the electricity trading market, importing electricity from France and Germany and selling to other neighbouring countries.

The government strategy is to phase out nuclear energy by 2050 and replace it with alternatives including renewable energy. In addition to energy reduction targets, the government is considering the construction of new hydro-electric, geothermal and gas-fired generating plants. Female engineers have an important role in these developments, from the design of these plants to implementation and operation.

Dominique Mouillot, president of



Nathalie Hardyn, deputy director of the Geneva Chamber of Industry and Services, outlined the Swiss nuclear policy and its ramifications for the economy.

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Women in Nuclear Energy (WiN) Europe and CEO of Onet Technologies, spoke of the importance of recognising the achievements of women in engineering.

She has established the Fen Energia Award to promote diversity in the nuclear industry. The award is provided in collaboration with the European National Energy Leadership Academy and consists of several prizes in various categories including students, internships and scholarships for technical site visits for women in the nuclear industry.

Onet Technologies works in the design and construction of nuclear reactors as

well as nuclear decontamination and decommissioning. It has 2200 employees.

WiN is a global organisation with 3500 members in 80 countries including Australia. It was established to communicate with the public on issues relating to nuclear technology and, especially with the younger generation, to encourage education and knowledge transfer, and to foster diversity and gender equality in scientific and technical fields.

Jacqueline Buysee, engineering leader at Areva and founder of the company's network for women in engineering, spoke of the importance of networking for women in engineering and technology.

The Areva network holds an annual symposium and has alliances with other networks in large organisations in France. It has established a mentoring program and has encouraged the company to increase the number of women in management to 20% and to implement policies such as teleworking where employees can work from home for one day per week.

Monika Tabacchi, human resources manager for General Electric Thermal Division in Europe, outlined the company's gender policies.

GE established its diversity program in 2007 following an employee survey. Its diversity strategies include targets for women in management positions, policies on working hours and employee support including day-care facilities. Its policies include diverse candidates and selection panels for recruitment, leadership development, coaching and mentoring. The company has also implemented a policy to ensure equal pay which it plans to achieve in the next few years. ■



Among the participants of the women in engineering panel discussions were (l-r) Annick Carnino, adviser at WiN Europe; Jacqueline Buysee, engineering leader at Areva; Marie-Helene Therre, chair of the WFEO Committee for Women in Engineering; Monika Tabacchi, human resources manager at GE Thermal Europe; and Dominique Mouillot, president of WiN Europe and CEO of Onet Technologies.

Dr. Marlene Kanga is a national councillor of Engineers Australia and past chair of its National Committee for Women in Engineering. She is Engineers Australia's representative to the World Federation of Engineering Organisations, and a member of its Standing Committee for Women in Engineering. The committee is developing a guidance document on good practices for implementing diversity in the workplace. The document will incorporate the best practices from large companies in Europe, Asia and Australia. It will be available at the committee's web page at www.wfeo.net/women.