

News Briefs

European Atomic Energy Community

Meeting of the European High Level Group on Nuclear Safety and Waste Management (2008)

The second meeting of the European High Level Group on Nuclear Safety and Waste Management (HLG) took place on 11 January 2008 in Brussels.

The meeting resulted in the confirmation of Mr. Andrej Stritar, the Head of the Slovenian Regulatory Authority, as the chairperson of the HLG and the designation of vice-chairpersons. The group agreed upon its rules of procedure and held an initial exchange on the preparation of the HLG work programme. The members of the group have decided to create working groups dealing with nuclear safety, decommissioning, radioactive waste management and spent fuel and improvements in transparency arrangements.

Deposit of the Instrument of Conclusion by the European Atomic Energy Community of the MNEPR Agreement (2008)

The Instrument of Conclusion by the European Atomic Energy Community of the Framework Agreement on a Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation (MNEPR) and of the Protocol on Claims, Legal Proceedings and Indemnification to the MNEPR, was deposited on 22 February 2008 with the Head of Legal Affairs of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency on behalf of the Secretary General of the OECD.

The European Commission, on behalf of Euratom, had adopted a decision concerning the conclusion of the MNEPR Agreement and its Protocol on 4 December 2006 (see *Nuclear Law Bulletin* No. 79). The MNEPR Framework Agreement and its Protocol entered into force for the European Atomic Energy Community on 23 March 2008.

The MNEPR and the Protocol were signed in Stockholm on 21 May 2003 (see *Nuclear Law Bulletin* Nos. 71, 73 and 76). It is an international programme designed to facilitate co-operation and assistance to the Russian Federation in the field of spent nuclear fuel safety and radioactive waste management. Projects covered by MNEPR include securing and cleaning up spent nuclear fuel storage sites and dismantling old decommissioned nuclear submarines. More information on the MNEPR and its latest status are available at www.nea.fr/html/law/mnepr.html.

European Nuclear Energy Forum in Prague (2008)

The second meeting of the European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) took place in Prague, Czech Republic on 22/23 May 2008. EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso opened the forum together with the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Mirek Topolánek, the Prime Minister of Slovakia Robert Fico and the Prime Minister of Lithuania Gediminas Kirkilas.

The latest session of the forum was attended by high-level speakers and invitees, such as EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs, Members of the European Parliament, representatives from Member State's governments as well as representatives from the nuclear industry and civil society. The focus of the meeting was on the activities of the three ENEF working groups that were established at the first ENEF meeting, namely on opportunities, risks and transparency. The working groups have already met twice since the Bratislava meeting and are in the process of drafting proposals which shall enable ENEF to provide a roadmap for the continued development of nuclear energy in the European Union.

The Commission's proposal to create such a forum was endorsed by the European Council in March 2007. It serves as a platform to promote a broad discussion among all relevant stakeholders. ENEF is organised by the European Commission in co-operation with the Czech and Slovak Governments. Meetings are alternately hosted by the cities of Prague and Bratislava. On 26 – 27 November 2007, the first ENEF was held in Bratislava (see *Nuclear Law Bulletin* No. 80).

Joint Statement of the IAEA and the European Commission (2008)

A Joint Statement on Reinforcing Cooperation on Nuclear Energy for Peace and Development was released by the IAEA and the European Commission (EC) on 7 May 2008 in which the IAEA and the EC pledge to work together in several fields related to the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

The main purpose of the Joint Statement is to highlight the mutual determination of the two institutions to “significantly reinforce the quality and intensity of their cooperation, including through identifying specific priority areas and synergies”. The following areas of co-operation, *inter alia*, are listed:

- nuclear safety, including safety standards, installation safety, regulatory issues, safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, safe transport of radioactive material and safe decommissioning;
- radiological protection;
- verifications, safeguards and non-proliferation;
- nuclear security;
- supply of nuclear material, equipment and services;
- technology and scientific research;
- legal affairs and legislative assistance.

Both the IAEA and Euratom were established in 1957 and have a history of collaboration. A co-operation agreement between the two institutions of 1 January 1976 sets the legal framework of the relationship. The Joint Statement and more background information are available at www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2008/iaea_ecpledge.html.

European Nuclear Assembly

2008 Conference in Brussels (2008)

On 15 and 16 April 2008, the European Nuclear Assembly (ENA) brought together approximately 180 participants at a conference themed “Nuclear Energy: Developing Europe’s low-carbon-economy” to discuss the latest political, economic and environmental developments in the nuclear field.

EU Commissioner Andris Piebalgs highlighted in his keynote speech the latest developments in EU energy policy and nuclear energy’s contribution to the forging of Europe’s low-carbon economy goals. He announced that the European Commission is examining ways to address the difficulties related to licensing, financing and different nuclear liability regimes in order to make the necessary investments possible. Some of the speakers were Luis Echávarri, Director-General of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency, Pierre Sellal, Ambassador of France to the EU, Romana Jordan-Cizelj, Member of the European Parliament, Christian Waterloos, Director DG TREN, European Commission

ENA is organised every two years by FORATOM, the nuclear industry trade association in Europe.

G8 Energy Ministerial Meeting

Joint Statement by G8 Energy Ministers, Aomori, Japan (2008)

Energy Ministers of the G8, the People’s Republic of China, India and the Republic of Korea met in Aomori, Japan on 7 and 8 June 2008 in order to discuss issues related to energy security and climate change. Together, these countries account for about 65% of the global energy consumption, leading them to stress the importance of achieving global energy security, climate change mitigation and sustainable development. In a Joint Statement, the ministers extend messages to contribute to the discussions at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit in July 2008.

The ministers address nuclear energy and emphasise “that the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy must be carried out in a manner that ensures nuclear non-proliferation, safety and security and take note of the importance of various schemes for nuclear liability, such as the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage”. They also emphasise the necessity of responsible policies for decommissioning and fuel and radioactive waste management.

The full statement is available at www.enecho.meti.go.jp/topics/g8/g8_3sta_eng.pdf.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Fourth Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety (2008)

The Fourth Review Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) was held at the IAEA headquarters, Vienna, Austria, from 14 to 25 April 2008. The meeting was attended by 55 Contracting Parties to the convention and presided by Mr. Maurice Magugumela, Chief Executive Officer of the National Nuclear Regulator of South Africa. The OECD Nuclear Energy Agency was invited to attend as an observer.

The CNS entered into force on 24 October 1996. As of 15 November 2007, there were 65 Signatories and 61 Contracting Parties to the convention, including all countries with operating nuclear power plants. The main objective of the convention is “to achieve and maintain a high level of nuclear safety worldwide through the enhancement of national measures and international co-operation including, where appropriate, safety-related technical co-operation” [Article 1 (i) CNS]. Obligations under the convention cover, *inter alia*, siting, design, construction, operation, the availability of adequate financial and human resources, quality assurance and emergency preparedness.

Pursuant to Articles 20 and 21 of the CNS, Contracting Parties shall hold meetings at least every three years for the purpose of reviewing the national reports presented by each party on measures taken to implement each of the obligations under the convention. In accordance with the above, parties submitted national reports six months before the review meeting. In the following months, they reviewed each other’s reports and exchanged written questions, answers and comments in preparation for the meeting.

Review Meeting – Observations

As a general observation, a high degree of compliance with obligations under the CNS was reported during the meeting.

The Contracting Parties recognised the importance of openness and transparency: During the review meeting, many examples were reported of activities that regulatory bodies and operators of nuclear power plants had undertaken to enhance openness and transparency, including *inter alia* public meetings, revised legislation and the increased availability of information on websites.

Many Contracting Parties reported on their positive experiences with the IAEA peer review missions, especially the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) and Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) missions, and recognised their importance.

In their respective national reports, countries addressed mainly the subjects: independence of their respective regulatory bodies, safety management and safety culture, staffing and competence, probabilistic safety assessment techniques, periodic safety reviews, ageing management, life extension and emergency management. Many parties reported also on activities or plans for the construction of new nuclear power plants. In this respect, it was emphasised that the necessary safety infrastructure, such as technical expertise, legislative and regulatory framework, must be established well in advance, before the construction of a nuclear power plant is authorised.

With respect to the independence of the regulatory body, the review meeting noted that, in some states, the separation between the functions of the regulatory body and those of bodies and organisations concerned with the promotion or utilisation of nuclear energy may not be fully effective. Following recent developments in Canada, parties spent considerable time engaging in in-depth discussions regarding potential conflicts between nuclear safety and the need for the production of goods and services which are essential for public safety or well-being. The Contracting Parties noted that these issues needed further attention.

Finally, the review meeting invited other countries intending to launch nuclear power programmes to join the CNS.

More information on the CNS and the review meeting is available on the IAEA website at www-ns.iaea.org/conventions/nuclear-safety.htm.

International Nuclear Regulators Association

Statement of the International Nuclear Regulators Association (2008)

In a statement following the latest meeting of the International Nuclear Regulators Association (INRA) from 13 to 15 March 2008 in Washington, D.C., United States, INRA members strongly encouraged both existing and future nuclear nations to adopt programmes of continuous improvement in nuclear safety.

The association identifies in its statement the following commitments which countries should consider to achieve and maintain high levels of nuclear safety:

- To have a legislative and regulatory framework to govern the safety of nuclear materials and installations which meets the requirements of the Convention on Nuclear Safety.
- To establish an independent nuclear safety regulatory body with authority, competence, and financial and human resources to fulfil its responsibilities to secure a high level of safety.
- To ensure that such an independent regulatory body is able to come to its regulatory judgments or decisions on nuclear safety issues based on expert nuclear safety technical understanding unfettered by outside interest or pressure, and that this is underpinned by an appropriate legal framework, custom and practice and through other measures established by governments and parliaments.
- To anchor an effective system of nuclear safety regulation and control on a strong national commitment to develop cultures in all relevant organisations, bodies, that emphasise nuclear safety as the priority.

INRA also offers its assistance to countries in developing legislation and independent regulatory entities with a sound safety culture.

The association was formed in 1997 as a forum of discussion and includes the senior national regulatory officers from Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. In 2008, INRA is chaired by US Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Dale Klein.

The statement is available at www.nrc.gov (Agencywide Document Access and Management System – Electronic Reading Room).¹

1. Information taken from US NRC Press Release N. 08-085 available at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/news/2008/08-085.html.