

# 2003 in Perspective



Mr. Luis Echávarri  
Director-General of the NEA

We are in a changing environment, one that is strongly affected by world events. In 2003, the war in Iraq and the blackouts in North America and Europe brought energy supply questions more starkly to the front of people's minds. What has been the impact on the energy sector? Many ask: is nuclear energy making a comeback? Based on the energy policy of our member countries, the answer is not clear-cut, as a full range of scenarios exists spanning from no nuclear energy or gradual nuclear phase-out, to nuclear expansion and growth. Regardless of the specific scenarios in place, the Nuclear Energy Agency continues to have an important role to play in helping its members maintain sound bases for the safe and economical use of nuclear energy, as governments struggle to find effective solutions to ensure security of energy supply as well as address climate change considerations.

The Agency was very active and productive in 2003, as the reader will discover in the pages that follow. These achievements are the result of much hard work; our member countries and their experts deserve a great deal of the credit. Our results mirror the ambitious programme of work endorsed by our member countries, bringing added value to all of them in areas such as nuclear safety and regulation, energy policy, radioactive waste management, radiological protection, nuclear science, nuclear law, knowledge preservation and nuclear data.

The Nuclear Energy Agency conducts its activities based on a programme of work developed through member country inputs in accordance with the Agency's five-year Strategic Plan, the programmes of work of its seven standing technical committees, joint project support and voluntary contributions. Some of the highlights for 2003 were:

### Safety of nuclear installations

- Heads of the nuclear regulatory agencies of OECD countries met in June 2003 with high-level government officials and executives from the nuclear industry to discuss ways of measuring, assessing and communicating nuclear regulatory effectiveness and efficiency.
- A workshop organised with the International Atomic Energy Agency held in June 2003 focused on nuclear safety management and safety culture.

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### Energy policy and legislation

- The reference book, *Nuclear Energy Today*, was published in order to provide policy makers and interested members of the public with factual information of relevance to decision making in this field.
- A report on *Government and Nuclear Energy* was completed for publication early in 2004.
- The path was cleared for the signing in 2004 of the protocols to amend the Paris Convention on Third Party Liability in the Field of Nuclear Energy and the Brussels Supplementary Convention.

### Radioactive waste management, decommissioning and radiological protection

- The NEA co-sponsored a major international meeting on political and technical progress in the development of geological repositories for the disposal of high-level waste.
- The NEA conducted international peer reviews of certain aspects of the radioactive waste management research programmes of Belgium and France.
- Two major reports were issued in 2003 addressing the decommissioning of nuclear power plants.
- Current work in the area of radiological protection includes collaboration on a new system of protection being developed by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). This also addresses new approaches to the protection of fauna and flora.

### The future of nuclear power

- Under a special programme, the NEA has contributed to the Generation IV International Forum, which is exploring new reactor types and related research and development.

These are only a few examples of the many activities performed in depth at the NEA. This annual report provides details and shows the scope of the work that the Agency performs with and for its member countries. As so widely acknowledged, international co-operation on nuclear energy is becoming ever more necessary, and I am particularly pleased that the Agency can provide an effective environment to foster quality work in this area.

