

Message from the Director-General

As nuclear energy continues to make its comeback in many countries as a secure, affordable and virtually CO₂-free energy source, international co-operation becomes an increasingly attractive approach for all sectors concerned.

Safety is one of the areas in which there is the widest consensus that international co-operation can provide significant benefit, for government agencies, for industry as well as for the public at large. The Agency has a full programme on nuclear safety, with its activities being piloted by the NEA Committee on Nuclear Regulatory Activities (CNRA) and the NEA Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (CSNI). In addition, in 2007, 18 multinational joint projects were being conducted under NEA auspices on specific aspects of nuclear safety (see page 28 for further details). Joint projects were also being carried out in the fields of radioactive waste management and radiological protection.

In order to respond to growing demand for electricity, but also to growing environmental concerns, member countries have entrusted the NEA with carrying out a number of studies and co-operative activities. These range from economic studies covering the full range of the fuel cycle and such topics as the financing of new nuclear power plants, to technical studies on material science, decommissioning and radioactive waste management, to name just a few. The Agency is also acting as Technical Secretariat for the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) and Stage 2 of the Multinational Design Evaluation Programme (MDEP), two international initiatives that are seeking to pave the way for nuclear energy use in the future. Safety, security, efficiency, economy and sustainable development are among the initiatives' driving forces.

Progress continues to be made in the area of radioactive waste management, where consensus has largely been reached at the international level in support of deep geological disposal for the management of high-level and long-lived waste. Support at the political level and among key stakeholders is also more forthcoming than in the past, as readers will see in the pages that follow. Greater experience in steering radioactive waste management programmes, and the sharing of this experience, are having a clear impact.

International co-operation has brought very positive, concrete results in 2007 in the form of new general recommendations from the International Commission on Radiological Protection. For nearly a decade, the NEA played an active role in helping to develop the new recommendations, notably by providing a forum and opportunities for interaction with interested authorities of member countries as well as a dialogue with other stakeholders.

Finally, the development and strengthening of nuclear legislation governing the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which provides the legislative backbone for operations in the field, would not be possible without the dedicated participation of experts from across the NEA membership.

Building upon its successes, and looking forward to a challenging future, the NEA will continue to promote international co-operation in order to provide the greatest value added for its member countries.



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