



## Nuclear energy is making its case



In the face of growing energy challenges, nuclear energy is appearing more and more often in the lists of top energy policy choices. Its supply is secure. Its prices are competitive and stable. Its production is virtually CO<sub>2</sub>-free.

In OECD/NEA member countries, new build is under way in Finland and starting to take shape in France and the Slovak Republic. And for the first time in 30 years, the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun receiving applications for the construction of new units (applications for 5 units thus far, and expected for a total of 32 units over the 2007-2009 period). These developments are bolstered in the OECD Pacific region with 13 new units firmly committed in Japan and Korea.

As readers will find in the article on “Nuclear energy risks and benefits in perspective”, nuclear power also has other benefits to offer; its main drawback appears to lie in the management of the radioactive waste that it generates. But progress is being made in this area too. Innovative solutions are being sought for the “Management of recyclable fissile and fertile materials” (see page 9) and being backed up by definitive emplacement strategies relying on the deep geological disposal of radioactive waste (see page 13). To ensure the safety of the nuclear power plants and those who work there, studies continue in the relevant disciplines and are also discussed in this issue of *NEA News*.



Finally, several NEA member countries are committed to making nuclear energy even safer still, while improving its economic competitiveness. Through its multinational research projects, the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) is seeking to offer significant improvements over existing nuclear energy systems in the areas of economics; safety and reliability; proliferation resistance and physical protection; and sustainability. An update on the work of the GIF, for which the NEA acts as Technical Secretariat, is provided on page 30. In order to establish reference regulatory practice and regulation to enhance the safety of new reactor designs, several countries are also participating in the Multinational Design Evaluation Programme (MDEP), whose current phase of work is described on page 36.

Against this backdrop, the NEA looks forward to a dynamic work setting for the years to come, and to helping its member countries make the most of international co-operation in the field.

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