

News briefs

The RWMC Regulators' Forum

by C. Pescatore*

The NEA Radioactive Waste Management Committee Regulators' Forum (RWMC-RF) is a consolidated forum of senior regulators who have comprehensive views of the regulatory frameworks for radioactive waste management and decommissioning in NEA member countries. It provides regulators with opportunities for open discussions and exchanges of information on national regulatory experience and practices with a view to refining regulatory systems in this field. The RWMC-RF recognises the importance of effective interaction between regulators, implementers, policy makers and scientists, in order to reach a wider understanding of the issues associated with our responsibilities to present and future generations, and of the societal demands directly impacting the role of regulators in managing radioactive materials and waste.

On 20-22 January 2009 the RWMC-RF held its first of a series of workshops in an international context. Entitled "Towards Transparent, Proportionate and Deliverable Regulation for Geologic Disposal" the general purpose of the workshop was to address the questions of transparent, proportionate and deliverable regulation for long-term safety in as broad a fashion as possible. Subsidiary aims were to help the RWMC-RF and its partners:

- evaluate and update current regulatory positions, notably those adopted since the NEA Cordoba workshop of 1997, and add more recent developments/international guidance;
- complete the current understanding of the process for establishing long-term safety criteria and the major motivation for differences;
- establish areas of agreement/disagreement [e.g., duties to future generations, timescales for regulation, stepwise decision making, roles of optimisation and best available techniques (BAT), multiple lines of reasoning, safety

and performance indicators and limitations, recognition of uncertainties, importance of stakeholder interactions, etc.];

- identify the elements of a successful process of regulation for the long term;
- carry out the first phase of an RWMC-RF project to study regulators' needs for research and development on regulatory-related issues.

The workshop was hosted by the Government of Japan through its Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), in co-operation with the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organisation (JNES).

Questions specific to the workshop had arisen from RWMC activities, including the reports on *Regulating the Long-term Safety of Geological Disposal* (OECD/NEA, 2007) and *Considering Timescales in the Post-closure Safety of Geological Disposal of Radioactive Waste* (OECD/NEA, 2009). In preparation of the workshop, the RWMC-RF carried out a survey of countries' regulatory positions that was provided with the workshop materials. Other workshop materials included a review of progress in regulation of geological disposal since the 1997 Cordoba workshop and a review of guidance in the field of optimisation of geological repositories. Overall, some 70 participants from 13 countries attended the workshop, including representation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP).

Starting from a set of well-targeted questions, the workshop allowed a very broad exchange of views among participants, who represented not only regulatory authorities but also implementers of disposal facilities, policy makers and academics. The workshop methodology favoured discussions in small groups and all the participants were able to give their points of view and to share their experience with others. Speakers and participants at the closing session felt that the workshop accomplished its goals. The workshop proceedings are to be published later in 2009. Preliminary findings from the workshop are available in NEA/RWM/RF(2009)1. ■

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