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THE AGENCY'S ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF PHYSICAL PROTECTION OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL AND FACILITIES

Memorandum by the Director General

1. At its twenty-first regular session the General Conference adopted Resolution GC(XXI)/RES/350, paragraph 4 of which requested the Director General to report to the General Conference at its next regular session on the progress made in this matter. The following provides the information requested.
2. The Agency's role in the area of physical protection of nuclear materials and facilities has expanded as a result of the resolution adopted by the General Conference at its nineteenth regular session in September 1975[1]. In this regard an advisory group on physical protection, convened by the Director General in March 1977, formulated a set of recommendations.
3. On this basis, the Agency's programme in the area of physical protection at present includes: (a) the formulation of guidelines on adequate levels and measures for the physical protection of nuclear material; (b) the development of legal instruments, including an international convention on physical protection; (c) the organization of training courses on physical protection; (d) the publication of practical guidebooks on comprehensive physical protection systems for various types of nuclear facilities; (e) the provision of technical assistance relating to physical protection in the form of experts and fellowships; and (f) the collection of information on physical protection.
4. Since the last General Conference the following developments have taken place. Since 1976 special clauses which provide for application of physical protection measures to nuclear material and equipment submitted to the Agency's safeguards have been incorporated into some bilateral and trilateral safeguards agreements concluded with the Agency.[2] In most cases references are made to the recommendations in document INFCIRC/225/Rev.1[3]. Some agreement also foresee that the Agency will be informed or consulted on the subject.

[1] GC(XIX)/RES/328.

[2] See the agreements between the Agency, Brazil and the Federal Republic of Germany of 26 February 1976, INFCIRC/237; between Canada, Spain and the Agency of 10 February 1977, INFCIRC/247; between the Agency and Pakistan of 2 March 1977, INFCIRC/248; between Argentina and the Agency, two agreements of 22 July 1977, INFCIRC/250 and INFCIRC/251.

[3] The General Conference noted with satisfaction this publication in its Resolution GC(XXI)/RES/350.

5. In a communication addressed to the Director General early in 1978 16 Member States declared that they would consider the assurance of adequate levels of physical protection, corresponding with those contained in document INFCIRC/225/Rev.1, as one of the conditions for exporting nuclear material and equipment.

Draft convention

6. In June 1977, the Director General circulated to all Member States of the Agency the text of a "draft convention on physical protection of nuclear facilities, materials and transports", which had been prepared by the United States of America. After a series of informal consultations, the Director General invited all Member States to a meeting to consider the drafting of a convention and the services of the Secretariat at the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna were made available. [4]

7. Thirty-six Member States participated in a Meeting of Governmental Representatives to consider the Drafting of a Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPNM) which was held from 31 October to 10 November 1977, and which was also attended by observers from other States and international organizations. At this meeting two working groups on technical and legal issues were established. The reports of the working groups, as adopted by the Meeting, showed progress in the resolution of some of the substantive and drafting issues which emerged from the original draft convention. A major issue, on which there was no agreement, was the scope of the convention: namely, whether it should apply only to nuclear material in international transport or whether it also should apply to nuclear material while in use or stored in national facilities.

8. A second session was held in Vienna from 10 to 20 April 1978. At this session, in which representatives of 43 Member States and some observers participated, further progress was made within the working groups. Agreement was reached on the draft texts of several articles and technical annexes. The number of reservations or alternatives to other draft articles was also reduced. However, again, no agreement was reached on the scope of the convention. [5]

9. With a view to resolving the question of scope of the convention, a special informal session will be held from 4 to 8 September 1978. It has also been agreed to hold another regular session from 5 to 16 February 1979 at which the participants hope to agree on a widely acceptable text of a convention.

Training programme

10. A meeting of consultants, held at the IAEA Headquarters in October 1977, recommended that a training course on physical protection should focus mainly on physical protection of nuclear facilities and materials of the type currently used to satisfy the practical needs of countries developing their nuclear programmes.

11. Early in 1978 the United States Department of Energy indicated its willingness to organize, in co-operation with the Agency, an interregional training course corresponding to the consultants' recommendations. The proposal was accepted by the Director General and the necessary arrangements for the course have been set out in a Memorandum of Understanding between the United States of America and the IAEA. The first course will be held from 1 to 15 November 1978 at Sandia Laboratories, Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States.

[4] The General Conference endorsed this initiative in its Resolution GC(XXI)/RES/350.

[5] The sets of documents adopted by the first and second session of the Meeting were circulated to all Member States.

12. A meeting of consultants was held at the IAEA Headquarters in Vienna during October 1977 to consider the preparation of an IAEA publication on a comprehensive physical protection system for nuclear power plants. The consultants' report recommended that a handbook under the title "Principles of Physical Protection of Nuclear Power Plants" be prepared and published within the IAEA Technical Reports Series. Considering that the planned training course will have similar objectives, the course material, including the texts of lectures, might well be included in the handbook with appropriate editing by the course directors. The draft text of the handbook would be then reviewed by a technical committee of experts before its publication.

13. In a circular letter sent on 7 July 1977 the Director General invited selected Member States to make available through the Agency physical protection experts for assisting Member States at their request and to offer fellowships for the training of physical protection personnel. Ten Governments expressed their readiness to assist the Agency in this area when specific requests are made through the customary channels of the Agency's technical assistance programmes. Some requests for assistance relating to physical protection have already been received and responded to by the Agency.

14. The Agency's Library will collect and make available to interested Member States unclassified information on the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities, including the national regulations on physical protection which Member States would provide for this purpose. The Library is prepared to supply interested Member States with bibliographical information on physical protection as well as to provide them with the copies of relevant publications on their request.

