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MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN NUCLEAR, RADIATION TRANSPORT AND WASTE SAFETY

THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OCCUPATIONAL RADIATION PROTECTION: PROTECTING WORKERS AGAINST EXPOSURE TO IONIZING RADIATION

1. Last year, in document GOV/2001/29-GC(45)/12, the Secretariat reported on the forthcoming *International Conference on Occupational Radiation Protection: Protecting Workers against Exposure to Ionizing Radiation* (the *International Conference*).
2. The *International Conference* took place at the Headquarters of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, from 26 to 30 August 2002. It was hosted by the Government of Switzerland and presided over by Dr. Thomas Zeltner, Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health. It was organized by the Agency, which convened it jointly with the ILO, was co-sponsored by the European Commission and was held with the co-operation of the World Health Organization and the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and also of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements, the International Electrotechnical Commission, the International Radiation Protection Association and the International Society of Radiology. It was attended by 324 participants from 70 countries and 13 organizations.
3. The full text of the findings and recommendations of the *International Conference* is being made available in a Note by the Secretariat (2002/Note 23). The *International Conference* found that, in general terms, occupational radiation protection over the past few decades has been a success story for the international radiation protection community, with global information from international organizations pointing to solid downward trends in many key performance indicators. However, most of the data relate to the nuclear fuel cycle; the picture is not so clear or encouraging for exposures in medicine and industry, nor for

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exposures to natural sources, especially in the mining of ores other than uranium. The *International Conference* highlighted a number of issues which need to be resolved in order that a high standard of occupational radiation protection may be maintained worldwide. In this regard, the main recommendations of the Conference were:

- The international organizations should avoid unnecessary changes in standards of occupational radiation protection, so that regulatory stability can be maintained and implementation carried through.
- The international organizations should harmonize and, if possible, simplify their terminologies and their interpretations of requirements, especially those set out in conventions (including ILO Convention 115) and standards. Given the statutory responsibilities and the long tradition of the IAEA in the relevant field, this organization may wish to take the lead in an international harmonization effort. As part of this effort, the internationally recommended quantities and units should be used worldwide.
- To achieve the goal of better integrating radiation protection with general health and safety, the IAEA, with its specific radiation safety remit, and the ILO, with its overall worker safety remit, should consider collaborating more closely, especially in establishing and strengthening occupational radiation protection in developing countries.
- To achieve better dissemination of information and lessons learned into the medical, industrial and mining areas, the international organizations should consider whether systems similar to the ISOE could be established for these areas.
- The international organizations should consider producing a package of information and training material designed to enable workers to fully participate as stakeholders in all aspects of radiation protection.
- The international organizations are encouraged to make widely available in appropriate forms, including via the internet and in local languages, analyses of and lessons learned from accidents in industry to increase awareness and encourage responsible and safety-conscious behaviour among management and workers.
- The IAEA should initiate the formulation of detailed practical guidance to assist regulators in deciding what occupational exposures are unamenable to control. This guidance should be incorporated into recommendations for establishing which industries involving exposures to natural sources of radiation should be subject to control as practices, including advice on graded approaches to regulatory requirements that are nonetheless compatible with protection from artificial sources.
- The international organizations should develop guidance on the formulation and application of probability of causation schemes for the compensation of workers for radiation-induced occupational diseases.
- Many of these recommendations, and also a number of measures to strengthen occupational radiation protection globally, could be implemented if the international organizations, especially the IAEA and the ILO, formulated and implemented an international action plan for occupational radiation protection.