

Information Circular

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Communication dated 10 June 2009 received from the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan enclosing a press release regarding the International Conference on Remediation of Land Contaminated by Radioactive Material Residues

The Secretariat has received a communication dated 10 June 2009 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, transmitting a press release regarding the *International Conference on Remediation of Land Contaminated by Radioactive Material Residues*, which was held in Astana, Kazakhstan from 18 to 22 May 2009.

As requested in that communication, the attached press release is herewith circulated for the information of all Member States.

PRESS-RELEASE

The International Conference on Remediation of Land Contaminated by Radioactive Material Residues was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on 18-22 May, 2009.

This international conference was organized by the Government of Kazakhstan and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Kazakhstan Mr. S. Minbayev, Director of the IAEA Division nuclear fuel cycle and waste technology Mr. H. Forsstrom, heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Kazakhstan, 200 experts and observers from 37 countries and representatives of 10 international organizations took part in the conference.

The international conference provided an excellent opportunity for all the parties involved in remediation of contaminated sites to exchange ideas, review progress and new developments since the last international IAEA symposium on this topic which was held in 1999 in the United States of America.

The main objective of this forum was to facilitate international cooperation, promote the application of international standards and good practices, raise awareness and encourage the sharing of information and lessons learned on policy and regulatory, safety, technological, managerial and related socio-economical aspects of the remediation of sites contaminated with radioactive materials.

One of the reasons that this conference was taking place in Kazakhstan was to highlight the need to find a viable and effective architecture to address the remediation of the existing legacy sites, which have resulted from the inappropriate development of uranium mining and milling operations. The mining enterprises that extracted uranium and rare earth elements for over 50 years in Central Asia left behind very large amounts of industrial waste, including radioactive residues.

The IAEA provides comprehensive assistance at both national and regional levels with the aim of upgrading institutional capabilities of the countries of Central Asia. The main focus of this assistance is on upgrading regulatory control, and expanding environmental monitoring and

laboratory analysis capabilities in full compliance with the International Safety Standards. Recent initiatives by the IAEA for the former uranium mining and production activities in Central Asia include cooperation and communication with other international organizations.

Former nuclear weapons testing programmes have radiologically contaminated large portions of territories in many places, including Kazakhstan, where 16,000 km² for public use is still restricted. The IAEA has provided an independent assessment of the radiological situation of some of these former test sites and is prepared to continue to support its Member States in assessing present and future radiological threats and in planning the remediation of these sites.

Summing up the results of the conference, it could be said that this event assisted the establishment of different partnerships, revealed synergies that can help in the full implementation of environmental remediation projects and provided a forum for improved coordination among the international organizations that support environmental remediation programs.