

## Overcoming Safeguards Challenges

IAEA Deputy Director General for Safeguards, Herman Nackaerts, talks about the major challenges faced by the Agency in the implementation of safeguards and how the IAEA plans to tackle them in the coming decade.

*What do you see as the major challenges to the Safeguards system in the near future?*

Our greatest challenge remains to understand the nuclear programmes and activities of Member States. This understanding is obtained through verification activities, information collection and analysis which allow us to ensure that we can continue to draw credible conclusions about our Member States' nuclear material holdings, the absence of any undeclared nuclear material and activities, and therefore the peaceful nature of these programmes.

Many countries that have never previously had a nuclear industry, nuclear facilities, or expertise are now showing an interest in developing nuclear power programmes. This will affect us since we will not only have more facilities to inspect, but we'll also have to train these countries to understand their obligations, instruct them on how inspections should be conducted, as well as on what the IAEA is expecting of them.

There are also a small number of countries under suspicion of contravening their Safeguards Agreement. One of the challenges of course is to bring these issues to closure in a way that satisfies everyone.

We need to be more efficient by focusing our activities to where the real risks are. In order to do so, we need the best technology available. So the development of new technologies remains an important challenge for the IAEA.

*How will Safeguards address these challenges?*

In our long-term strategic plan, that was recently approved, we have indicated how we intend to tackle these challenges. We've tried to identify the gaps and ways to fill them, figuring out where we should develop new concepts, or where to implement more efficient methods.

To that end, we have a research and development programme to address our technical needs, i.e. instruments, hardware and software. We share this information with IAEA Member States that are ready to provide assistance. Through Member State Support Programmes they help us develop technology and instrumentation, and even help us develop concepts and approaches that address these challenges.

We are also working with a large network of individuals and external organisations that have expertise to contribute.

## **Background**

The *IAEA International Safeguards Symposium: Preparing for Future Verification Challenges* was held from 1-5 November 2010 in the Vienna International Centre.

The Symposium was organized in cooperation with the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management and the European Safeguards Research and Development Association.

Its primary objective was to foster dialogue and information exchange between the IAEA and experts from Member States, the nuclear industry and the broader nuclear non-proliferation community.

The focus of the 2010 *IAEA International Safeguards Symposium* was how best, from a technical perspective, to prepare for future verification challenges during this time of change. By bringing together the leading experts in the field from across the world, this symposium provided an opportunity for stakeholders to explore possible solutions in support of the IAEA's nuclear verification mission, and to identify areas where the different stakeholders in the safeguards business can help address these challenges.

-- *By Sasha Henriques, IAEA Division of Public Information*