MORE IMPORTANT SAFEGUARDS DEVELOPMENTS

Agreements signed in June considerably increased the total capacity of plant which has been placed under IAEA's safeguards system designed to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons.

They raised the number of agreements to 29, involving 25 countries, 55 nuclear reactors and a capacity of 2500 thermal megawatts. With the Board of Governors also having agreed to adopt, for a provisional two year period, inspection procedures for plants which reprocess fuels used in nuclear reactors, the Safeguards System has been given both extra responsibilities and significance.

Bradwell nuclear power station, one of the most powerful in the world, which on full load can create as a by-product about a kilogram a day of plutonium, comes under the system from 1st September. Mr. Ronald C. Hope-Jones, Resident Representative for the UK, who signed for his country, regarded the conclusion of the agreement as "a significant landmark in the Agency's progress towards a complete achievement of the purposes for which it was established". It was the first large nuclear power station forming part of a national electricity network and operating more or less continuously throughout the year to be subject to the safeguards. It was the belief of the United Kingdom Government that the inspectors would gain essential experience in tackling such a task. They were also giving evidence of their belief that even though the procedure involved access at all times it was compatible with the efficient operation of the station. The United Kingdom was giving practical demonstration both of its belief in safeguards and of its desire that they should be widely applied. They hoped it would encourage other nations to take similar steps, thus increasing the effectiveness of the system and supporting the efforts made within the United Nations to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.

Dr. Sigvard Eklund, Director General of IAEA foresaw that transcending its more immediate and tangible effects, this development would have an ideological and psychological impact. He felt that "It will help to break down the old-established habits of thinking and prejudices and pave the way for the new approach to national sovereignty which will have to prevail for the basic purposes of all safeguards ultimately to be achieved".

Bradwell consists of two reactors, each generating 538 thermal megawatts. They are gas-cooled, graphite-moderated and each fuelled with 20000 elements containing 236000 kilograms of natural uranium.

Canada and Japan transferred responsibility for administering safeguards, provided by a bilateral cooperation agreement, to the Agency. Their original agreement was noteworthy for the fact that it was fully reciprocal, each Government having been entitled to exercise safeguards controls over all the facilities and materials in the other country affected by the arrangement.

In signing the transfer of such arrangements to the Agency Miss Margaret B. Meagher, the Canadian Ambassador and Member of the Board of Governors,

spoke of her Government's hope that the present trend towards wider acceptance of the system would continue. It was an established Canadian policy to seek the transfer to the Agency of the safeguards embodied in its bilateral agreements. This was their first, and they intended to proceed with the negotiation of similar agreements with other States.

The Japanese Ambassador, Mr. Shinsaku Hogen, who is Chairman of the Board of Governors of IAEA, recalled that his Government was the first to receive nuclear material through the Agency in 1959 and to place it under safeguards. He also hoped that many member States would follow the lead.

Dr. Eklund, who noted that Japan was associating itself with yet another first, said they were bringing another country, another area of the world, into the "peaceful nuclear club of nations" which had charged the Agency with the administration of safeguards. Canada had broken new ground by concluding reciprocal agreements and transferring them to the Agency, thus broadening the scope and authority of these activities.

Provision of nuclear material to Mexico from the United States through IAEA means that this also comes under the Agency's statutory conditions. About 2530 kg of natural uranium fabricated into fuel elements, and a 5-curie plutonium-beryllium neutron source for a sub-critical assembly are being leased by the US Atomic Energy Commission (USAEC) to the Agency and subsequently to the Mexican Government. Part or all of it may become a gift as part of the US offer to donate to the Agency up to US $50 000 worth of special fissionable material for use in research and medical therapy projects.

Mrs. Amalia G.C. de Castillo Ledón, the Mexican Ambassador, Dr. Henry Smyth, the American Ambassador and Member of the Board of Governors and Dr. Eklund were the signatories. Mrs. de Castillo Ledón regarded it as one more example of excellent cooperation between the three parties and another step towards full nuclear development in her country. Dr. Smyth expressed pleasure that his country had been able to play some part in Mexico's scientific development.