

May 28, 2001

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International Atomic Energy Agency
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Reference: J1-01 Circ/TC-1194, Report on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management

The United States of America appreciates the opportunity to comment on the reference report as requested by the Secretariat. Representatives from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the U.S. Department of Energy were present for the Technical Committee Meeting and provided drafting assistance on the report.

Both technical and non-technical/societal issues exist in radioactive waste management. Member States need to have openness and genuine dialogue with stakeholders to ensure success in their radioactive waste management planning and decision making. With this in mind, we believe that the IAEA should remain primarily focused on technical issues surrounding the safety of radioactive waste management. To address the non-technical/societal issues, we recommend that the IAEA Secretariat take the following actions (from the first activity listed under Option 2 of TC-1194):

- The Secretariat should remain cognizant of non-technical societal issues by observing the handling of these issues in Member States, recognizing that the Member States are generally the most qualified organizations for dealing with stakeholders in their countries. The United States believes that dealing with non-technical societal issues and interested stakeholders will differ from country to country, because of differences in Member States governmental systems and in the ways their societies function. Such differences would make it highly unlikely that a uniform approach to deal with socio-political factors could be fashioned. Nevertheless, the United States believes that the IAEA Secretariat should encourage Member States, who do not currently have active programs to address non-technical societal issues, to openly address such issues to support implementation of successful radioactive waste management solutions.
- The Secretariat should facilitate the exchange between Member States of their experiences in and methodologies for dealing with non-technical societal issues. The Secretariat should emphasize participation in, or observation of, these exchanges by Member States that do not currently have experience with management of non-technical societal issues, or sharing of case studies on Member State's experiences. In considering specific activities to carry out this initiative, the Secretariat should recognize that similar efforts are already being conducted by other international bodies, such as OECD/NEA, and should refrain from creating new programs that would duplicate activities already being carried out by others. The Secretariat should participate in, or otherwise take advantage of the results of,

Mr. A. J. González

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initiatives such as those conducted by the OECD/NEA and assist Member States that did not participate in accessing the results as well.

The United States welcomes the opportunity to discuss our views with the committee of senior representatives of Member States planned for July 2001. U.S. representatives to this meeting will be forwarded shortly.

Sincerely,

John T. Greeves, Director */RA/*
Division of Waste Management
Office of Nuclear Material Safety &
Safeguards
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

cc: D. Huizenga, DOE
M. Clark, EPA
J. Dunn Lee, NRC/OIP

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