

R. Browning

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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STEERING COMMITTEE FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY

RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION
Paris, 29th-31st March 1988

Item 1: Opening of the meeting

1. The meeting was opened by Dr. Rometsch, Chairman of the Committee, who welcomed the following new members and participants:

Mr. Barbreau (France)
Mr. Nakamura (Japan)
Dr. McCombie (Switzerland)
Mr. Bernero (United States)
Mr. Clark (United States)
Dr. Galson (United States)
Ms. Poirot (NEA Data Bank)
Mr. Parneix (NEA Secretariat, Consultant)
Mr. Wiktorsson (NEA Secretariat, Consultant)

2. Apologies for absence had been received from:

Dr. Detilleux (Belgium), replaced by Mr. Heremans
Dr. Dejonghe (Belgium)
Mr. Bragg (Canada)
Mr. Geipel (Fed. Rep. of Germany)
Mr. Rothemeyer (Fed. Rep. of Germany)
Mrs. Piermattei (Italy), replaced by Mr. Mancioffi

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Dr. Snihs (Sweden), replaced by Mr. Boge
 Dr. Niederer (Switzerland), replaced by Dr. Zurkinden
 Mr. Goksel (Turkey)
 Mr. Clelland (United Kingdom)
 Mr. Girardi (CEC).

3. A list of participants is provided in Annex I.

Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda [SEN/RWM(88)1]

4. The Chairman noted that the three priority areas of the NEA waste management programme, namely performance assessment, in-situ research and investigations and general policy issues, formed the basic structure of the agenda. The agenda was adopted as proposed.

5. The Chairman also noted several developments in waste management in Member countries which could be of interest to discussions of the Committee, including the recent amendment to the high-level waste disposal law in the United States, the Transnuklear-Mol affair and the near-completion of the SFR waste disposal facility in Sweden.

Item 3: Approval of the Summary Record of the Eighteenth Session held on 11th and 12th June 1987 [SEN/RWM(87)8]

6. The Chairman noted that no written comments on SEN/RWM(87)8 had been received by the Secretariat prior to the meeting. Mr. Isaacs (United States) requested that the second last sentence on page 6 be amended to read, "On the basis of the results, it had been concluded that the seabed option continues to show promise of safe performance and, although at a less developed stage of understanding, may compare favourably with the technical performance of land-based options." The summary record, thus amended, was approved.

Item 4: Report on Activities of the OECD and NEA of interest to the Committee [SEN/RWM(88)3]

7. Mr. Strohl discussed the NEA programme of work and budget for 1988. He noted that, following discussions by the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy and the OECD Council, it had been decided that the 1988 programme of work would be based on the 1986 budget plus a small increment in resources. The necessary budget savings implied that programme activities related to CRESP and Subseabed Disposal would be slowed down in 1988. The Steering Committee had also indicated that activities in the field of radioactive waste management should continue to be given high priority. Mr. Strohl noted that an ad-hoc Working Group established by the Steering Committee had met in February to review problems related to the proposed re-organisation of the NEA Data Bank to provide increased computer services in support of activities in the nuclear safety and waste management programmes. The report of the Working Group's meeting, including proposals for re-organisation, would be considered by the Steering Committee in April 1988. In the meantime, Data Bank countries have accepted a transitional arrangement whereby they would continue to support the cost of computer services in 1988.

8. Ms. Cheghikian presented a report on the NEA programme activities of interest to the Committee. The Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (CSNI) had reviewed its priorities to place emphasis on two main work areas: feedback from operational experience, and prevention and management of accidents. The Committee on Radiation Protection and Public Health (CRPPH) had been very active in addressing Chernobyl-related issues, including review of intervention levels and of emergency planning practices and criteria. As well, other activities related to nuclear development and legal aspects were noted. The Committee noted the activities of the various NEA Committees, as well as the administrative and budgetary matters.

Item 5: Subsidiary Bodies of the RWMC [SEN/RWM(88)2]

9. Mr. Olivier introduced SEN/RWM(88)2 which had been prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of an initiative by the Executive Committee of the OECD to examine the justification for subsidiary bodies of the Organisation. The document outlined the mandate for the subsidiary bodies of the RWMC, including the Performance Assessment Advisory Group (PAAG), the Advisory Group on In-Situ Research and Investigations for Geological Disposal (ISAG), the User Group for Probabilistic Systems Assessment Codes for Radioactive Waste Management (PSAC) and the Expert Group on Geochemical Modelling and Data (GGMD). The Committee noted full support for the subsidiary bodies and agreed to the justification proposed for maintaining them, for subsequent transmission to the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy and the Executive Committee of the OECD.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT MATTERS

Item 6: Report from the Third Meeting of the Performance Assessment Advisory Group (PAAG) (25-27 January 1988) [SEN/RWM(88)4]

10. Mr. Papp, Chairman of PAAG, presented an overview of the Group's activities in the field of performance assessment, noting present priorities and planned initiatives. In particular, he noted the high priority given to study of scenario identification and selection, efforts to evaluate and further develop models used in performance assessment, the need to develop quality controlled databases for use in assessing uncertainties and confidence in safety predictions, and the need for good co-operation and interaction between different groups, countries and scientific disciplines. In the general discussion which followed, the Committee supported the activities of PAAG focussed on addressing relevant technical issues of performance assessment, but advised that issues of a non-technical nature, such as the acceptability of disposal practices and the question of retrievability, would best be left to review by the Committee.

11. Following the general discussion on the work of PAAG, Mr. Thegerström reported on specific aspects of PAAG's programme and related projects. These included: i) progress of the Working Group on the Identification and Selection of Scenarios [RWM/DOC(88)1]; ii) the establishment of the Alligator Rivers Natural Analogue Project; iii) discussion of the conclusions from the NEA Workshop on Near-field Assessment of Low- and Medium-Level Waste Repositories [RWM/DOC(88)10]; iv) an update on the SKI HYDROCOIN and INTRAVAL Projects; v) a progress report on the User Group for Probabilistic Systems

Assessment Codes (PSAC) [RWM/DOC(88)2]; and vi) preparation of an International Symposium on Safety Assessment of Radioactive Waste Repositories, to be held in September or October 1989 and to be jointly sponsored by the NEA, IAEA and CEC [RWM/DOC(88)3].

12. The following principal decisions on the programme of activities of PAAG were taken:

- i) The Committee noted progress and developments in the Working Group on Scenario Identification and Selection, the HYDROCOIN and INTRAVAL Projects, and the Alligator Rivers Natural Analogue Project.
- ii) With respect to the recommendations arising from the Workshop on Near-Field Assessment of Low- and Medium-Level Waste Repositories, the Committee approved the proposal to organise a workshop on human intrusion at waste disposal sites, and approved the proposal to convene a small consultant group under the direction of GGMD to examine uncertainties in experimental sorption data for particular radionuclides. Some reservations were expressed about the usefulness of addressing the third recommendation from the Workshop, namely the characterisation of nuclide inventories and waste forms for low- and medium-level waste. However, the Committee agreed with the approach of initially preparing and distributing a questionnaire to collect further information and to determine in more detail the feasibility of undertaking initiatives in this area.
- iii) The Committee noted progress and developments in the PSAC programme. Dr. Galson (United States) noted that the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) wished to be represented formally in PSAC.
- iv) The Committee approved plans to prepare an International Symposium on Safety Assessment of Radioactive Waste Repositories, to be held in the Fall of 1989 and to be organised jointly with the IAEA and the CEC. Mr. Bernero (United States) noted that the American Nuclear Society (ANS) would be organising a meeting on probabilistic safety assessment in April 1989, and that he would provide the NEA Secretariat with further details about the ANS Symposium.

Item 7: Report from the First Meeting of the Expert Group on Geochemical Modelling and Data (GGMD) (8-10 March 1988) [SEN/RWM(88)5]

13. Mr. Rügger reported on the discussions held at the first meeting of the Geochemical Group which will supervise the progress of the NEA work in the field of thermochemical and sorption databases and related topics. This group has replaced the former ISIRS Executive Committee. Mr. Rügger informed the Committee of developments in updating and transferring the ISIRS database to a new, PC-compatible database, called the Sorption Data Base (SDB). Ms. Poirot outlined progress in the development of the Thermochemical Data Base (TDB). Thermodynamic constants for the key elements in performance assessment, as required by chemical speciation codes such as PHREEQE, MINEQL and EQ3/6, are

being collected and carefully assessed by specialist review teams. Ms. Poirot noted that the uranium review would be completed by the end of 1988, and those for americium and technetium by the end of 1989. The Committee noted with interest the developments related to the geochemical databases.

IN-SITU RESEARCH MATTERS

Item 8: Recent Developments in the Programme of the Advisory Group on In-Situ Research and Investigations (ISAG) [SEN/RWM(87)10]

14. Mr. Chamney presented an overview of activities and future plans of ISAG, including: i) publication of a status report on In-Situ Research and Investigations in OECD Countries [RWM/DOC(88)4]; ii) organisation of a technical Workshop on Excavation Responses in Geological Repositories, to be held in Winnipeg, Canada on 26-28 April 1988; iii) preparation of a technical Workshop on Backfilling and Sealing of Radioactive Waste Repositories, to be jointly sponsored by the NEA and the CEC and to be held in the Federal Republic of Germany in May or June 1989; and iv) progress of a Consultant Group examining possible initiatives to enhance interaction between in-situ research and investigations and model development. He noted that these activities, and a preliminary review of technical issues relevant to processes of site characterisation, would be discussed at the fourth meeting of ISAG, to be held in May 1988 in Washington, D.C., United States.

15. The following principal decisions on the programme of activities of ISAG were taken:

- i) The Committee approved the publication of the ISAG status report on In-Situ Research and Investigations in OECD Countries, subject to minor revisions to be provided to the Secretariat by mid-April 1988.
- ii) The Committee took note of the upcoming Workshop on Excavation Responses in Geological Repositories, and approved the proposal to organise a workshop on backfilling and sealing of radioactive waste repositories in May or June of 1989.
- iii) The Committee noted developments in ISAG related to examining ways to enhance interaction between in-situ research and investigations and model development, and supported efforts to ensure interaction, where applicable, with PAAG.

Item 9: International Stripa Project [RWM/DOC(88)5]

16. Mr. Chamney outlined recent progress within the International Stripa Project. Phase II activities have been finished, and the first year of the 5-year Phase III programme has been completed. A proposal has also been made to establish a Task Force Group for Fracture Flow Modelling, to co-ordinate the modelling activities being conducted using data generated from the Stripa Project. The Committee noted progress in the Project.

GENERAL POLICY ISSUES AND OTHER MATTERS

Item 10: Follow-up of the US Proposal for the Preparation of Status Reports on National Waste Disposal Programmesa) Conclusions and Proposals from the Small Consultant Group on the Preparation of Status Reports [RWM/DOC(88)6]

17. Mr. Olivier outlined the conclusions of the Consultant Group which had met in January 1988 to discuss the US proposal, and introduced the proposal for all Member countries with nuclear power programmes to prepare status reports describing their national programmes, as well as background information on administrative and regulatory aspects. He noted that draft examples of such status reports from the five countries represented in the Consultant Group (France, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, United States), as well as a suggested format for preparation of the status reports, were provided in RWM/DOC(88)6.

18. In the discussions that followed, general support for such an initiative was expressed by all countries having nuclear power programmes. The Committee agreed to the preparation and submission to the NEA Secretariat of individual status reports by the end of June 1988. Subsequently, the Secretariat will edit and compile the reports to harmonise presentation to the extent possible, and distribute the compilation to RWMC members as a restricted document prior to September 1988. Responsibility for the use of the information will be left to the RWMC members.

b) Proposal for a Possible RWMC Appraisal of the Geological Disposal Concept [RWM/DOC(88)7]

19. Mr. Olivier introduced the proposal for the RWMC appraisal, which had arisen from a proposal by the Consultant Group mentioned in Item 10.a) above for the RWMC to issue a statement supporting the concept of geologic disposal. Mr. Olivier noted that it would be useful to release the appraisal in conjunction with the forthcoming ISAG publication of the status report on in-situ research and investigations [RWM/DOC(88)4], which addresses the role on in-situ investigations in enhancing confidence in the geological disposal concept.

20. The Committee agreed with the utility of such statements, and approved in principle the publication of the appraisal of the geological disposal concept. Several revisions to the text of the appraisal were proposed, and the Committee agreed that the Secretariat would provide a revised version to the RWMC within two weeks for comments, and that the appraisal would be finalized before the end of April. The Committee also agreed to publish the appraisal as a preface to the ISAG status report on In-Situ Research and Investigations in OECD Countries, and to prepare a suitably modified version for publication in a press release, the Nuclear Waste Bulletin and the NEA Newsletter.

21. During the discussion on the appraisal, questions were raised on the possible need or usefulness of updating the 1985 "Collective Opinion" [OECD/NEA, 1985. Technical appraisal of the current situation in the field of

radioactive waste management. A collective opinion by the Radioactive Waste Management Committee]. The Committee agreed that the Bureau and the Secretariat would prepare a proposal for such an update in late 1989 or early 1990. Following a suggestion forwarded by Mr. Hancox (Canada), who referred to the publication made a few years earlier by the International Council on Scientific Union (ICSU) on the subject of geological disposal, it was agreed that the Secretariat would informally contact ICSU to enquire about their possible plans for a new ICSU report on this issue.

Item 11: NEA Co-Ordinated Research Programme on Seabed Disposal of High-Level and Long-Lived Waste

a) Publication of the Concept Assessment Report [RWM/DOC(88)8]

22. Mr. Olivier recalled that the Committee had agreed to refer the task of finalising the report on the safety and feasibility of the seabed concept and supervising its publication to the Executive Committee of the Seabed Working Group. This concerned mainly the publication of the Overview volume, summarizing the research conducted to-date and the conclusions of the feasibility assessment. The other seven volumes are devoted to more specific technical and scientific work conducted by the various Task Groups. Some discussion occurred on the need to place the results of the seabed concept assessment in perspective, particularly with regards to land-based disposal options which appear to be more advanced technically and which have a higher level of priority for research and investigations. The Committee approved the publication of the report, subject to minor editorial revisions to be made by the Secretariat.

b) Future of the Seabed Programme [SEN/RWM(87)9]

23. Mr. Olivier commented on the possible future seabed research programme to be conducted following the publication of the Seabed Concept Assessment Report. He noted that most delegates in the Executive Committee of the Seabed Working Group had indicated a wish to continue co-operation, in some cases only at the management level to follow developments, but in others to study topics recommended by the assessment report, for example, during the joint cruises planned for 1989 and 1990 by France, Italy and Japan. Funding for further research in most countries would, however, remain restricted. Similar viewpoints were expressed by Members of the Committee. Since it was considered too premature to evaluate future prospects, even with recognition of recent developments such as the establishment of an Office of Sub-Seabed Disposal Research (OSDR) within the US DOE Office of Energy Research, the Committee agreed that interest for development of a new programme would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee.

Item 12: Decommissioning: Progress within the International Programme on Information Exchange [RWM/DOC(88)9]

24. Dr. Ilari informed the Committee of recent developments within the NEA decommissioning programme, including the addition of two projects: Eurochemic (Belgium) and NPD (Canada). Mr. Menon, Programme Co-ordinator, presented the Second Annual Report (1987) to the Committee, outlining the participants,

projects and administration of the programme. The Committee noted progress in the programme, and agreed to the submission of the Second Annual Report to the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy.

Item 13: Radiation Protection Aspects of Radioactive Waste Management

a) Progress Report on Rules for Exemption from Regulatory Control

25. Dr. Ilari informed the Committee of the results of the joint NEA/IAEA meeting on exemption rules held in Vienna on 21-25 March 1988. He noted that considerable progress had been made in developing a realistic and flexible approach to the exemption of practices or sources from regulatory control. It had been agreed at the meeting that the basic criteria for exemption are that the particular practice or source should produce a "trivial" risk to the individuals of a critical group, and that an assessment of optimisation of radiological protection, taking into consideration the collective detriment to the population and the cost of regulating the practice or source, should indicate that exemption is the optimum option. It had been concluded that an individual dose of tens of microsieverts in a year could be considered by regulatory authorities as corresponding to a "trivial" risk. It had also been agreed that, if preliminary estimates of collective dose were less than about 1 mansievert committed per year of practice, exemption would be appropriate. For higher values of collective dose, an optimisation assessment would be necessary to examine if exemption was the optimum option. Dr. Ilari noted that significant progress towards achieving a practicable approach to exemption had been made by establishing clear definitions of the concepts of "practice" and "source" for the purposes of exemption. The Committee noted the progress made in this area.

b) Conclusions of the joint CRPPH/CSNI/RWMC Ad-Hoc Meeting on the Optimisation of Protection in Regulation and Operational Practices (March 1988, Paris)

26. Dr. Ilari informed the Committee of the results of the meeting on optimisation, noting that participants had attended from the fields of radiological protection, nuclear safety and waste management. The proceedings of the meeting will be distributed to the RWMC within a few months. Mr. Papp, who had participated in the meeting, also presented his views on the results of the meeting, noting that waste management issues are such that there are some difficulties in practical application of an optimisation process, but that gradual adaptation of such decision-aiding techniques to waste management could be useful in clarifying uncertainties and assisting in structuring decisions. The Committee noted the results of the meeting.

Item 14: NEA Nuclear Waste Bulletin

27. Mr. Chamney informed the Committee of the preparation and distribution of the two editions of the Bulletin published to-date. The Committee noted the usefulness of the Bulletin in communicating relevant information on RWMC programme activities; and agreed that its publication should be continued. The Committee agreed that the Secretariat would distribute to each member of the RWMC a distribution list for their respective countries.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

Item 15: Presentation of National and International Activities

28. Participants provided summaries of developments in waste management in their respective country or organisation since the last RWMC meeting. A list of the written contributions is provided in Annex II.

OTHER MATTERS

Item 16: Date of Next Meeting

29. The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held 24-25 January 1989, starting at 10.00 hours on the first day.

Item 17: Other Business

30. The Chairman extended the warm thanks of the Committee to Mr. Hirling (IAEA), who was attending for the last time, for his excellent co-operation over the years, and wished him a happy retirement.

31. Mr. Cooley (United States) expressed his appreciation to the Secretariat and the Chairman for the organisation of a very productive meeting.

ANNEX I

NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE
RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

29th-31st March 1988

List of Participants

Australia

Dr. R. ROWETSCH (Chairman)

Dr. P. MOORE
Counsellor (Atomic Energy)
Australian High Commission
Strand
London WC2B 4LA
United Kingdom

Tel: 44 (1) 438 8759
Tlx: 27565
Fax: 44 (1) 240 5333

Austria

Dr. P. KREJSA
Head, Waste Management
Osterreichisches Forschungszentrum Seibersdorf
A-2444 Seibersdorf

Tel: 43 (2254) 80/2650
Tlx: 14353
Fax: 61-322 2545 = FZS

Belgium

Mr. R. HEREMANS
Organisme National des Déchets
Radioactifs et des Matières Fissiles
ONDRAF/NIRAS
Place Madou 1
Boîtes 24/25
B-1030 Brussels

Tel: 32 (2)
Tlx: 65784 NIROND
Fax: 32 (2) 218 51 65

Mr. J.M. LAMBOTTE
Ministère de la Santé Publique et de
l'Environnement
Service de Protection contre les
Radiations Ionisantes
Cité Administrative de l'Etat
Quartier Vésale 2-3/24
B-1010 Brussels

Tel: 32 (2) 210 4978/4966
Tlx: 21034 RADIST B.
Fax: 32 (2) 210 4967

Canada

Dr. W.T. HANCOX
Vice-President for Waste Management
Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL)
Whiteshell Nuclear Research Establishment
Pinawa, Manitoba ROE 1L0

Tel: 1 (204) 753 2685
Tlx: 757553
Fax: 1 (204) 753 8404

Finland

Mr. H. KOPONEN
Acting Deputy Head of the Department of
Nuclear Safety
Finnish Centre for Radiation and Nuclear Safety
P.O. Box 268
SF-00101 Helsinki 10

Tel: 358 (0) 70821
Tlx: 122691 STUK SF
Fax: 358 (0) 70 82210

Dr. S. VUORI
Nuclear Engineering Laboratory
Technical Research Centre of Finland
P.O. Box 169
SF-00181 Helsinki

Tel: 358 (0) 648931
Tlx: 122972 vttha SF
Fax: 358 (0) 603626

France

Mr. A. BARBREAU
Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique (CEA)
DPT/IPSN
B.P. N° 6
92265 Fontenay-aux-Roses Cedex

Tel: 33 (1) 46 54 70 76
Tlx: 204841 ENERGAT
Fax: 33 (1) 47 35 14 23

Mr. J. LEFEVRE
Directeur chargé des effluents et
déchets radioactifs
Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique (CEA)
Centre d'Etudes Nucléaires
B.P. No. 6
F-92265 Fontenay-aux-Roses Cedex

Tel: 33 (1) 46 54 74 71
Tlx: 204841
Fax: 33 (1) 47 35 14 23

Mr. C. MORAVILLE
Directeur général
Agence Nationale pour la Gestion des
Déchets Radioactifs (ANDRA)
B.P. N° 510
29-33, rue de la Fédération
F-75752 Paris Cedex 15

Tel: 33 (1) 40 56 15 15
Tlx: 205433 ANDRA
Fax:

F.R. of Germany

Dr. M. SCHREITERER
Minister Counsellor
Delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the OECD
5, rue Léonard-de-Vinci
75116 Paris

Tel: 33 (1) 45 01 73 68

Greece

Mr. V. KARAVIAS
Counsellor, Energy Advisor
Greek Delegation to the OECD
15, Villa Said
75116 Paris

Tel: 33 (1) 45 00 08 36

Italy

Mr. A. BRONDI
ENEA - C.R.E. Casaccia
Casella Postale No. 2400
I-00100 Roma A.D.

Tel: 39 (6) 3048 3171
Tlx: 43613296 ENEACA I
Fax: 39 (6) 3048 4203

Dr. S. MANCIOPPI
ENEA/DISP
Via Vitaliano Brancati 48
I-00144 Rome

Tel: 39 (6) 8528 2846
Tlx: 43612167
Fax: 39 (6) 5013429

Mr. P. RISOLUTI
Dipartimento Ciclo del Combustibile
ENEA-Casaccia
C.P. 2400
I-00100 Rome

Tel: 39 (6) 3048 3133
Tlx: 43613296 ENEACA I
Fax: 39 (6) 30483190

Japan

Mr. K. HANADA
Deputy Director
Waste Isolation and Ore Processing
Division
Nyngyo-Toge Works
Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel
Development Corporation (PNC)
Kamisaibara-mura
Okayama Pref.

Tel: 81 0868 44 2211
Tlx: 26462
Fax:

Dr. H. NAKAMURA
Head, High Level Waste Management Laboratory
Department of Environmental Safety Research
Nuclear Safety Research Center
Tokai Research Establishment
JAERI
Tokai-mura
Naka-gun
Ibaraki-ken, 319-11

Tel: 81 292 82 6008
Tlx: 3632340 J TOKAI J
Fax: 81 292 82 5408

Mr. T. UEKI
Deputy Director
Office of Radioactive Waste Management
Nuclear Fuel Division
Science & Technology Agency (STA)
2-2-1 Kasumigaseki
Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100

Tel: 81 03 581 5271
Tlx: 2226720
Fax:

Netherlands

Mr. H. CORNELISSEN
Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting
Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer
Postbus 450
2260 NB Leidschendam

Tel: 31 (70) 209367
Tlx: 32362 VROM NL
Fax: 31 (70) 279868

Mr. H.H. KORTHOF
Ministry of Economic Affairs, Electricity
and Nuclear Energy Branch
Bezuidenhoutseveg 6
Postbus 20101
2500 EC Den Haag

Tel: 31 (70) 797849
Tlx: 31099
Fax: 31 (70) 474001/
796350

Norway

Mr. G.C. CHRISTENSEN
Head, Health and Safety Department
Institute for Energy Technology
P.O. Box 40
N-2007 Kjeller

Tel: 47 (6) 81 25 60
Tlx: 74573 energ n
Fax: 47 (6) 81 55 53

Spain

Mr. C. MELCHES
ENRESA
Paseo de la Castellana 135
28046 Madrid

Tel: 34 (1) 279 3027
Tlx: 41429 ENRES E
Fax: 34 (1) 279 2486

Sveden

Mr. B. BOGE
National Institute of Radiation Protection
Box 60204
S-104 01 Stockholm

Tel: 46 (8) 7297100
Tlx: 11771 SAFERAD
Fax: 46 (8) 330831

Mr. S. NORRBY
Swedish Nuclear Power Inspectorate
Box 27106
S-102 52 Stockholm

Tel: 46 (8) 6635560
Tlx: 11961
Fax: 46 (8) 6619086

Mr. T. PAPP
Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste
Management Company
SKB
Box 5864
S-102 48 Stockholm

Tel: 46 (8) 6652800
Tlx: 13108 SKB
Fax: 46 (8) 6615719

Switzerland

Dr. H.P. ALDER
Chef du Département "Energie Nucléaire"
Paul-Scherrer Institute
CH-5303 Würenlingen

Tel: 41 (56) 99 24 12
Tlx: 827417 EIR CH
Fax:

Dr. C. McCOMBIE
Société Coopérative Nationale pour
l'Entreposage de Déchets Radioactifs (NAGRA)
Parkstrasse 23
CH-5401 Baden

Tel: 41 (56) 205 511/205 220
Tlx: 82 82 04 NAGR CH
Fax: 0 19 41 56 20 52 07/
20 52 12

Dr. R. ROMETSCH (Chairman)
Société Coopérative Nationale pour
l'Entreposage de Déchets Radioactifs (NAGRA)
Parkstrasse 23
CH-5401 Baden

Tel: 41 (56) 205 511/205 220
Tlx: 82 82 04 NAGR CH
Fax: 0 19 41 56 20 52 07/
20 52 12

Dr. A. ZURKINDEN
Deputy Head, Waste Management Section
Nuclear Safety Inspectorate
CH-5303 Würenlingen

Tel: 41 (56) 993930
Tlx: 59058
Fax:

United Kingdom

Dr. F.S. FEATES
Chief Inspector of Pollution
(Radioactive Substances)
Department of the Environment
Romney House
43 Marsham Street
London SW1P 3PY

Tel: 44 (1) 212 8804
Tlx: 22221
Fax: 44 (1) 212 8707

Dr. R.H. FLOWERS
UKAEA Fuel Processing Director
Atomic Energy Research Establishaent
Harwell
Didcot
Oxfordshire OX11 0RA

Tel: 44 (235) 24141 (x.5723)
Tlx: 83135
Fax:

United States

Mr. R.M. BERNERO
Deputy Director
Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington D.C. 20555
Tel: 1 (301) 492 3326
Tlx: 71 0824 0412
Fax: 1 (301) 492-0260

Dr. D.E. CLARK
International Program Support Office
Battelle Pacific Northern Laboratory
Hoeben 38 a
D-3301 Gross-Schvuelper
Federal Republic of Germany
Tel: 49 (531) 8012-1
Tlx: 2767/5310228 1ft
Fax: 49 (531) 8012-200

Mr. C. COOLEY
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
US Department of Energy
Forrestal Building, RW
Washington D.C. 20585
Tel: 1 (202) 586 6116
Tlx: 7108220176
Fax: 1 (202) 586 2672

Dr. D.A. GALSOM
Division of High-Level Waste Management
US Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington D.C. 20555
Tel: 1 (301) 492 04 05
Tlx: 71 0824 0412
Fax: 1 (301) 492-0260

Mr. T.H. ISAACS
Associate Director of the Office
of External Relations and Policy
Office of Civilian Radioactive
Waste Management
US Department of Energy
Forrestal Building, RW
Washington D.C. 20585
Tel: 1 (202) 586 2277
Tlx: 7108220176
Fax: 1 (202) 586 8134

Mr. L.T. LAKEY
Manager
International Program Support Office
Battelle Pacific Northwest Laboratory
P.O. Box 999 A3-70
Richland
Washington 99352
Tel: 1 (509) 376 0933
Tlx: 152874

CEC

Mr. S. ORLOWSKI
Chef de la Division Cycle du
Combustible Nucléaire
Commission des Communautés Européennes
Direction générale XII
200 rue de la Loi
B-1049 Bruxelles
Belgique
Tel: 32 (2) 235 4063
Tlx: 21877 COMEU B
Fax: 32 (2) 236 20 06

IAEA

Mr. J. HIRLING
Head, Waste Management Section
Division of Nuclear Fuel Cycle
International Atomic Energy Agency
P.O. Box 100
A-1400 Vienna
Austria
Tel: 43 (222) 23600
Tlx: 112645
Fax: 43 (222) 30 184

NEA Data Bank

Mlle I. POIROT
NEA Data Bank
Bâtiment 45
91191 Gif-sur-Yvette Cedex
Tel: 33 (1) 69.08.46.53
Tlx: 690920 F NEADATA
Fax: 33 (1) 69 41 39 65

NEA

Mr. P. STROHL
Deputy Director General
OECD Nuclear Energy Agency
38, boulevard Suchet
75016 Paris
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 50
Tlx: 630.668
Fax: 33 (1) 45 24 96 24

Mlle Z. CHECHKIAN
External Relations
OECD Nuclear Energy Agency
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 97

NEA Secretariat

Mr. J.-P. OLIVIER
Head, Radiation Protection and
Waste Management Division
OECD Nuclear Energy Agency
38, boulevard Suchet
75016 Paris
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 95
Tlx: 630.668
Fax: 33 (1) 45 24 96 24

Dr. O. ILARI
Deputy Head, Radiation Protection and
Waste Management Division
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 87

Mr. L. CHAMNEY
Radiation Protection and Waste
Management Division
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 59

Mr. J.-C. PARNEIX (Consultant)
Radiation Protection and Waste
Management Division
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 58

Dr. B. ROEGGER
Radiation Protection and Waste
Management Division
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 86

Mr. C. THEGERSTRÖM
Radiation Protection and Waste
Management Division
Tel: 33 (1) 45 24 96 78

Mr. S. MENON (Consultant)
Project Co-Ordinator
Decommissioning Programme
Studsвик Energiteknik AB
S-61182 Nyköping
Tel: 46 (155) 21 000
Tlx: 64013
Fax: 46 (155) 63 117

ANNEX II

LIST OF WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS

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