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Translated from Spanish

Meeting of Senior Experts in Latin America: Sharing experiences in implementing the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, and harmonization of procedures for the import and export of radioactive sources.

Mexico City, 13–15 December 2006

Chairman's report

1. A group of senior experts from Latin America met in Mexico City from 13 to 15 December 2006 to share experiences in implementing the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and discuss matters related to the harmonization of procedures for the import/export of radioactive sources.
2. The meeting was organized by the IAEA, under the auspices of the Government of Mexico through the National Nuclear Safety and Safeguards Commission (CNSNS) of the Republic of Mexico. It was chaired by Mr. Hermenegildo Maldonado, Head of the Radiation Facility Department of the CNSNS, and was attended by 16 participants from 8 member countries of the IAEA (Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela).
3. Mr. José Luis Delgado, Director of Radiation Safety at the CNSNS, opened the meeting. The scientific secretary of the meeting was Mr. Alejandro V. Bilbao Alfonso, from the IAEA Department of Nuclear Safety and Security.
4. The main objective of the meeting was to promote extensive sharing of national experiences in implementing the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources (the Code), with an emphasis on the harmonization of procedures for complying with the supplementary Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources (the Guidance).
5. The meeting participants were informed about the publications, services and opportunities offered by the IAEA with the aim of following the recommendations included in the Code, as well as the main conclusions of the International Conference on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources held in Bordeaux, France, in the summer of 2005.
6. Mr. José Luis Delgado expressed the CNSNS's support for the Code and the Guidance, and the willingness of the Government of Mexico to participate actively in the implementation of the recommendations contained in those documents.
7. The meeting participants took note of the non-binding nature of the Code and Guidance, expressing their support for the technical content and recommendations of those documents, which have differing levels of feasibility as regards their practical implementation with a view to strengthening the international regime for the control of high-risk radioactive sources.
8. Although not all countries participating in the meeting have expressed as yet to the IAEA their political commitment to the Code and the Guidance, there is a desire to work towards implementing the recommendations in these documents. In this connection, the meeting requests those countries in the region that have not yet expressed their political commitment to these instruments to consider the possibility of doing so as soon as possible.
9. As regards the implementation of the Guidance, the meeting participants noted the importance of providing the details of contact points for import/export in cases where this has not yet been done, and the importance of keeping them up to date in the IAEA database. In addition, they thanked the IAEA in advance for its efforts to provide this and other related information to countries in the shortest time possible.

10. Finally, the meeting participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to hold this first exchange meeting in Mexico City and, recognizing the technical possibilities already existing in the region for suitably strengthening the regime for control of radioactive sources, decided that greater cooperation in the Latin American region in this regard should be promoted. Thus, the participants agreed specifically that it would be advisable to continue to hold such meetings periodically, as appropriate and where possible, to exchange information and experiences among countries in the region with regard to implementation of the Code.
11. In three sessions, an enriching exchange of information and experiences took place on the following topics.

Legislative and regulatory framework

- In general, the establishment of an adequate system of regulatory control in countries is contributing to meeting the objectives of the Code.
- It is important to clarify the practical application of the concept of “authorization” in the Code, taking into account the different ways this concept is applied by countries during import/export processes, including the concept of “consent” incorporated in the models established by the IAEA on the basis of the Guidance.
- Some countries are revising their regulations to take account of the recommendations of the Code, and it would be appropriate to urge the remaining countries in the region to do likewise, as appropriate.
- Not all national regulatory authorities attended the meeting and these authorities are urged to be properly represented at future meetings.
- It is important and appropriate to invite representatives of national customs services to these meetings for exchange of information and experiences on implementation of the Code and the Guidance.
- It would be appropriate to make arrangements for exchange of information among countries on import and export and to use the contact points system to verify the effectiveness thereof.

National registers, monitoring of sources, import and export

- Generally speaking, the participating countries have established national registers of radioactive sources which include, as a minimum, high-risk sources (categories 1 to 3), allowing these to be identified and located. Notably, some countries have completed or made a start with harmonizing these registers, using the information required for the RAIS (module 1) as a reference. It is reasonable that other countries in the region be urged to make similar efforts in this regard.
- The participating countries have established systems for control of the import/export of radioactive sources. Notably, the communication system between customs services and national regulatory authorities has benefited from the use of automated systems. Nevertheless, exchange of information between the regulatory authorities of importing and exporting countries using the IAEA forms available for this purpose is necessary and feasible. However, some countries are slow to respond and the situation becomes even more critical when countries do not respond to requests for information. Therefore, it is appropriate that the IAEA provide assistance in this regard and that it urge countries (using the appropriate channels or mechanisms) to respond as quickly as possible, particularly those which have expressed their commitment to the Code. The use of a digital certification system or other similar instrument which ensures the confidentiality and the origin of the information in communications between countries should also be evaluated.
- In view of the vulnerability of radioactive sources during transport, including the associated security issues, it was seen as appropriate that the requirements laid down in the IAEA

Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material (TS-R-1) should take account (i.e. when they are revised in the future) of the recommendations contained in the Code and Guidance.

- It is important that there should be effective communication and coordination between customs services and national regulatory authorities regarding radioactive sources in storage under the control of customs services, and that appropriate cooperation agreements be established, as required, on measures for radiation protection and security, control, sending back or return of the radioactive sources, inter alia.
- Special attention will have to be paid to the problem of vulnerability of disused radioactive sources which might be temporarily stored under inadequate safety and security conditions.

National strategies, disused sources

- There is consensus regarding the need for countries in the region to continue to make efforts to have in place effective national systems for regulatory control of the safe management of radioactive sources, including appropriate financial provisions (pursuant to a specific analysis of each case), when such sources are disused, and to establish national strategies for acquiring or regaining control over orphan sources using the guidelines prepared by the IAEA (TECDOC-1388).
- The problem of returning disused sources to suppliers was also a cause of concern, as there are specific cases in the region where it has not been possible to return such sources owing to specific situations (such as changes in the legislation of the supplier countries). However, for new radioactive sources to be acquired, the regulatory authorities should verify during the authorization process that the user has, preferably, included in the purchase contract the option of returning the sources to the supplier at the end of their useful life. It is also important that countries' Governments are aware of the risks associated with disused and other sources which, owing to historical circumstances and other reasons, cannot be returned to the suppliers, and that they provide support and resources to solve the problem at national level.
- The efforts on the part of the regulatory authorities to promote initiatives aimed at minimizing the possibility of disused sources becoming orphan sources are auspicious and positive results have been achieved, for example through centralized collection of disused sources or national audits.

Hermenegildo Maldonado
Chairman
13–15 December 2006