

**Opening remarks for the Technical Meeting on the Establishment
of a Radioactive Waste Management Organization – 7th June 2010**

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- **General remarks on the conference**

Thank you Dr Soda for your opening speech, and welcome to all the participants.

France is happy to organize this conference, in relation with the IAEA. The goal of this conference is to ensure continuity between two Review Meetings of the Joint Convention and to take advantage of the work done in the Joint Convention.

- **Importance of radioactive waste management**

Managing radioactive waste, on the long term, is of particular importance for the protection of future generations.

With a view to protecting the environment for future generations, every country using nuclear energy or producing radioactive waste must tackle questions about radioactive waste management under the best possible conditions of security, safety and non-proliferation.

- **Responsibilities to tackle this issue now**

It is our responsibility to tackle waste management, and not to leave the problem on future generations. This can be done through the establishment of a national framework, through the creation of a national organization for radioactive waste management, and through R&D in order to define management solutions for all radioactive waste.

- **Responsibility of the State:**

Each State is responsible for the policy of managing any radioactive materials and waste arising in particular from the operation or decommissioning of installations using radioactive sources or materials (NPP, medical waste, waste coming from research reactors...).

Policies for managing radioactive materials and waste must be developed and implemented with due regard for protecting public health, safety and the environment, and in compliance with the principle of transparency.

It is also of the utmost importance that all necessary resources are secured for the final safe disposal of radioactive waste is undertaken.

- Example of France: the “Bataille” Act, creation of ANDRA, and 28/06/2006 Act

In 1991, the French Parliament passed its first Act dedicated to radioactive waste management:

- It initiated a large R&D programme, fixing 3 research orientations for High Level waste (separation-transmutation; geological disposal; long term surface storage).
- It created ANDRA (national agency for radioactive waste management) as a public body, separated from the CEA (Atomic Energy Commission).

- It also prescribed general principles and constraints regarding regulatory processes, organization of waste management, transparency and public participation (consultation mission before any underground laboratory; Local Information and Monitoring Commission around any underground laboratory).

In 1991, Members of Parliament also planned an assessment of the R&D, which gave rise to a new Act in 2006 for the sustainable management of radioactive materials and waste. This new law takes benefit from past R&D and experience. It provides for a more complete and robust framework regarding (i) waste management policy, (ii) transparency, regulatory processes and information of the public, and (iii) financial provisions (including financing R&D, and financing long term radioactive waste management). It also confirms that the disposal in France of radioactive waste from abroad is forbidden, in application of the principle of responsibility of each country.

I would like to stress the importance of the Parliament in this involvement of the State, and I would like to thank some French Members of Parliament (namely MM. Birraux and Bataille) that were (and still are) very active in the regulation of the nuclear field.

I would like to mention that the 2006 Act was also prepared by a public debate organized in France in 2005 on radioactive waste management. Such consultation of the public is essential for two reasons: it is a framework to inform the public on the current policy regarding radioactive waste management, and it allows to identify some expectations of the public that could be taken into account to improve the national policy. Thus, I can mention two outcomes of this public debate that were incorporated in the 2006 Act. The public is not only concerned with radioactive waste, but also with other radioactive materials: this is why France established a national plan on the management of all radioactive materials and waste. The public also expressed the expectation of the reversibility for a deep geological disposal: in consequence, the 2006 Act imposes a reversibility period of at least 100 years for any deep geological disposal.

=> So, it is the responsibility of the State to set up an adequate framework for radioactive waste management, that should pay particular attention:

- to the consistency of the policy for radioactive waste management,
- to the organisation set up to manage radioactive waste,
- to the financial security,
- and to the information given to the public.

- **Consistency of the policy for radioactive waste management: a solution for all kinds of waste**

An efficient and responsible policy for radioactive waste management should have a complete scope, aiming at the definition of a solution for each kind of radioactive waste.

It should also be coordinated to ensure the consistency of the approach. This overall vision is useful to assess all management solutions and their possible improvement.

- Example of France: National Plan for the Management of Radioactive Materials and Waste (PNGMDR)

To illustrate what France does in this field: since 2006, the Government (in relation with the Nuclear Safety Authority) establishes every 3 years a national plan on the management of radioactive materials and waste. This plan makes an assessment of waste management policy, an assessment of R&D needs, and sets up objectives for the future. It is an adequate framework to ensure the sufficiency and the consistency of management policy and of its R&D orientations and activities.

This national plan has just been updated: the new version was made public last Friday (4th June 2010).

- **Organisation set up to manage radioactive waste: promote centralized organisation**

We strongly believe that a national centralized organisation should be the preferred option in order to put together all the competences and to make easier the coordination to ensure the consistency of waste management (consistency on the State territory compared to several local organisations; consistency between categories of waste, to avoid mismanagement of some kinds of waste).

- **Financial security: apply the polluter pays principle, ensure sufficient resource for the management organisation**

The national framework should also ensure that the waste management organisation have sufficient resources to complete successfully its missions: R&D, collection of waste, operation of disposal centres, etc.

Radioactive waste management organisation can get subsidies, especially for some missions of general interest (information of the public, management of orphan waste). But it should first be funded by the waste generators (in consistency with the so-called “polluter pays principle”). For instance, France set up a tax on nuclear facilities to finance R&D on High Level waste management; France also set up obligations to nuclear operators to earmark dedicated assets to finance (among other things) long term management of their radioactive waste.

- **Information given to the public**

At last, I would like to stress the importance of informing the public, which is a key element for the acceptance of radioactive waste management solutions, and more generally for the acceptance of nuclear energy.

For instance, in France, as well as the national plan already mentioned, there is a national inventory of radioactive waste, which is made public by ANDRA every 3 years. There is also a local commission around Bure (French underground laboratory) to inform local population of the R&D activities.

- **Conclusions, usefulness of international cooperation**

To conclude, it is a pleasure to open this conference, which I think will give you the opportunity to open the debate on all issues regarding the creation and the functioning of national radioactive waste management bodies and policy.

Such international cooperation is useful (i) to help countries that are starting to act in this field, but also (ii) to share lessons learnt between experienced countries.

France encourages every international initiatives to develop cooperation in radioactive waste management, and I am sure this conference will be fruitful for everybody.