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Application of the Safety Assessment Methodologies for Near Surface Disposal Facilities (ASAM)

Chairman's Report

*1st Research Coordinating Meeting,
11 to 15 November 2002, Vienna, Austria*

December 2002

CH-1RCM



Chairman's Report

The relevance and importance of this new International Atomic Energy Agency (Agency) initiated project is illustrated by the fact that this inaugural meeting was attended by 68 individuals from 31 countries. The meeting lasted for four and a half days with an opening plenary during the first day. It was opened by Gordon Linsley (Waste Safety Section Head, IAEA) who reminded participants of the purpose of the project – to explore issues related to the practical application of the safety assessment methodologies for near surface disposal facilities and introduced the chair. This was followed by five presentations, which provided essential background information for the project: P. Metcalf (IAEA) gave an overview of IAEA's activities in the waste management area. This was followed by presentations on relevant ICRP recommendations (J. Cooper, UK) and IAEA standards related to near surface disposal (P. Metcalf). B. Batandjieva (IAEA) provided an overview of the previous IAEA project ISAM that developed a methodology for assessment of near surface waste disposal facilities. She also outlined the scope, objectives and general approach proposed to be followed in the ASAM project. Presentations followed on the application of safety assessment methodologies to near surface disposal (M. Kozak, USA), and on the review of safety assessment for near surface disposal facilities (C. Torres, Spain). The final presentation in the morning session was by J. Cooper on the content and work programme of the ASAM project. A lively discussion followed during which participants sought clarification on aspects of the ASAM project.

The remainder of the plenary was taken up by presentations by the working group leaders on the scope, objectives and work programme of the five working groups: the three Application Working Groups - Safety Reassessment (P. Ormai, Hungary), Mining and Minerals Processing Waste, and Disused Sealed Sources and Heterogeneous Waste (L. Gagner, France); and the two Cross-cutting Working Groups - Review and Regulatory aspects (C. Torres, Spain) and Common Application Aspects (L. Watts, UK). Participants completed a questionnaire indicating their preference for working group membership. The working group meetings were structured such that any one individual could be a member of one of the application working groups and also one of the cross-cutting working groups. An equitable division of participants between the working groups was achieved.

Working group meetings were held on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, with a short meeting of the application working groups prior to the final plenary session on



Friday. A brief plenary meeting was held on Wednesday morning to update participants on the progress within the working groups. The chairman's proposal was adopted to combine the plenary sessions planned for Thursday and Friday morning in order to give the working groups more time for discussion and to develop their work programmes. More than 20 poster presentations were made during the RCM that were summarised in the plenary session on Thursday afternoon.

The final plenary was introduced by Abel González (DIR-NSRW) who emphasised the importance of the project particularly in the context of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. He also drew attention to the issue of security of management and disposal of disused sealed sources in a near surface repository in the context of the possibility of deliberate human intrusion to recover the source for illegal purposes. This was suggested to be included in the work programme as well as disposal of very low level waste and waste from oil and gas industry. It was also pointed out that there is a need to ensure relationship between different Agency activities, such as the review of the classification of sealed sources and the work planned by the ASAM Disused Sealed Sources WG. Working group leaders presented the issues that their groups will consider these issues and the work programme leading up to the joint working groups' meeting planned for 2-6 June 2003. Few additional issues identified as important and agreed by the Common Application WG to be taken forward are the role of conservative vs. realistic assessments; and treatment of limited or no information. Individual working group meetings were also planned to take place next year to review the progress made and identify areas that need further consideration and action. The 2nd RCM was proposed to be held in February 2004. The plenary meeting agreed to the proposals.

This first RCM of the ASAM project was an outstanding success, in no small part due to the efforts of IAEA staff. The main outcomes of the RCM could be summarised as follows:

The scope and objective of the project were approved and elaborated in more detail by each individual working group. The use of information on volunteered sites by the three Application WGs was also discussed and clarified at the meeting. The actual organization of the project was presented and approved ensuring that there is sufficient coordination between the five working groups and the Coordinating WG. For each working group a leader and deputy leader were proposed and approved, and for the three Application WGs an additional technical advisor was defined. The ASAM project has now a coherent well-founded work programme for the



forthcoming year, which, together with the obvious commitment of the working group leaders and other participants, leads me to conclude that the project will be a success.

The proceedings of the 1st RCM will be prepared and distributed to the ASAM participants and interested experts in a form of a CD-ROM at the beginning of 2003. In addition a newsletter will be prepared and issued regularly summarising the main activities and associated materials/documents developed and IAEA related events. A password protected ASAM web site will be also available in the next months where more detailed information and project reports will be accessible to the participants in the project.

J R COOPER