

Ibero-American expert meeting on radiological monitoring of scrap and recovery of radioactive sources

Veracruz, Mexico, 11–15 February 2013

MEETING SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- Orphan sources represent a general problem common to all countries present at the meeting. In some countries, there have been cases that affected the metal recycling industry.
- All of the countries recycle (collect, process and/or melt down) metals from scrap.
- None of the countries (except Spain) have specific instruments, whether legal, formal, regulatory or voluntary (e.g. Protocol), for dealing with the problem of orphan “sources” that turn up in scrap flows.
- Some countries follow general radiological safety standards (Ex. 1: In Chile, every person must report the discovery of a radioactive source; Ex. 2: In Mexico, when a source is found, the regulatory authority is responsible for handling the event).
- Some countries in Latin America have partial cooperation agreements for prevention, detection and response with some of the primary stakeholders (customs, steel companies, regulators, national commissions) and are in the process of formalizing them (for example, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Mexico).

The meeting participants RECOGNIZE that:

1. The spirit of a strategy or Protocol is to “solve the problem”, not “find the culprits”.
2. This is a region-wide problem, which goes beyond the individual needs of each country, so a solution that takes this into account is desirable.
3. A regional agreement needs to be developed in order to develop the necessary solutions to address the issue, and the work of the Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies provides a frame of reference that could be used to define the regional agreement.
4. In principle, a system that is voluntary in nature (modeled after the Spanish Protocol) would be preferable to a compulsory system with obligatory compliance.
5. The participation of government authorities (regulatory body, ministries, national commissions, radioactive waste managers and customs, among others) is indispensable.
6. The participation of the recycling (scrap) and iron and steel sectors is key and they should be considered as “essential partners”.
7. The Spanish Protocol and the work of the Forum are recognized as the foundation for the development of a system of radiological surveillance of metallic materials.
8. A clear allocation of State funds for certain key elements (e.g. management and removal of orphan sources and other contaminated materials) is important, and the private sector will contribute, for example by supplying suitable personnel and detection equipment.
9. The Protocol or “system” developed for the prevention and detection of and response to orphan sources in the metal industry (including waste management and the protection of individuals and the environment) should be able to declassify materials that can be processed without any radiological restrictions and to respond to emergencies.
10. The system to be developed should cover aspects such as training, information, calibration and registration, and documents that report on radiological monitoring carried out on cargo, among others.
11. The spirit of collaboration that is evident in the Spanish Protocol and that is emphasized in the Forum’s document should extend not only to national systems, but also to a regional agreement under which the countries collaborate to the extent that they are able.

12. Countries with suitable infrastructure, detection equipment and personnel at border crossings or customs can supplement the existing (or planned) infrastructure with a national radiation monitoring system for metallic materials.
13. Accidents in the metal recycling process involve extremely complex radiological situations. For these cases, countries with a stronger preparedness and response capability will be able to provide assistance to countries that need it.
14. Technical Radiological Protection Units, as described in the Spanish Protocol, can contribute to resolving radiological situations, as needed, including by providing technical support to those involved.
15. The meeting participants hope that the IAEA will support the countries in the region in the development and implementation of the regional agreement mentioned in para. 11 for the prevention and detection of and response to inadvertent radioactive material in metal recycling, through coordination of activities and exploration of possible mechanisms of assistance.