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IAEA

More countries looking to introduce nuclear power

THE GROWING INTEREST in nuclear energy was reflected in the number of nonnuclear countries that took part in a workshop to discuss requirements that must be in place before starting a nuclear program. The meeting was held December 4–6 at the International Atomic Energy Agency’s headquarters in Vienna. Of the 42 countries participating, 20 were potential new entrants: Algeria, Australia, Bahrain, Cameroon, Chile, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Ghana, Greece, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, and Poland.

Experts from 10 countries that already have nuclear programs made presentations on their experiences in the startup and operation of reactors and related topics. The main prerequisites discussed were assessing national energy needs; legal and regulatory frameworks; safety, security, and safeguards; physical infrastructure; human resource requirements; environmental protection; and relations with the public.

“The rate of introduction of nuclear power in developing countries will depend to a large extent on the adequacy of [their] national infrastructure,” said Yuri Sokolov, IAEA deputy director general and head of nuclear energy, before the meeting. “The decision by a state to consider embarking on a nuclear power program should be based upon the state’s needs and requires commit-

An international workshop focuses on the infrastructure issues that must be addressed before embarking on a nuclear power program.

ment to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in a safe and secure manner,” he noted. “There is growing interest in the application of nuclear power for electricity and water desalination in many countries that currently do not operate nuclear power plants. This workshop is a timely opportunity to exchange information on the infrastructure issues that need to be addressed and to build up international confidence.”

According to the IAEA, its activities in infrastructure development have increased in the recent climate of expectancy of a nuclear energy renaissance. Nuclear infrastructure includes the institutional framework and legislation within which nuclear facilities operate, as well as the industrial, economic, social, technical, and scientific capabilities to enable the secure and efficient development, management, and operation of nuclear power facilities.

A statement on the IAEA Web site says, “In countries wishing to introduce nuclear power, the minimum necessary infrastructure needs to be established and enhanced as the program expands.” In this regard, the agency has been asked to develop guidance

on infrastructure for member states to adopt nuclear power, on operational and economic issues related to license renewal, and on feedback from experience, including decommissioning and plant replacement. It went on to say that “guidance will be developed on proven engineering and management practices in establishing and enhancing a variety of infrastructure facilities related to feasibility studies for the introduction of nuclear power and transfer of technology and on the owner’s responsibility in the acquisition of the first nuclear power plant project, including bid invitation and evaluation.”

After the workshop, Scientific Secretary Ian Facer told *Nuclear News* that the non-nuclear participants played a particularly active part in the discussions. Their input, he said, especially about what they need from vendors, nuclear-developed countries, and the IAEA, was revealing and very helpful to the secretariat, which plans to incorporate it in new guidance to be published, it is hoped, in the second part of 2007.—*Gamini Seneviratne*

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