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NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY
RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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RWMC SUPPORT TO THE ICGR 2011

24-25 MARCH 2010

This document supports Item 16.b on the RWMC-43 agenda

The RWMC Bureau suggests that a text of 10-15 pages be prepared as input to the ICGR2011 conference and finalised thereafter. The text would focus on the theme of the conference and it would be prepared within the Secretariat and the Bureau taking into account the relevant work in the RWMC working groups, notably the FSC.

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BACKGROUND ON THE ICGR-2011

The ICGR series of conferences on geological repositories – the next one being organised in Japan in October 2011 - brings together high-level political, governmental and regulatory decision-makers, as well as representatives of economic and social groups and implementing organisations. The aims are (1) to take stock of worldwide political and strategic developments in the field of geological disposal of radioactive waste, (2) to exchange views and engage in dialogue aimed at clarifying the issues and, in this way, (3) to assist national representatives in finding and refining social and political ways forward that are most appropriate to their own particular national conditions.

Three successful conferences have been held so far: in 1999 in Denver, in 2003 in Stockholm, and in 2007 in Bern. Traditional sponsors of the conference have been the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the OECD, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the International Association for Environmentally Safe Disposal of Radioactive Materials (EDRAM). The EC has also cosponsored the conferences in Europe.

RWMC SUPPORT

The NEA and the RWMC, in particular, have taken an active role in organising this series of conferences and have contributed importantly to give them a high profile. The NEA contribution has grown from simple co-sponsor of the first conference to active co-organiser in the latest conference. Thus:

1. The RWMC Bureau was represented in the programme committee and some of its members also in the international advisory committee.
2. Thanks also to the support of the RWMC members, the NEA invited ministerial levels on behalf of the conference and its sponsors.
3. The NEA was represented by its Director General and other high levels in the Agency. The NEA Directorate General gave the initial welcome to participants on behalf of the sponsors.
4. The whole RWMC was involved in preparing the conference. In particular, the text that later became the collective statement of 2008 formed one of the bases for contacting the conference speakers and helping them prepare for the conference. The same initial text was also used by the RWMC colleagues to prepare their country representatives for the conference.
5. The NEA issued the proceedings of the conference.

The RWMC agreed to support the 4th conference slated to take place in Japan over a period of 2-3 days in October 2011. It is thus planned to reconfirm the type of support that was provided to earlier conferences. Indeed, the RWMC Bureau and the Secretariat have been active already in the programme committee for the ICGR2011.

Proposal for a supporting text to the conference

The title of the Japan conference is “National Commitment – Regional/Local confidence”. The RWMC has had a lead role internationally on providing guidance on the governance aspects of waste management. The RWMC reports on Stepwise Decision Making and on the Evolving Role of Regulators are two such examples. These reports were developed with the assistance of the FSC, which has an impressive series of studies dealing with local confidence and its relation to national policy. The FSC also has a rich experience of dialogue with local communities. Some of its reports – notably the one on added value – were prepared with the support of several of its correspondent communities. The FSC will also release very soon a study on the concept of partnering as applied in 13 countries and will reflect on the evolution in the past decade, e.g., through its 10-year anniversary workshop in September 2010. Finally, the FSC has opened a new field of study on the interests and expectations of regional authorities.

Give the above background, the RWMC Bureau proposes that a text accompanying the ICRG2011 conference be prepared to serve roughly the same goals as the text that later became the RWMC Collective Statement of 2008 [see point 4.b above]

Proposed way forward

- The RWMC Bureau, with the help of the Secretariat and the FSC, develops an initial text by December 2010
- The text is circulated to the RWMC and to its working parties for later in-depth discussion at the RWMC-44 meeting (March 2011)
- The text is refined over the next two months and then proposed, or used, as supporting document to the ICGR2011 conference
- The text is updated in the light of the ICGR2011 findings and discussed within the RWMC Bureau in December 2011
- The Bureau will then make a proposal on a way forward to the whole RWMC for discussion at RWMC-45 in 2012. One possibility is that the text becomes the basis for a new Collective Opinion of the RWMC.