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International Nuclear Safety Experts Conclude IAEA Peer Review of China's Regulatory System

Beijing, 30 July 2010 | An international team of senior experts on nuclear safety regulation today completed a two-week International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) review of the governmental and regulatory framework for nuclear safety in the People´s Republic of China.

The team identified good practices within the system and gave advice on areas for future improvements. The IAEA has conveyed the team´s main conclusions to the Government of the People´s Republic of China. The final report will be submitted to China by Autumn 2010.

At the request of Chinese authorities, the IAEA assembled a team of 22 experts to conduct an Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) mission. This mission is a peer review based on the *IAEA Safety Standards*. It is not an inspection, nor an audit.

The experts came from 15 different countries: Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Hungary, Japan, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ukraine and the United States.

Mike Weightman, the United Kingdom´s Head of Nuclear Directorate, HSE and HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations said: "I was honoured and pleased to lead such a team of senior regulatory experts from around the world, and I was impressed by their commitment, experience and hard work to provide their best advice possible. We had very constructive interactions with the Chinese authority to maximize the beneficial impact of the mission."

The scope of the mission included the regulation of nuclear and radiation safety of the facilities and activities regulated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) National Nuclear Safety Administration (NNSA). The mission was conducted from 18 to 30 July, mainly in Beijing. To observe Chinese regulatory activities, the IRRS team visited several nuclear facilities, including a nuclear power plant, a manufacturer of safety components for nuclear power plants, a research reactor, a fuel cycle facility, a waste management facility, industrial and medical radioactive sources and the nuclear and radiation accident emergency centre.

The IRRS team reviewed the following regulatory areas: the government´s responsibilities and functions in the nuclear safety regime; the responsibilities and functions of the regulatory body and its management system; the activities of the regulatory body including authorizations; review and assessment; inspection and enforcement processes; and the development of regulations and guides.

The IAEA´s IRRS coordinator Gustavo Caruso said, "This mission was a big challenge for the Agency because of the significant expansion of China´s nuclear programme in the context of the nation´s current regulatory activities."

The IRRS team identified particular strengths in the Chinese regulatory system, including:

- Leadership´s expression of a high-level commitment to nuclear safety and its regulation;
- The cultural environment that turns such commitment into practical activities;
- The extensive use of IAEA Safety Standards in the development of China´s legislative framework; and
- At a more detailed level, the system of registering a cadre of high level nuclear safety engineers.

The safety leadership in China has been seen in many areas and levels, the Government, regulatory body and utilities, providing confidence in the effectiveness of the Chinese safety regulatory system and the future safety of the vast expanding nuclear industry.

The IRRS team also made recommendations to improve the overall performance of China´s regulatory system. Examples include:

- Nuclear safety-related legislation and policies should be further enhanced for all nuclear activities, including radioactive waste management;
- Regulatory bodies should be provided with greater flexibility and resources, both financial and human, to keep pace with the China´s nuclear development programme;
- As part of its strategy to achieve high standards of safety during a period of rapid growth, greater capability to access international experience and cooperation should be provided;
- With the very significant increase in regulatory work and associated resources, the structure of the MEP NNSA should be enhanced;
- In line with the development of the nuclear power industry, a commensurate increase to other parts of the fuel cycle and to waste management should be required. Associated with this, it was recommended that a comprehensive national policy and strategy for the management of radioactive and spent fuel should be established, as well as a single agency to implement the national strategy for radioactive waste; and
- At a detailed level, improvements in the various regulatory activities should be undertaken, such as greater utilisation of risk-informed and graded approaches.

IAEA Deputy Director General Tomihiro Taniguchi said, "I witnessed myself the very intensive work of the team and correspondingly commitment of the Chinese Government to achieve a high level of safety against a background of massive expansion of the nuclear

energy programme."

General information about the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) and previous missions can be found on the IAEA website.

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