

NDA INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

At the 8th National Stakeholder Group meeting in June, there was an action on the NDA to publish details of all of its International Agreements on our website. This information has now been published and you can access it by clicking on the link below.

<http://www.nda.gov.uk/stakeholders/newsletter/international-cooperation.cfm>

International co-operation on tackling the challenges

26 June 2009

As the NDA prepares its first International Relations Strategy, it seems a good time to take a quick look at existing agreements with partner organisations around the world.

Work on the new strategy has been ongoing for several months and the final version is expected to be published in September.

Under the Energy Act, the NDA is obliged to "secure the adoption of good practice". One way of achieving this is to look at how other countries deal with decommissioning and waste management issues similar to our own, so we can tackle the challenges we face more effectively.

We therefore work with a number of overseas organisations on areas of common interest, where we can gain from sharing ideas and experience. This strategy meets another Energy Act requirement to "secure value for money" – and avoids re-inventing the wheel.

There is no single organisation in the world with an identical remit to our own, or one that works exactly the same way as we do. But many share common aspects, and so we collaborate with a range of organisations. Often, such collaboration is undertaken through bilateral agreements. These agreements are not entered into lightly but are important, as they ease the legal and administrative burden of co-operating on complicated technical issues. As well as specifying areas of co-operation, they include clauses covering intellectual property and commercial confidentiality.

Entering into an agreement is also an indication of the mutual respect that each organisation has for the other's capabilities and standard of work. They provide a number of benefits and, importantly, allow for benchmarking, staff training opportunities and access to best international practice on societal as well as technical matters to do with waste treatment, decommissioning and waste disposal. We are also interested in some more institutional aspects such as running competitions, contract management and organisational structures.

The agreements cover all aspects of the NDA's responsibilities and we particularly encourage the companies that operate our sites to take advantage of these relationships.

Sellafield Ltd, for example, works closely with USDOE on information exchanges relating to vitrified wasteforms; UKAEA is working with the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) on decommissioning activities associated with its Steam Generating Heavy Water Reactor, which is similar in concept to their Fugen reactor; LLWR is involved in review work for Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd's low-level waste repository at Rokkasho which also gives an insight into Japanese LLW management practice.

The NDA, through its Radioactive Waste Management Directorate (RWMD), works with the national waste management organisations listed below, and with others. A key example of where these relationships have proved to be of great benefit is in the development of the reference disposal concept for high-level waste

and spent fuel which is based on the Swedish nuclear fuel and waste management company's (SKB) own hard rock concept, adapted for the UK situation with input from Switzerland's national co-operative for the disposal of radioactive waste (NAGRA) and Japan's nuclear waste management organisation (NUMO). In addition, RWMD has developed a number of disposal concept options for other rock types in the UK, based on reference designs from several countries.

As well as bilateral agreements, we are members of The International Association for Environmentally Safe Disposal of Radioactive Materials (EDRAM), a forum of national waste management organisations. We are also members of the "Club of Agencies" which brings together the waste management organisations within the EU plus Switzerland, and the European Commission. Here we discuss areas of mutual interest such as prospective EU Directives, progress with national radioactive waste management programmes, technical and socio-economic aspects of waste management, and research and development initiatives.

International organisations such as the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency and the International Atomic Energy Agency run a number of networks and expert groups covering decommissioning and clean-up, radioactive waste management, inventory development, transport regulations and safeguards support with which we are involved. International co-operation on R&D activities provides opportunities for sharing costs with others. Indeed, involvement in EC Framework R&D activities means that organisations may only need to contribute 50% of costs. RWMD is involved in many international R&D projects which are carried out on a multilateral basis, or under the auspices of the IAEA, OECD/NEA and EC Framework programmes.

International Bilateral Agreements

The NDA has bilateral agreements^[i] with the following organisations:

The United States Department of Energy (USDOE) through its Office of Environmental Management (EM) in respect of decommissioning and clean-up activities and the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management regarding geological disposal. (signed March 2007, duration five years) www.energy.gov

The Nuclear Waste Management Organisation of Japan (NUMO) in respect of geological disposal. (signed June 2004, duration five years) www.numo.or.jp/en/english.html

The Radioactive Waste Management Funding and Research Centre of Japan (RWMC) in respect of low, intermediate and high-level waste management, including geological disposal. (signed June 2004, duration five years) www.rwmc.or.jp/english

Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) regarding low-level waste management, waste treatment, decommissioning and geological disposal. (signed July 2008, duration five years) www.jaea.go.jp/english/index.shtml

Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited (JNFL) regarding low level waste disposal, waste treatment facilities, decommissioning and public acceptance activities. (open-ended.) www.jnfl.co.jp/english/index.html

Electricité de France (EDF) through its decommissioning arm CIDEN^[ii] for decommissioning strategies, graphite waste disposition, and contaminated land management. (signed January 2006, duration three years, extended January 2009) www.edf.fr

ANDRA, the French national agency for the disposal of radioactive waste ^[iii] regarding very low level waste disposal, low level waste disposal and geological disposal, national inventory development and graphite disposition. (signed May 2008, duration five years) www.andra.fr

NAGRA, the Swiss national co-operative for the disposal of radioactive waste,[iv] for intermediate and high-level waste, and spent fuel disposal. (signed February 2006, duration five years) **www.nagra.ch**

ONDRAF/NIRAS, the Belgian agency for radioactive waste and enriched fissile materials,[v] regarding decommissioning activities, low and intermediate level waste disposal, and geological disposal. (signed October 2005, duration five years) **www.nirond.be**

SKB, the Swedish nuclear fuel and waste management company,[vi] for low and intermediate level waste disposal and geological disposal of spent fuel. (signed February 2002, duration five years, extended February 2007) **www.skb.se**

[i] The agreements with NUMO, RWMC, NAGRA, ONDRAF/NIRAS, and SKB were novated to the NDA in 2007, following the merger of Nirex.

[ii] CIDEN : Centre d'Ingénierie, Déconstruction et Environnement

[iii] ANDRA : Agence nationale pour la gestion des déchets radioactifs.

[iv] NAGRA: Nationale Genossenschaft für die Lagerung radioaktiver Abfälle

[v] ONDRAF/NIRAS: l'organisme national des déchets radioactifs et des matières fissiles enrichies/ de nationale instelling voor radioactief afval en verrijkte splijtstoffen.

[vi] SKB: Svensk Kärnbränslehantering AB