

THE INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR FUEL CYCLE CONFERENCE: SECURING SAFE ACCESS TO PEACFUL POWER

London 18th March 2009

Working Group F: What is the best way to take forward the Multinational Nuclear Approach agenda?

The group was tasked with looking at how we should best develop the MNA agenda. There was not consensus on all issues raised in this group.

Should the IAEA be the focal point?

On this there was consensus that the IAEA should be the focal point for discussion but that there was a great deal more debate needed.

Points raised included the issue of both financial and human resources and greater investment by states was called for, particularly with changing demographics and training requirements.

It was agreed that the NPT Article IV commitment to the inalienable right of nations to access to the peaceful use of nuclear power is sacrosanct and that there is no role for the IAEA in export control.

However the group felt that it is premature to say what role there will be for the IAEA. The expectation on the IAEA is different with each proposal and, although the IAEA has already begun discussion, a lot more debate is needed. Resource demands will be developed as part of this process. The markets would prevail and the group envisioned that the role for the IAEA would be central but not an extensive one.

It was noted that, although there has been a great deal of behind the scenes constructive discussion, there had been little debate at the Board of Governors. One recurring call was for inclusiveness in these debates. The views of the existing commercial players and potential customers needed to be taken into account to establish what extra assurances and what mechanisms were needed that go beyond the commercial market - a 'Free Insurance Policy' as it was described earlier in the conference.

It is clear however that within the two proposals that have undergone a lot of development, and within others that are nearing maturity, the IAEA is envisaged as having a central role for discussion.

One delegate noted that the Russian proposal under discussion for some time has a clear role for the IAEA that is exactly as before of and described as:

- Support and promotion of Nuclear Power and guarantee of supply
- Safeguarding and verification of material

Two of the delegates reminded the group that some of the mis-trust of MNAs stems from earlier drafts of proposals that have now evolved.

Special committees, “external experts groups” and priorities

The group discussed whether there was an need to establish a special committee of the Board of Governors or whether this should be preceded by “external expert groups”. There was little appetite for setting up new structures.

On the question of whether priority should be given to legal, institutional or commercial aspects, the group felt that the focus should be on the commercial aspect with the others addressed according to

need.

What kind of time frame? Should the 2010 NPT Conference be kept in sight when preparing the agenda?

Some delegates stressed that addressing all three pillars of the NPT, including progress on the nuclear fuel cycle, was essential to a successful NPT Review Conference.

The urgency of a time frame was stressed. The group was reminded that some of the proposals are time bound, the NTI proposal for example. Although there was a lot to do, for example, discussion of the modalities role of the IAEA, a sense of urgency was needed. The call for ending philosophical debates and to be concrete and practical was not disputed – described by the chair as a 'Call to Action'.

There is a need to establish the opportunities offered by MNAs now. The engagement of recipient states was stressed often in the session.

It was felt that the Board of Governors meeting in June needed clarity on what re-assurances will help. There are two fuel assurances fully developed and ready to roll and that could be put before the Board.

It was suggested that a FMCT was complementary to this agenda.

The chair gave a brief summary of the session:

- Agreed the importance of this agenda
- Development on civil nuclear power and non-proliferation in parallel
- IAEA had a role to play, though there was work to be done on this
- Technical expertise is needed to develop the proposals
- Process should be inclusive and many states given the opportunity to participate
- Time is of the essence