

Regional meeting for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned from the application of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources

Santiago, Chile, 28 November–2 December 2011

Report

1. A Latin American regional meeting was held from 28 November to 2 December 2011 at the La Reina Nuclear Research Centre of the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission (CCHEN) in Santiago, Chile, chaired by Mr Hugo A. BRISO, the delegate from Chile. The objective was to exchange experiences and lessons learned from the application of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources (the Code of Conduct) in Latin America.
2. The regional meeting was instigated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in accordance with pre-established policies, and organized in conjunction with CCHEN.
3. The regional meeting was held in conformity with the formal process established by Member States in 2006, taking into account the recommendation of the meeting of technical and legal experts on this subject held in Vienna in May 2010, whereby the organization of regional meetings was encouraged.
4. All Member States and non-members of the IAEA from the Latin America region were invited to attend the regional meeting regardless of whether or not they had made a political commitment to the Code of Conduct and/or the supplementary Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources (the Guidance).
5. 27 delegates from 18 IAEA Member States participated in the regional meeting. Those States were: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela. Also participating in the regional meeting were three consultants from outside the IAEA, from the Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies, the United States of America Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, as well as one observer from the Canadian Embassy in Chile. The Scientific Secretary of the regional meeting was Mr Ronald PACHECO, from the IAEA Division of Radiation, Transport and Waste Safety.
6. The regional meeting was opened by Mr Luis FRANGINI, Head of the Office of Legal Affairs, representing the Executive Director of CCHEN. In his introductory remarks, Mr FRANGINI noted the importance of the event both for the region and for the country, highlighting the relevant activities carried out by CCHEN in that field.

He also invited the participants of the regional meeting to optimize the regional resources that would allow the requirements of the Code of Conduct and supplementary Guidance to be met.
7. The Scientific Secretary explained the radiation safety infrastructure in the Latin America region. In that regard, he stated that, of a total 22 Member States in the region, 11 had expressed political support for both the Code of Conduct and the Guidance, and 5 for the Code of Conduct alone. He noted that the IAEA would continue its efforts to increase the commitments made by countries.
8. It was suggested that the IAEA should focus its policy on integrating non-Member States, encouraging them in particular to apply the Code of Conduct and the Guidance.

9. A wide-ranging debate took place on community initiatives to implement controls for the import and export of radioactive sources. The bilateral agreements between the regulatory bodies of some countries in the region and their counterparts in Canada and the United States of America were given as examples.

Main recommendations:

On this topic, it was suggested that the IAEA should, to the extent possible:

- Develop a format for a bilateral-type agreement, based on existing ones, to be recommended to Member States;
- Promote the development of multilateral initiatives, for example within MERCOSUR or other regional organizations;
- Consider extending the scope of the Guidance to cover all categories of radioactive sources, including the possible legal and administrative implications of such a measure;
- Seek mechanisms for keeping data on national contact points up to date;
- Some delegates proposed subjecting the transfer of scrap to administrative import and export controls;
- Establish national strategies to regain control of orphan radioactive sources and improve control of vulnerable radioactive sources, based on IAEA Safety Guide SSG-19;
- The training of customs staff in this field continues to be necessary;
- It was recommended that the IAEA make the new online version of RAIS 3.0 available to Member States and that it organize training workshops for specialists in safety and IT.

10. Some delegates mentioned the existence of organizations devoted to commercial intermediation, in particular for managing the import of radioactive sources — a stage that is not covered by the Guidance. It was suggested that the topic, especially the applicable regulations, should be discussed at future meetings.

11. The Scientific Secretary described an appropriate system for establishing regulatory control, presenting the guides for authorization and inspection developed under project RLA/9/064. These guides will be available to Member States once they are published. In relation to this topic, the justification for applying tariffs to inspections as compensation for regulatory effort was discussed.

12. The recycling of scrap was discussed as one of the main sources of discovery of orphan radioactive sources. In this connection, the experiences of several countries and organizations in handling scrap were presented. The Forum presented its projects in that regard, stressing its willingness to disseminate the results. Some delegates proposed subjecting the transfer of scrap to administrative import and export controls.

13. There were discussions on national strategies for regaining control of orphan radioactive sources and improving control of vulnerable radioactive sources, based on IAEA Safety Guide SSG-19. It was noted that the combating of illicit trafficking involved forming a database and informing the IAEA of events.

It was noted that customs services constitute an extremely important sector for the detection of illicit trafficking. Therefore, customs staff should be trained in this field.

14. Various aspects related to a national radioactive source register were widely discussed during the regional meeting. The importance of having a system, ideally computerized, for registering radioactive sources in each country was shown. In that regard, the features of the Regulatory Authority Information System (RAIS) utility created by the IAEA were presented. It was recommended that the IAEA make the new online version of RAIS 3.0 available to Member States and that it organize training workshops for specialists in safety and IT.

On the other hand, it was recommended that Member States categorize radioactive sources in a form consistent with the proposal of the Agency.

15. Comments were made on the role of regulatory bodies in promoting the safety culture, with the proposal that Member States that are more developed in this area share their experience. In particular, Cuba was requested to design guides on this topic, with the support of the IAEA.

The delegates agreed upon the advisability of promoting training outside the regulatory setting, i.e. in the context of operators, users and other related staff.

16. The Chairman of the regional meeting extended his thanks to the national delegates for their active participation, to the consultants from outside the IAEA for sharing their experiences and to the Scientific Secretary, representing the IAEA, for organizing the event.