

**Technical Cooperation Project INT/9/176 “Strengthening cradle to grave control of radioactive sources”**

Side event during the 57<sup>th</sup> General Conference

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First of all, on behalf of the Spanish Nuclear Safety Council, I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to participate in this interesting side event along the 57<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the IAEA. This is certainly a good opportunity to tighten our traditional good cooperation with many countries of the Mediterranean region.

Definitively the use of nuclear technology can contribute to development, prosperity and well-being of people. As a matter of fact, there is a growing use of nuclear technologies in fields of activity as diverse as human health, improving crop production, controlling pests, monitoring environmental degradation or preserving cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, all these applications have something in common: they use radioactive sources. Radioactive sources, when properly used, render important services for the benefit of society; but it is not exempt from risks and dangers when they are not securely and safely used all along its lifetime.

To cope with these risks, we have established the concept of “cradle to grave” control of radioactive sources (including policy, strategy, regulations, etc.). Undoubtedly, the source control is a national responsibility; however, international cooperation may play a key role by facilitating the exchange of experience conducting to the establishment of reliable and effective supranational monitoring mechanisms.

The final goal will be to minimize uncontrolled use and movement of radioactive sources; especially when they arrive to the end of its life cycle and become a burden to the user.

The IAEA plays a fundamental role in collecting worldwide experience to develop safety standards and guidance as valuable reference to set national regulatory framework; as well as in promoting international agreements to establish a global safety regime that will facilitate achieving all the benefits from the use of radioactive sources without undue risk for the population and the environment. But there is more than this.

The IAEA is also an important driving force in developing technological solutions to make easier the use of radioactive sources fully compliant with safety and security standards and at the same time economically efficient to preserve competitive advantage. And, last but not least, it has its own technical cooperation programme to assist its Member States in putting in place state of the art policy, strategies, regulations as well as technological solutions.

This is the aim of the Technical Cooperation project INT/9/176, to provide assistance to Member States around the Mediterranean Sea to put into place reliable “cradle to grave” control systems of radioactive sources. Compared to other initiatives, this project deals with

the matter in a comprehensive manner, covering all the basic elements of the problem, interconnecting players and creating synergies among the different fields.

Naturally, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution and each individual country has to establish his own framework, taking account of his specific applications, type of sources, size of the sector, available facilities, environmental constraints, etc. The key point of this project is to assist the countries to make well-grounded decisions taking into consideration all the relevant parameters of the specific problem they have to deal with.

The Mediterranean region is characterized by an intense maritime trade to enable the movement of persons and goods among seaside countries and from them to other countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. Associated to this intense traffic, multiple occurrences have been reported, involving radioactive sources or contaminated materials which needed to be properly addressed upon positive detection.

In some cases, radioactive orphan sources have reached industrial processes resulting in inadvertent release of considerable amount of radioactivity to the environment.

Accidents involving orphan sources have happened in Spain and in other countries, in some cases giving place to the release of radioactivity to the environment and in other cases causing important economical losses. In few cases also important injuries to individuals and even casualties have been reported. As of today, some countries of the Mediterranean region have already in place a reasonable national infrastructure for the control of radioactive sources and are implementing the provisions of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources.

Nevertheless, overall the situation cannot be considered yet fully satisfactory and there is wide room for improving the control of radioactive sources until comprehensive and harmonized "cradle to grave" management systems of radioactive sources will be achieved across the Mediterranean region.

For many years the CSN, the Spanish authority on nuclear and radiological safety, has been an active promoter of international cooperation in the Mediterranean region in all areas relevant to its realm of competences, including the regulatory control of radioactive sources.

The CSN has high experience in the matter of control of radioactive sources and because of it has been involved in several initiatives with similar aim; this is why this IAEA project was seen from the very beginning by the CSN as another opportunity to strengthen cooperation in region in this important field.

The project was presented and discussed in the frame of the European Union and Spain was very supportive of concluding a cooperation agreement between the IAEA and the European Commission to ensure appropriate resources to make the project proposal a reality, as it is nowadays.

On top of it, the CSN decided to make a bilateral contribution to the project budget and is actively supporting project implementation by providing expert advice and sharing the long

and valuable experience of the country in setting strategy, policy, management and regulatory framework for the control of radioactive sources.

The project is now in its second year of implementation and has already contributed to reach important achievements. Several countries of the region have already drafted and even put into operation “cradle to grave” strategies to deal with radioactive sources and staff from regulatory bodies and waste operators have been trained. There is still more than 2 years ahead and in spite that much has been done, there is still much more to do within the scope of the project and even more after the life of the project.

The CSN and other Spanish institutions have been very supportive of the project from the very beginning and will continue doing so until the termination of the project because we are convinced that initiatives like this one are excellent instruments of international cooperation in this region.

I would like to take advantage of the use of the floor to invite other institutions of countries in Europe and elsewhere to support the successful implementation of this important project, which might become a reference for similar projects in other regions of the world with similar casuistic.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.