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**NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY
RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Mandate of the Expert Group on Predisposal Management of Radioactive Waste (PMRW)

For any further information, please contact Ms. Gloria KWONG (gloria.kwong@oecd.org)

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MANDATE OF THE EXPERT GROUP ON PREDISPOSAL MANAGEMENT OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE (PMRW)

1. Preamble

Radioactive waste is produced from industrial, medical and research use of radioactive materials. It must be properly managed in order to protect human and our environment. The eventual safe disposal of all categories of radioactive waste is a necessity with or without any further construction of nuclear power stations. It is an ethical decision that the generation producing the waste must be responsible for the waste, but not to place undue burden on future generations. Until an appropriate disposal solution becomes available, safe interim storage of the already existing radioactive waste is essential. There is also a universal consensus that perpetual storage is not feasible or acceptable, storage and disposal are complementary activities that are both needed as part of the overall radioactive waste management strategy.

Predisposal management of radioactive waste covers all activities in the management of radioactive waste from its generation up to acceptance for disposal at a repository or other disposal site. It includes handling, pre-treatment, treatment, conditioning, decommissioning, interim storage, activities characterising the waste, the waste form or the waste package, and transportation of RW/SF.

In 2014 the RWMC established the expert group on Management of Radioactive Waste for an extended period of time with a view to disposal at the RWMC-47 session.

2. Description

The overall objective of this new expert group is to review all relevant issues associated with pre-disposal management of different radioactive waste types. In particular, the Committee reminded the Secretariat that, in planning/formulating the work scope of this new working group, activities ongoing at the international organisations such as the IAEA and EC in the area of predisposal management of radioactive waste must be considered in order to avoid replicate efforts.

This mandate, prepared under the instructions of the RWMC Bureau, is to specify the role of a new expert group on predisposal management of radioactive waste. As an initial task, this working group will focus on main aspects related to activities in storage (including long term storage) and transportation of RW/SF. The technical, strategic, logistic, safety aspects, etc. can be defined as topics for the initial review of current situation in NEA countries.

2.1 Proposed objectives:

- Analyse current status of storage and transportation of all radioactive waste types including spent fuel (SF) in NEA countries. Evaluate main challenges encountered in member countries; and identify practical methods for safe management of radioactive waste;

- Produce a summary report which documents applicable strategies, design and operational options for long-term RW predisposal management including transportation and shipment options of RW.

2.2 Organisational structure and mode of operation

To accomplish the above mentioned objectives, a Predisposal Expert Group is formed to design and prioritize the required work activities. This expert group, consists of 5-6 experts representing different RW management organisations (i.e. implementers, regulators, researcher, etc), will carry out activities as described in the Programme of Work (PoW). Further participants may include other RWMC members and organisations expressing interest in obtaining / receiving the information.

The Predisposal Expert Group will hold regular meeting(s) at which its work program and individual activities will be established, updated, and reported. Organisational issues will also be addressed in the meeting(s). The Chair and his/her Vice-Chair, as elected by the RWMC members, will lead the project to address relevant predisposal issues and make final decisions on outstanding matters. The terms of office for this group will be 2 years. Work activities may be proposed or recommended by RWMC members and should be driven by common interest in this issue. The mode of operation is by Expert Group meetings, periodic workshop(s) and the use of electronic media. It is envisaged that there will be at least one Expert Group meeting and one workshop per calendar year to discuss work progress.

The Chair will report major work accomplishments and status of work activities at the RWMC annual meeting.

2.3 Areas of work

To kick-off this project, the Expert Group is suggested to review the following topics:

1. Current transportation experience and planning of radioactive waste in RWMC member countries. This includes:
 - technical/logistic requirements
 - radiation and nuclear safety in transferring waste from storage facilities to future disposal site(s);
 - regulations, legislation, and licensing requirements for transporting RW within the country and/or trans - border shipments;
 - social aspects to address safe transport of RW and to achieve community confidence.
2. Long-term predisposal storage of RW, i.e. 100-500 year storage period:
 - strategies of long-term storage and management of RW
 - technical and engineering requirements in designing, constructing and operating interim long-term storage facilities;
 - radiation and nuclear safety in operating storage facilities;
 - regulatory and licensing requirements for long-term storage including monitoring and maintenance.

To achieve the above objectives (Section 2.1), the following tasks are proposed:

- a) Design a questionnaire to seek further details of the current situation of RW management in NEA member countries. Analyse current strategies, practices of storage/management, and challenges encountered in national programmes. Identify best practices, strategies and technical/engineering options in managing RW taking into account future transfer of RW to disposal facilities.
- b) Using the 2006 NEA RWMC report as a base, document key findings in a summary report summarising the crucial elements in safe long-term management of RW.

Information sources available to the Expert Group include: NEA RWMC national reports, country reports from the Joint convention, an IAEA database NEWMDB; and poll results from questionnaire.

3 Membership

The expert group is composed of senior experts with experience in storage and transporting radioactive waste in view of final disposal, as described in Section 2.2.

4. Resources

Participants are expected to support their responsible elements of the PMRW initiatives, and participating organisations will work on a quid-pro-quo basis.

Each participating organisation will make available an amount to be agreed on to support administrative issues, conference arrangements, proceedings publication and management.

5. Duration of the mandate

The duration of the expert group is 2 years. Given the nature of the PMRW, an extension of the mandate is envisaged which is to be determined at the discretion of the RWMC.