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Use of nuclear power sources in outer space

Draft report on the implementation of the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space and general recommendations for potential future work

Prepared by the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space

1. At its forty-seventh session, in 2010, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee agreed to the multi-year workplan for the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space for the period 2010-2015 (A/AC.105/958, para. 134 and annex II, para. 7). In 2014, at its fifty-first session, the Subcommittee extended the workplan to 2017 (A/AC.105/1065, annex II, para. 9).

2. The workplan was initiated in 2010 after the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space — a cooperative effort of the Joint Expert Group of the Subcommittee and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) — had been adopted by the Subcommittee at its forty-sixth session and endorsed by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space at its fifty-second session. The Safety Framework was made available by the Secretariat in document A/AC.105/934 and by the IAEA secretariat as a joint publication of the Subcommittee and IAEA.

3. The workplan had the following objectives:

* Reissued for technical reasons on 2 December 2016.

** A/AC.105/C.1/L.355.



(a) To promote and facilitate the implementation of the Safety Framework by providing information pertinent to challenges faced by member States and international intergovernmental organizations, in particular those considering or initiating involvement in applications of nuclear power sources (NPS) in outer space;

(b) To identify any technical topics for, and establish the objectives, scope and attributes of, any potential additional work by the Working Group to further enhance safety in the development and use of space NPS applications. Any such additional work would require the approval of the Subcommittee and would be developed with due consideration for relevant principles and treaties (A/AC.105/958, annex II, para. 7).

4. In 2010 the Working Group agreed that it would achieve those objectives by conducting workshops and hearing presentations in the period 2011-2015. The presentations would be of two types: (a) by member States and international intergovernmental organizations considering or initiating involvement in NPS applications in outer space, summarizing their plans, progress to date, and any challenges faced or foreseen in implementing the Safety Framework or specific elements thereof; and (b) by member States with experience in space NPS applications, providing information pertinent to addressing the challenges in implementing the Safety Framework (A/AC.105/958, annex II, para. 8).

5. The Working Group received presentations and papers from Argentina, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the European Space Agency (ESA). In addition, two non-papers were provided that had information relevant to ongoing discussions of the Working Group.

6. Some presentations were made in response to the Subcommittee's invitation to member States and international intergovernmental organizations with experience in space NPS applications to provide information on their implementation of the Safety Framework. Those presentations addressed the following specific aspects of the Safety Framework: (a) safety in design and development; (b) risk assessment; (c) emergency preparedness and response; (d) accident consequence mitigation; and (e) management organization for NPS mission applications.

7. The other presentations were made in response to the Subcommittee's invitation to member States and international intergovernmental organizations to summarize their plans, progress to date, and challenges faced or foreseen in implementing the Safety Framework or specific elements thereof. Some of those presentations identified specific challenges faced or foreseen in implementing the Safety Framework or specific elements thereof, namely:

(a) The mission launch authorization process for countries with NPS applications but without the capacity to launch the applications;

(b) The coordination of emergency preparedness and response with other countries over which the space mission would fly;

(c) The implementation of the prime responsibility of the organization conducting the space NPS mission and establishment of formal arrangements between it and all other relevant participants in the space mission;

(d) The allocation of responsibilities between any international intergovernmental organization and its Member States in implementing the “Guidance for Governments” section of the Safety Framework;

(e) The organization of launch safety and emergency preparedness and response for different launch phases and accident scenarios.

8. A non-paper and later a conference room paper were provided by a member State, containing the proposal to trigger an exploratory discussion, within the Working Group, on the point of updating the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space.

9. The Working Group concluded that the workshops and relevant technical presentations had fulfilled objective (a), namely to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Safety Framework by providing information pertinent to challenges faced by member States and international intergovernmental organizations. All member States and international intergovernmental organizations that made presentations at the workshops emphasized that the Safety Framework provided a valuable foundation for the development of national and international intergovernmental safety frameworks for space NPS applications.

10. The Working Group also concluded that the five challenges referred to in paragraph 7 above were essentially related to policy, management and coordination of space NPS activities (see sections 3 and 4 of the Safety Framework). Such activities are highly specific to the Government or Governments involved in authorizing and/or approving space NPS missions, and the Working Group considered that it would be difficult to develop generic guidance for any of those areas at this time.

11. The Working Group concluded that none of the challenges identified to date required any modifications to the Safety Framework.

12. The Working Group noted that more challenges might be identified in the future, as States members of the Committee and international intergovernmental organizations continue to implement the Safety Framework and gain experience with space NPS mission applications.

13. The Working Group discussed technical topics for potential future work to further enhance safety in the development and use of space NPS applications. Those discussions covered the objectives, scope and attributes of each such topic.

14. In particular, the Working Group discussed the following potential activities to further enhance safety in the development and use of space NPS applications:

(a) The conduct of a survey among States members of the Committee concerning the implementation of the Safety Framework;

(b) The preparation of a technical document by one or more States members of the Committee with experience in space NPS applications, and potentially in cooperation with IAEA, focused on the practical achievement of safety in space NPS applications;

(c) Presentations by States members of the Committee with experience in space NPS applications on their mission-specific experiences in implementing the

guidance contained in the Safety Framework and in satisfying the intent of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;

(d) Discussions within the Working Group about advances in knowledge and practices, and their potential for enhancing the technical content and scope of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space.

15. The Working Group considered the options presented in subparagraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph 14 above and concluded that the other options would be more effective in enhancing the safety of space NPS applications.

16. With respect to the option presented in paragraph 14 (c) above, the Working Group identified several potential topics that one or more States members of the Committee with experience in space NPS could address in presentations to the Subcommittee:

- (a) Development and sustainment of space NPS safety infrastructure;
- (b) Accident definition and analysis challenges;
- (c) Space NPS safety management organization, knowledge and practices;
- (d) Development and implementation of effective radiological contingency plans;
- (e) Development and implementation of intergovernmental, including international, risk communication plans.

17. The Working Group concluded that the option presented in paragraph 14 (c) above could be efficiently accomplished through any one of a number of organizational mechanisms available to the Subcommittee, such as a working group of the Subcommittee, technical workshops or special technical presentations.

18. The Working Group concluded that the option presented in paragraph 14 (d) above would be accomplished through continuing efforts of the Working Group within a new workplan.

19. After consideration of the results from the current workplan, the Working Group reached consensus on the following recommendations:

- (a) The Subcommittee should continue to encourage and provide opportunities for:
 - (i) States members of the Committee and intergovernmental organizations involved in space NPS mission applications, or planning or considering such involvement, to report on their progress in implementing the Safety Framework and to identify challenges and experiences relevant to implementing the Safety Framework;
 - (ii) States members of the Committee and intergovernmental organizations with experience in space NPS to share information relevant to addressing those challenges;
 - (iii) Presentations by States members of the Committee with experience in space NPS applications on their mission-specific experiences in implementing the guidance contained in the Safety Framework and in satisfying the intent of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space;

(b) The Subcommittee should provide the opportunity for States members of the Committee and intergovernmental organizations to engage in discussions within the Working Group about advances in knowledge and practices and their potential for enhancing the technical content and scope of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space.

20. The Working Group prepared a draft workplan encompassing the recommendations as follows:

2017 Develop a draft workplan with two objectives:

Objective 1. Promote and facilitate the implementation of the Safety Framework by:

(a) Providing an opportunity for member States and international intergovernmental organizations considering or initiating involvement in space NPS applications to summarize and discuss their plans, progress to date and any challenges faced or foreseen in implementing the Safety Framework;

(b) Receiving presentations from member States and international intergovernmental organizations with experience in space NPS applications on such challenges and on their mission-specific experiences in implementing the guidance contained in the Safety Framework.

Objective 2. Discuss within the Working Group advances in knowledge and practices and their potential for enhancing the technical content and scope of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space by receiving pertinent technical presentations from member States and international intergovernmental organizations with experience in space NPS applications on the application of the Principles.

After its adoption by the Subcommittee, the Working Group will request the Secretariat to invite member States and international intergovernmental organizations to make technical presentations in the period 2018-2020 pursuant to the first and/or second objectives.

2018 Receive technical presentations pursuant to the invitation extended in 2017. In its report to the Subcommittee, the Working Group will: (a) summarize the technical presentations; (b) identify any significant challenges that should be addressed in the presentations planned for 2019 by member States and international intergovernmental organizations with experience in space NPS applications; and (c) summarize the discussions about potential enhancement of the technical content and scope of the Principles.

2019 Receive technical presentations under the same arrangements as in 2018. In its report to the Subcommittee, the Working Group will: (a) summarize the technical presentations; (b) identify any significant challenges that should be addressed in the presentations planned for 2020 by member States and international intergovernmental organizations with experience in space

applications; and (c) summarize the discussions about potential enhancements of the technical content and scope of the Principles.

2020 Receive technical presentations under the same arrangements as in 2018. Determine whether the current workplan should be extended and, if it is not to be extended, prepare a draft report summarizing the technical presentations received and the challenges identified during the course of the workplan and identifying potential enhancements to the technical content and scope of the Principles.

2021 If the workplan has not been extended, finalize the report.

Annex

List of documents, presentations and non-papers before the Working Group in the period 2011-2016

	Year	Member State/entity	Title	Objective	
				A ^a	B ^a
1.	2011	United Kingdom	“Introduction to the workshop”, by Sam Harbison (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.311 and A/AC.105/C.1/2011/CRP.4)	X	X
2.	2011	United States	“Safety in the design and development of United States nuclear power source applications for use in outer space”, by Reed Wilcox (United States of America) (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.313 and A/AC.105/C.1/2011/CRP.6)	X	
3.	2011	Argentina	“Safety workshop for space nuclear power sources: the road map for its implementation in a special case for Argentina”, by Conrado Varotto (Argentina) (see A/AC.105/C.1/2011/CRP.7 and Corr.1)	X	
4.	2011	United States	“The United States approach to risk assessment and its role in implementing an effective safety programme for nuclear power source applications in outer space”, by Ryan Bechtel (United States) (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.312 and A/AC.105/C.1/2011/CRP.5)	X	
5.	2011	European Space Agency	“Implementing the International Safety Framework for Space Nuclear Power Source Applications at ESA: status and plans”, by Leopold Summerer (European Space Agency) (see A/AC.105/C.1/2011/CRP.19)	X	
6.	2012	China	“Discussion on the safety of space nuclear power sources”, by Zhu Anwen (China) (see A/AC.105/C.1/2012/CRP.5)	X	
7.	2012	Russian Federation	“Joint statement made by representatives of the Russian Federal Space Agency and the State Atomic Energy Corporation (Rosatom)”, by Alexander Solodukhin (Russian Federation) (A/AC.105/C.1/2012/CRP.6)	X	
8.	2012	United States	“United States preparedness and response activities for space exploration missions involving nuclear power sources”, by Reed Wilcox (United States) (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.314 and A/AC.105/C.2/2012/CRP.4)	X	

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Member State/entity</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Objective</i>	
				<i>A^a</i>	<i>B^a</i>
9.	2012	United States	“The United States approach to nuclear launch accident mitigation”, by Ryan Bechtel (United States) (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.315 and A/AC.105/C.1/2012/CRP.3)	X	
10.	2012	European Space Agency	“Implementing the International Safety Framework for Space Nuclear Power Sources at the European Space Agency: options and open questions”, by Leopold Summerer (European Space Agency) (see A/AC.105/C.1/2012/CRP.24)	X	
11.	2012	France	Letter from Marc Léger, Director for Legal Affairs and Litigation of the Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission of France, in relation to the issue of liability in the specific case of the ITER International Fusion Energy Organization: paper submitted by France (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.318)	X	
12.	2013	China	Conference room paper on the exploration of certain safety issues during the terrestrial trial of power sources of space nuclear reactors: technical paper submitted by China (A/AC.105/C.1/2013/CRP.20)	X	
13.	2013	France	Non-paper by the delegation of France on the proposal to initiate a discussion on updating the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space		X
14.	2014	United States	Paper submitted by the United States on defining the organizational structure that implements a space nuclear power source mission application (A/AC.105/C.1/L.334)	X	
15.	2014	United Kingdom	Presentation submitted by the United Kingdom on space nuclear power systems: activities and programmes in the United Kingdom (A/AC.105/C.1/2014/CRP.19)	X	
16.	2014	United Kingdom	A non-paper submitted by the Chair of the Working Group on possible next steps for the Working Group after completion of the current workplan		X
17.	2014	United Kingdom	Presentation by the delegation of the United Kingdom on the status of safety and regulatory activities in the project Megawatt Highly Efficient Technologies for Space Power and Propulsion Systems for Long-duration Exploration Missions (MEGAHIT), funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development	X	

	<i>Year</i>	<i>Member State/entity</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Objective</i>	
				<i>A^a</i>	<i>B^a</i>
18.	2015	United Kingdom	Paper submitted by the United Kingdom entitled "A trial set of safety recommendations to implement the guidance for governments section of the Safety Framework" (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.342 and A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.3)		X
19.	2015	United Kingdom	Presentation by the United Kingdom entitled "Space nuclear power systems: update on activities and programmes in the United Kingdom" (see A/AC.105/C.1/2015/CRP.5)	X	
20.	2015	China	Presentation by China entitled "The progress of the Chinese Lunar Exploration Programme"	X	
21.	2016	United Kingdom	Possible general safety recommendations to implement the Safety Framework for Nuclear Power Source Applications in Outer Space: conference room paper submitted by the Chair of the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (A/AC.105/C.1/2016/CRP.6)		X
22.	2016	France	Proposal to revise the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/68 of 14 December 1992: conference room paper submitted by France (A/AC.105/C.1/2016/CRP.7)		X
23.	2016	China	Safety practices of space nuclear power sources in China: conference room paper submitted by China (A/AC.105/C.1/2016/CRP.12)	X	

^a See the workplan objectives as described in paragraph 3 (a) and (b) above.