Nuclear Issues

Nuclear safety

Over 400 nuclear units generate 17 per cent of the world's electricity in 30 countries, and nuclear power is expected to continue to be a significant source of energy. The 1986 Chornobyl disaster created widespread concern about the safety of nuclear power, and highlighted the need for co-ordinated international action. The accident raised serious questions about reactor design and operation, and the lack of effective regulatory agencies in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Nuclear safety assistance

At the 1992 Munich Summit, leaders pledged to provide assistance in improving safety levels at Soviet-designed nuclear plants still operating in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Nuclear Safety Working Group was formed to co-ordinate activities to support this objective. G-7 and other countries have now committed more than $1.5 billion for nuclear safety improvements in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. The Nuclear Safety Account, established by the G-7 and managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, has contributed more than $430 million to projects in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. Canada has contributed $19.5 million to the account and committed a total of $78 million overall for nuclear safety related projects.

Chornobyl Memorandum of Understanding

Signed in Ottawa in December 1995, this memorandum of understanding between the G-7 and Ukraine outlined a comprehensive program to support the closure of the Chornobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000. The program included rehabilitating conventional energy plants to prepare for the decommissioning of the Chornobyl station. The MOU committed the G-7 and Ukraine to develop a cost effective and environmentally sound approach to the shelter for Chornobyl Unit 4. Western and Ukrainian experts have now agreed on a plan to stabilize the sarcophagus around Chornobyl's Unit 4 at a cost of $758 million and a forecast schedule of eight to 10 years.

Moscow Summit followup

The Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security in April 1996 focused on international co-operation in nuclear safety and security. The International Convention on Nuclear Safety, which codifies fundamental safety principles for the regulation, management and operation of nuclear installations, became effective on October 24, 1996. The convention obligates states to report on their