

potential future participants. In order to maintain overall direction of the Program after participation in it has been expanded, we agreed that the chair should seek to organize periodic meetings of new participants under the auspices of the Eight to discuss Program activities and exchange views on illicit nuclear trafficking. We welcome the intention of the United States to organize the first such meeting in November 1997 to be held in Vienna.

6. We welcome the progress made in international efforts to develop nuclear forensics capabilities, under the auspices of the IAEA, as well as through the meetings held by the International Technical Working Group (ITWG).

Plutonium Management

7. We welcome the conclusions of the group of experts, convened pursuant to the April 1996 Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security to examine options and identify possible development of international cooperation for the safe and effective management of fissile material designated as no longer required for defense purposes. Our experts concluded that the most timely and technically viable option is the consumption of plutonium as mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel in nuclear reactors, and as a complementary option, the immobilization of plutonium in glass or ceramic form mixed with high-level radioactive waste. The experts also concluded that interim storage will be required, whatever longer-term management options are selected. These conclusions were also endorsed by the Non-Proliferation Experts Group last November in Paris.
8. Such an approach to the management of surplus weapons plutonium would serve the international community's nonproliferation objectives and would make an important practical contribution to nuclear arms reduction. The non-proliferation objective should be given priority in the planning and implementation of cooperation programs. Due consideration should also be given to technical, economic, financial, environmental and other relevant factors.
9. International cooperation will accelerate efforts to address the management of surplus weapons plutonium. We therefore welcome the announcement by France, Germany, and Russia of their plans, which are open to additional states, to build a demonstration-scale MOX fuel fabrication facility in Russia. In this regard, we welcome efforts by Canada and Russia, in collaboration with France and Germany, to investigate the feasibility of producing CANDU MOX fuel. The United States and Russia are also planning cooperation in the area of converting weapons components to materials suitable for disposition, in coordination with other international efforts. Participation in these and other related initiatives is being considered by others among us.
10. We reiterate the importance of ensuring transparency in the management of plutonium designated as no longer required for defense purposes. Implementation of all options should include appropriate international verification as soon as it is practicable to do so and stringent standards of material protection, control, and accountancy, with the objective of building confidence that surplus weapons plutonium will not again be used for nuclear explosives or