

## **Nuclear Safety**

Electricity produced by nuclear power-generating plants provides more than 17 per cent of the world's electricity requirements. Nuclear power does not create greenhouse gases or contribute to global warming. Provided these plants operate safely, nuclear power will continue to play a significant role in the supply of the world's energy demands. Nuclear power plants provide 16 per cent of Canada's electricity needs and 60 per cent of Ontario's electricity.

Nuclear power plays a major role as a source of energy in countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU) and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In many of these countries nuclear power plants provide a major portion of the electricity supply, although overall they contribute only 12 per cent of electricity requirements in the FSU and 25 to 50 per cent in CEE countries.

Since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, concerns about the safety of Soviet-designed RBMK and older VVER nuclear reactors have increased as more information about these reactors has become available. Power plants using these reactors continue to operate in the FSU and CEE to meet urgent needs for energy. As the Chernobyl accident illustrated, however, the risks posed by these plants affect many nations in Europe and beyond.

Because of these concerns, the G-7 took a nuclear safety initiative at the 1992 Munich Summit to improve reactor safety and strengthen the nuclear regulatory regimes in the countries of the FSU and CEE. The G-24, which was chosen to co-ordinate these international efforts, has proved to be an effective mechanism, especially in bringing specialists from East and West together to resolve the technical issues and establish priorities for these safety improvement programs.

As a further result of the G-7 nuclear safety initiative, a multilateral nuclear safety account has been established at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The purpose of this account is to provide funds for urgent safety projects that are not already covered by other assistance programs. The donors have already committed ECU 58 million to two major projects. The first is the Kozloduy nuclear plant in Bulgaria and the second is the Ignalina nuclear plant in Lithuania. In both cases, donors are concerned that commitments to close the plants within the next few years may not be honoured because of economic pressures.

Future projects in Russia are likely to exhaust the current ECU 132-million level of contributions to the nuclear safety account. If assistance programs for Ukraine are considered essential, a change in priorities or further contributions to the account will be required. Canada has contributed \$7.5 million (ECU 4.7 million) to this account from the \$30-million Canadian Nuclear Safety Initiative (CNSI), which was committed just before the 1992 Munich