

The Moscow Summit

The Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security held in Moscow in April 1996 was an important step towards improved international co-operation in nuclear safety. It was also important for its recognition that every country must put safety first when using nuclear power. In endorsing the Summit Declaration, Russia agreed to accept international standards for nuclear safety. During the summit discussions, Russian President Boris Yeltsin specifically committed Russia to join the International Convention on Nuclear Safety, to adhere to the Vienna Convention on Nuclear Liability, and to adhere to the 1993 amendment of the London Convention banning the dumping of radioactive waste in the sea.

The International Convention on Nuclear Safety, already ratified by Canada, is particularly important to the promotion of a nuclear safety culture. It codifies fundamental safety principles for the regulation, management and operation of nuclear installations. A principal obligation of the convention is for states to report on their safety measures and to review their national reports at a meeting of all signatories. This provides an opportunity for all countries to improve nuclear safety measures and, through peer support and guidance, to introduce corrective action.

G-7-Ukraine Memorandum of Understanding

Under Canadian chairmanship, a G-7-Ukraine memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in Ottawa in December 1995 on the closure of the remaining nuclear reactors at Chernobyl by the year 2000. The G-7 and Ukraine are now working together on a number of projects to reform the Ukrainian energy sector and to mobilize financing for the completion of nuclear power plants, for the rehabilitation of conventional energy plants, and for decommissioning work at the Chernobyl site. At the Moscow Summit, this MOU was endorsed by Ukrainian President Kuchma and summit leaders.

Mixed-Oxide Fuel

The safe management and disposition of fissile material from dismantled nuclear weapons are paramount to Canadian non-proliferation and disarmament goals. Both the United States and Russia have expressed interest in burning excess weapons-grade plutonium that has been converted into a mixed-oxide (MOX) fuel in the reactors of a trusted third country such as Canada. The MOX fuel, containing less than 2 per cent plutonium, would be fabricated outside Canada and then burned in Candu reactors for the generation of electricity. The feasibility of this option is currently being studied with the U.S. and Russia.

At the Moscow Summit, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced Canada's support for the idea of burning MOX fuel in Candu reactors. This proposal, among others, was discussed by summit leaders.