Nuclear Safety

Nuclear safety assistance

The G-7 Nuclear Safety Working Group was formed in 1992 to co-ordinate activities to improve safety levels at Soviet-designed nuclear power plants still operating in Central and Eastern Europe. The international community has now committed over $2 billion for nuclear safety programs in Armenia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

More than $380 million US has been contributed to the projects so far, with funds coming from the Nuclear Safety Account, which was created through G-7 grants; from the European Union; and from seven other West European donors. The funds are managed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and have been spent on projects in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Russia and Ukraine. Canada has contributed $19.5 million to the Nuclear Safety Account and has committed $91 million overall for nuclear safety projects.

Chernobyl memorandum of understanding

In Ottawa in December 1995, the G-7, the European Commission and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in support of Ukraine's decision to close the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by 2000. The G-7 committed to help Ukraine restructure its energy sector, mobilize grants and loans for energy investments, improve the safety of operating nuclear facilities, and manage an international effort to stabilize the sarcophagus around Chernobyl's Unit IV, destroyed in the 1986 disaster. The MOU work is on schedule. In November 1996, Ukraine closed Unit I; Unit II was already closed when the disaster occurred and never reopened; and Unit III is slated for closure by the end of 2000. Over $1 billion US in energy sector investments has so far been made available to Ukraine, which is accessing $130 million US in Nuclear Safety Account grants, in addition to bilateral technical assistance. A $758 million US shelter implementation plan to stabilize the sarcophagus around Unit IV was launched in 1997. So far, over half the required funds have been pledged for this eight-year project. At the 1997 Denver Summit, G-7 leaders announced a $300 million US contribution, of which Canada has pledged $24 million. Managed by the EBRD, the Chernobyl project is now under way and initial bids have been requested.

Nuclear liability

All countries with nuclear installations should have an effective liability regime to deal with funding requirements in the event of a nuclear accident. Canada's regime is being reviewed to ensure that it meets, or exceeds, the most recent internationally accepted norms. Amendments have been negotiated to the