



**JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR  
NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES**

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**Vienna Center for Disarmament  
and Non-Proliferation**

**FACT SHEET #4**

*Information Relevant to the IAEA General Conference*

## **Topic: IAEA and Nuclear Security**

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### **WHAT IS THE IAEA'S ROLE IN NUCLEAR SECURITY?**

The IAEA plays an advisory role on issues related to nuclear security, providing member states with assistance in developing and implementing nuclear security programs. There is no international regulatory body for nuclear security; responsibility for protecting nuclear material lies with states. The IAEA attempts to coordinate international efforts, but can only make recommendations, not regulations. Its nuclear security activity tends to focus on education and training in member states, providing advisory and assessment services per request from member states, promoting adherence to related international legal instruments, establishing voluntary guidelines and other recommendations, addressing cyber security and nuclear information concerns, and providing upgraded nuclear security hardware and software to member states.

The IAEA's responsibilities expanded following reports of nuclear smuggling in the late 1990s and after the September 11th, 2001 attacks, when concerns were raised that terrorists would purposefully sabotage nuclear facilities or steal nuclear material for use in explosive devices. The Board of Governors adopted the "Nuclear Security Plan" in March 2002, a three-year plan to expand the Agency's activities to help member states prevent, detect and respond to malicious acts (such as sabotage, illicit trafficking, and theft) involving radioactive material and related facilities. Since then the plan has been renewed twice. At the 2013 General Conference, the agency is seeking approval for a fourth plan which would cover the years 2014-2017.

In recent years, member-states have taken a number of steps to increase the agency's role in nuclear security. In March 2012, the IAEA Board of Governors established a Nuclear Security Guidance Committee (NSGC) as a standing body of senior experts in the area of nuclear security, open to all member states. The same year, the Board of Governors for the first time formally endorsed the agency's Nuclear Security Fundamentals document. In July 2013 the agency convened a ministerial conference on nuclear security. Recently, the agency has also moved to upgrade the Office of Nuclear Security to a Division within the Department of Safety and Security.

The Agency has also increased its visibility in nuclear security through the 2010 and 2012 Nuclear Security Summits. Both summits highlighted the role the IAEA plays in promoting best practices in nuclear security and called for a strengthened role for the Agency. They have also helped encourage more countries to invite the agency to review their nuclear security practices. The 2014 Nuclear Security Summit in the Netherlands is expected to provide a further boost to these missions as a means of assuring other countries that a state has secured its nuclear materials. In addition, it is not clear what institutions will sustain the political momentum of the summit process, which is anticipated to draw to a close after a final summit in Washington in 2016. Some governments have been looking to the IAEA to shoulder greater responsibility for this issue while some outside experts would like to see the IAEA's security reviews and standards become mandatory.



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## **WHAT IS NEW IN THE 2014-2017 NUCLEAR SECURITY PLAN?**

The proposed 2014-2017 Nuclear Security Plan does not represent a sharp substantive break from its predecessors. However, new emphasis is placed on cybersecurity; nuclear forensics; and the development of Nuclear Security Support centers, the International Nuclear Security Educational Network, and International Nuclear Security Support Plans to aid capacity-building. It also points to the need for the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Information Management System, a tool that states can use to assess the quality of their nuclear security. And it calls for improved capabilities to provide advice and assistance to states with regard to unregulated nuclear and radioactive material, such as disused radioactive sources that have not been placed in a secure facility.

## **WHAT FUNDING HAS THE IAEA PROPOSED FOR ITS NUCLEAR SECURITY PROGRAMS?**

The agency's funding for nuclear security programs has been proposed as part of its overall budget submission for 2014-2015. It suggests that to carry out planned nuclear security activities it is counting on voluntary contributions for nearly 80% of the funding (around €19 million). Still, the agency has proposed an 11% increase in the regular budget contribution to nuclear security (to around €5 million). Increasing contributions from the regular budget has long been seen by outside experts as important to help the agency more reliably plan and implement programs. They note that time spent on fundraising detracts from the agency's core mission and that some strings attached to voluntary donations limit the agency's flexibility in carrying out its work.

## **WHAT IS THE AMENDMENT TO THE CONVENTION ON THE PHYSICAL PROTECTION OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano will once again push member states to ratify the amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM). Signed in 1980, the CPPNM required that States Parties ensure the physical security of imported and exported nuclear material during transport. States Parties must also establish measures to detect, prevent, and punish offenses related to nuclear material. The 2005 amendment additionally requires States Parties to protect nuclear facilities and material in all stages, including in peaceful domestic use and storage. It also provides for expanded cooperation between States Parties to recover stolen or smuggled material and to respond to sabotage.



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The amendment was adopted by States Parties to the CPPNM by consensus in July 2005, and was welcomed by the Board of Governors in September 2005, who urged all States Parties to ratify it. Currently only 68 states have ratified the amendment, while two-thirds of the underlying convention's 148 States Parties or 99 states are needed to bring the amendment into force. Countries that have not ratified the treaty include the United States, South Korea, Canada, and Japan. However, all of these countries as well as about a dozen other non-ratifying states participated in the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul whose final communiqué said that member states would seek to bring the 2005 amendment into force by 2014.

- Miles A. Pomper, Senior Research Associate

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