

European Community

News Release

BACKGROUND NOTE:

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND NUCLEAR SAFEGUARDS:
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Commission of the European Communities recently participated in the annual General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.), which was held 20-24 September in Vienna, Austria.

The I.A.E.A., whose 110 signatories include Canada and the United States as well as the ten member states of the European Communities, was established in 1956 to foster, encourage and advise on the development of peaceful uses of atomic energy throughout the world.

In nuclear matters, the European Community is represented by the European Atomic Energy Community, known as EURATOM. Since its inception twenty-five years ago, EURATOM has played an integral rôle in international atomic energy development. Numerous agreements exist between EURATOM and its member states and the International Atomic Energy Agency, to provide for cooperation in nuclear matters in general and for nuclear safeguards in particular.

EURATOM's delegation to the I.A.E.A. conference was headed by Mr. Christopher Audland, Director-General of Energy at the Commission of the European Communities. In his statement to the meeting, Mr. Audland explained the nature of EURATOM vis-à-vis the ten member states of the Community. Under the Treaty of Rome which established both EURATOM and the European Economic Community in 1957, the member states transferred to the Community certain responsibilities in the nuclear field, notably as regards the supply and safeguarding of nuclear materials, which had previously been exercised by their own governments.

"One consequence of all this is that, from the earliest days of the Community, the Commission has been exercising, through its safeguards inspectorate, the responsibilities for safeguards laid upon it by the Rome Treaties", stated Mr. Audland.

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Pointing out that the Commission currently has 120 inspectors who will carry out some 6000 man-days of inspection at the Community's large number of nuclear plants in 1982, Mr. Audland continued:

"It is perhaps worth recalling that, at the end of last year, according to (I.A.E.A.) figures, the number of Agency inspectors actually engaged on comparable duties on a world-wide basis, was 135."

The Community is the only region in the world where two international nuclear safeguarding authorities are at work together. Describing the close and cooperative relationship between EURATOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mr. Audland spoke of the three agreements made between the Agency, the Community and its different member states which came into effect between 1976 and 1981.

"(These agreements) laid down the basis on which we cooperate with the Agency to ensure that safeguards are effectively applied on all nuclear matters subject to them. Today, inspection work carried out by Agency staff at nuclear facilities in the Community represents just under 50 per cent, in terms of man-days, of all such work by the Agency throughout the world".

Technical co-operation between the Agency and EURATOM continues to increase in areas of common interest such as research and development of new safeguarding technologies, nuclear research (in particular nuclear fusion) , dissemination of research results, nuclear safety, waste management, training of nuclear specialists, etc.

Stating that the European Community attaches the utmost importance to the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mr. Audland concluded:

"The Commission stands ready to develop and extend its co-operation with the Agency, in any way possible, both now and in the future."