

UAE to present nuclear safety plans at global meeting

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The United Arab Emirates will present this week its plans on nuclear safety at a major, two-week gathering that starts in Vienna. The Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS), which entered into force on 24 October 1996, is the world's only legally binding safety framework to which States operating land-based nuclear power plants (NPP) commit themselves to maintaining a high level of safety by setting international benchmarks.

As of November 2010 there were 72 contracting parties to the Convention including countries with operating NPPs. The parties gather every three years at a Review Meeting where each state presents its safety measures and responds to questions from others.

The UAE has been party to the CNS since 29 October 2009. Although it currently does not have a "nuclear installation" as defined by the Convention, the country wishes to play an active role in the process since it embarked on an active nuclear energy programme.

"Our participation in this review process will enhance the safety of our nuclear energy programme," said Ambassador Hamad Al Ka'abi, the UAE's Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"We have received 108 questions asking for details of our safety measures. This is as much as some countries with decades of nuclear power operation experience have received," he added. "We are glad to see such an interest in our programme."

Ambassador Al Ka'abi also said that the UAE posed 277 questions to other countries, "which testifies to the engagement of the UAE's nuclear establishment."

"The Convention was the result of lessons learned from the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents," he added. "We are working hard in the UAE to benefit from all lessons learned from other nations' experiences, including the recent Fukushima accident once a full assessment is conducted."

The UAE delegation to the CNS 5th Review Meeting is headed by Ambassador Al Ka'abi and will include high-level representatives from the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR), the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC), the Critical National Infrastructure Authority (CNIA), the National Emergency and Crisis Management Authority (NCEMA) and Khalifa University.

The 1st National Report on Measures Taken by the UAE to Implement the Convention on Nuclear Safety was already sent to CNS parties in August 2010. Although it is not required to make it public, this report can be found on FANR's website in line with the UAE's policy of "full operational transparency".