



JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR
NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES

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Vienna Center for Disarmament
and Non-Proliferation

FACT SHEET #1

Information Relevant to the IAEA General Conference

Topic: IAEA General Conference Overview & Issues for the 2014 Meeting

WHAT IS THE IAEA GENERAL CONFERENCE?

WHAT DOES IT DO?

The General Conference (GC) is one of the main policy making bodies of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It consists of all IAEA member states and convenes annually, usually for one week in September. Representatives of member states, often at the ministerial level, deliver statements at the General Debate, reporting on their countries' nuclear activities, plans, and cooperation with the IAEA, and outlining national positions on issues ranging from nuclear nonproliferation and verification to nuclear applications in medicine and agriculture.

The General Conference considers the Agency's annual activity reports, approves the IAEA's biennial budget, and adopts resolutions on subjects such as safeguards implementation, nuclear security, power and non-power nuclear applications, and other matters relevant to IAEA activities. Most of the resolutions are negotiated at the Committee of the Whole, an important body of the GC that works in parallel with the Plenary. The Committee often designates additional working groups to develop the text of particularly difficult and contentious resolutions. Ambassador Aliyar Lebbe Abdul Azeez of Sri Lanka is likely to be the President of the General Conference, while Ambassador David Stuart of Australia is expected to chair the Committee of the Whole this year.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR ISSUES THAT WILL BE ADDRESSED AT THIS YEAR'S GENERAL CONFERENCE?

Middle East: In many past years, the GC has witnessed controversy surrounding the Arab-sponsored resolution on Israeli Nuclear Capabilities (INC), calling on Israel to join the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. In 2011 and 2012, however, the Arab states refrained from tabling this resolution. In 2013, the resolution was put to a vote again and narrowly defeated. The Arab states have requested that the issue be placed on the GC agenda for 2014 and have circulated a draft text of the resolution among Member States. The resolution is likely to be put to a vote again this year. The GC will also consider the traditional, Egypt-sponsored, resolution on the Application of IAEA Safeguards



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in the Middle East. The latter resolution has not been adopted by consensus since 2006, with Israel, the United States, Canada, and sometimes EU states abstaining. For more details, please see *Fact Sheet #2* on Middle East issues.

Safeguards Implementation: Traditionally, the General Conference adopts an EU-sponsored resolution concerning the application of IAEA Safeguards and Model Additional Protocol. In recent years, the resolution has been a subject of controversy and since 2007 has been put to a vote several times. The most recent point of contention has been the state-level concept in safeguards, which emphasizes the use of broader, comprehensive information about a state's nuclear program to guide safeguards implementation, instead of focusing on specific facilities. Since 2012, Russia, joined by several other states, has objected to the endorsement of the state-level concept in the resolution, citing the lack of prior approval of the concept by the Board of Governors (BOG) and concerns that the approach leads to a discriminatory application of safeguards. Following requests from the GC and the BOG, the Agency's Secretariat has prepared a report and a supplementary document providing background and explanations of the state-level concept and its implementation. However, Russia, Brazil, and other states reportedly are not yet satisfied with that information and have sought further clarifications ahead of the September 2014 meeting of the Board of Governors. If the issue is not settled at the Agency's BOG meeting on September 15-19, 2014, it could once again prove controversial at the GC. Other past sources of disagreement over the resolution's text have included the question of whether the Additional Protocol, a voluntary measure which provides the agency with additional tools to detect undeclared nuclear activities, should be considered the verification standard for non-nuclear-weapon states party to the NPT, and the IAEA's potential involvement in nuclear disarmament verification. Please see *Fact Sheet #3* for more details.

New Board of Governors Members: In accordance with the IAEA Statute, agreed to in 1957, each year the Board of Governors "designates" the Member States most advanced in the technology of atomic energy both within certain regions and globally to serve on the Board for one year. The 13 states "designated" by the current Board to serve in 2014-2015 are: Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In addition, each year the General Conference elects 11 members to serve staggered two year terms on the Board of Governors. The members elected this year will therefore serve until 2016. Like their predecessors, they will reflect regional designations. The 1957 statute established eight regional groups for the purposes of elections to the Board of Governors: North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa, Middle East and South Asia, South East Asia and the Pacific, and Far East. It is currently expected that this year the GC will elect Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Ireland, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, and Switzerland. It is not clear yet which countries the East Asia and the South Asia-Middle East groups are nominating to the Board.

The 11 members elected in 2013 which will continue to serve until September 2015 are: Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Finland, Kenya, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, and Vietnam. Slovakia is also expected to be the next Chair of the Board. The Board members whose terms are ending in September 2014 are Algeria, Argentina, Costa Rica, Greece, Libya, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Thailand, and Uruguay.

Budget Issues: IAEA program and budget are developed and approved biannually, and the current budget was adopted in 2013. However, the IAEA secretariat is required to issue a budget update for each year. The secretariat has not proposed any changes to the budget for 2015 compared to the estimate approved last year. The proposed 2015 budget also will limit any increases in spending in 2015 to the rate of inflation--known as zero real growth.



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WHO ARE THE MAIN ACTORS? WHAT ARE POLITICAL & REGIONAL GROUPINGS? HOW DO THEY INTERACT?

Given today's geopolitical realities, states do not necessarily keep to the regional group arrangements put forth in the IAEA Statute, and political alignments cut across various regions.

One of the largest political groupings at the IAEA, the **Group of 77** (G77) was initially formed by 77 developing states; the group currently includes 132 countries. At the IAEA, the G77 Vienna chapter is active primarily in pushing for technical assistance and cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Group's mission is to represent and defend the interests of developing nations. G77 representatives often argue that the assistance and cooperation activities of the IAEA should be given the same priority as verification and safeguards, and be funded from obligatory, rather than voluntary, contributions. Donor states object to such proposals, and debates between the two groups take place during the consideration of Budget Appropriations and Technical Cooperation Fund resolutions.

A large and important political grouping that has in recent years increasingly been involved in issues related to IAEA matters is the **Non-Aligned Movement** (NAM). The NAM currently has 120 members and 17 observers, all of whom identify themselves as developing countries. The NAM Vienna Chapter was established in 2003, and it is presided over by the current NAM Chair (Iran). The Movement's focus at the IAEA is more political than that of **G77**, whose membership greatly overlaps with that of NAM. The latter has addressed the Board of Governors on the subjects of safeguards implementation and compliance, particularly in relation to Iran and Syria, multilateral nuclear fuel arrangements and assurances of supply, and other issues. In recent years, key NAM states, including Egypt, Brazil, and Iran, and the Western group have disagreed about the voluntary vs. compulsory nature of the Additional Protocol and the role of the IAEA in nuclear disarmament verification, which affected the negotiation of the safeguards resolution. Most recently, some of the leading NAM states – along with Russia – have also objected to the implementation of the state-level concept in safeguards, which most of the Western states support (see above and *Fact Sheet #3*). NAM has supported the Arab states' initiative to return the INC resolution to the Conference's agenda. The Movement has not been as united, however, in endorsing the actual text of the resolution, with several states abstaining. This is indicative of the Movement's diversity and variety of positions among its members and observers. On highly political and controversial issues, the NAM may not be as powerful a voting bloc as the membership numbers suggest.

The group that has lately been more disciplined and consistent in its voting is the **European Union** and "associated" states. Many countries from the Eastern European Group are now EU members, and several more are aspiring to accede, which leads them to support EU positions. Other non-EU Western European states join this bloc, as well as non-European developed states such as Australia, Canada, Japan, and the United States, especially on the issues of safeguards and verification. Together, they are known as the Western European and Other States Group (WEOG). EU traditionally sponsors a resolution entitled "Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system and application of



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the Model Additional Protocol.” For more on this resolution and some of the debates surrounding it, see *Fact Sheet #3*.

On budget matters, there is greater diversity of opinion within the EU and other developed states, particularly on the subject of increasing the regular IAEA budget. The major contributing states to the IAEA (and the UN more broadly) are known as the **Geneva Group** of 14 countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For more than two decades, this group insisted on “zero real growth” in the IAEA budget, but more recently, some countries such as the United States and the Netherlands have supported small increases in the budget in response to growing safeguards implementation needs.

Arab states in the IAEA also act as a group at the General Conference, particularly on issues related to the Middle East. Every year since 2006, this group has requested that the Israeli Nuclear Capabilities item be returned to the General Conference agenda, and in 2006-2010 and in 2013 jointly sponsored a resolution under the same title. The resolution has become a source of major controversy, with many states viewing it as politically motivated and covering issues outside the purview of the Agency. The re-introduction of the INC resolution had also lead to a breakdown of consensus on the Egypt-sponsored resolution “Application of IAEA Safeguards in the Middle East.” In 2011 and 2012, citing goodwill and desire not to thwart preparations for the 2012 Middle East Conference, Arab states decided not to table the INC resolution. The Middle East Conference was subsequently postponed without any agreement on a new date. In response, the Arab group tabled the resolution again in 2013. Despite last year’s defeat, the group will likely seek the adoption of the INC resolution by the GC in 2014.

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