



Nuclear Energy Experts Group Key Findings

The Nuclear Energy Experts Group (NEEG) of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) met at the Rex Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, under the auspices of CSCAP's Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific Region (WMD Study Group). It brought together 24 participants from 11 countries from throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The NEEG had previously met about a dozen times between 1998 - 2003, where it conducted groundbreaking work on nuclear energy safety, security, and transparency.

The key findings of the meeting are the following:

1. Reconvening of the NEEG at this time is particularly appropriate in view of the so-called "nuclear renaissance" in Asia. With several countries in the region in the process of developing energy alternatives that include nuclear power and others (save Japan) seemingly intent on expanding their nuclear energy programs despite the concerns raised by the March 11, 2011 Fukushima tragedy, greater transparency and confidence-building measures appear vital.
2. The core goal of the NEEG is to serve as a multilateral forum to discuss methods and processes to develop and manage nuclear energy programs in a safe, secure, and proliferation-resistant manner. It is neither pro- nor anti-nuclear energy *per se*.
3. The NEEG will examine and develop recommendations on how both states and regional organizations and initiatives can assist Asian states in ensuring the safe, secure, and proliferation-resistant development and management of nuclear power programs.
4. Given that Southeast Asian states are "newcomers" to nuclear energy, it would be particularly beneficial to focus on enhancing regional cooperation within ASEAN.
5. NEEG analysis and activities will include a mix of country-specific presentations on various aspects of indigenous nuclear programs or plans as well as issue-specific presentations on key elements of nuclear energy programs and/or the nuclear nonproliferation, safety, and security regimes. Practical exercises, such as action-focused scenarios or simulations, could also enhance mutual understanding and encourage regional cooperation and preparedness in response to nuclear incidents or accidents.
6. Topics for discussion could include regional approaches toward data sharing, spent fuel storage and disposal, the creation of Reprocessing- and Enrichment-Free Zones, among others.
7. Japan's stated desire to phase out nuclear power by 2030 while remaining silent about the future of its reprocessing facility has raised concerns in the region about Japanese long-term intentions that need to be more adequately addressed.

8. While the IAEA is a key actor in assisting states to develop and manage nuclear power programs, states often need to rely on additional experts and organizations.

9. Nuclear safeguards, nuclear safety, and nuclear security have come to be viewed as inseparable. Notably, this has meant that the nonproliferation community (in charge of safeguards) increasingly needs to work in coordination with nuclear operators (tasked with maintaining safety) and law enforcement bodies (dealing with security).

10. There is a renewed appreciation of the need for adherence to the highest standards of nuclear safety and security in the wake of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant accident in Japan. While the 3/11 disaster has raised awareness and resulted in reassessments region-wide, widespread concerns remain about nuclear safety and security both within and among Asia-Pacific nations.

11. The NEEG will enable its members to learn from one another's experiences as well as to identify good practices on a wide range of issues (regulatory considerations, safety procedures, liability questions, notably). Dissemination of information would be enhanced by revitalization of the CSCAP Nuclear Transparency Web Site.

12. Effective management of a national nuclear power program is critical and the role of the IAEA as a reviewer remains central. Also important is the thorough integration of strategic trade controls and nuclear security with program development and the role of regional organizations. Better integration of track-I and track-II activities can considerably help facilitate these processes.

13. Looking ahead, the NEEG should seize opportunities for partnering with other initiatives to help create synergy among regional organizations and activities. It should also review the applicability of the regimes related to nuclear safeguards, safety, and security, and work in close collaboration with the existing centers of excellence.

14. Visits to facilities engaged in activities related to nuclear energy, including the region's three centers of excellence, should be part of NEEG activities.

For more information, please contact CSCAP WMD Study Group NEEG co-chairs Ralph Cossa [RACPacForum@cs.com] or Carl Baker (carl@pacforum.org). These findings reflect the view of the co-chairmen; this is not a consensus document. A full summary of the workshop proceedings is being prepared and will be available upon request shortly.