



# General Assembly

Distr.: Limited  
28 February 2005

Original: English

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**Committee on the Peaceful****Uses of Outer Space**

Scientific and Technical Subcommittee

Forty-second session

Vienna, 21 February-4 March 2005

Agenda item 8

**Use of nuclear power sources in outer space**

## **Interim progress report of the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space: planning and terms of reference for the workshop to be organized in February 2006 during the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee**

### **I. Introduction**

1. At its fortieth session, in 2003, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space adopted a work plan, for the period 2003-2006, for developing an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of nuclear power source (NPS) applications in outer space (A/AC.105/804, annex III). The present report informs the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the progress that the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space has made in carrying out the actions in its work plan and discusses the merits of holding a joint technical workshop with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during the first two days of the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, to be held in February 2006. The implications of such a joint workshop for the remaining period of the current work plan are discussed and possible amendments to and an extension of the work plan are proposed.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons.



## II. Progress with the work plan in 2003 and 2004

2. The following table represents the status of the topics on the multi-year work plan:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>2003</b>		
	(a) Adopt a schedule of work;	Completed.
	(b) Invite national and regional space agencies to present information to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2004 and 2005 on the content of relevant national (including bilateral or multilateral) space NPS programmes and applications planned or currently foreseeable;	Completed in 2004; continuing action was scheduled for 2005.
	(c) Invite national and regional space agencies to present information to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2004 on the space applications enabled or significantly enhanced by NPS;	Completed.
	(d) Conduct preliminary discussions on objectives and attributes for an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned and currently foreseeable space NPS applications;	Completed: provided input for document A/AC.105/L.253.
	(e) Invite IAEA by June 2003 to define the specific processes and mechanisms (including their time frame, resources and administrative requirements) that the Agency could use to participate with the Subcommittee in developing space NPS technical safety standards;	Completed (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.271/Rev.1).
	(f) Request the Office for Outer Space Affairs and IAEA by September 2003 to jointly prepare possible organizational plans providing for: (i) potential co-sponsorship of an effort to develop an international space NPS technical standard; and (ii) potential IAEA advice to the Subcommittee in the preparation of such a standard.	Completed (see A/AC.105/C.1/L.268).

<i>Year</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Status</i>
<b>2004</b>		
	(a) Review information from national and regional space agencies on the content of relevant national (including bilateral and multilateral) space NPS programmes and applications planned or currently foreseeable;	Completed.
	(b) Review information from national and regional space agencies on the applications enabled or significantly enhanced by space NPS;	Completed.
	(c) Review IAEA-specific processes and mechanisms (including their time frame, resources and administrative requirements) that the Agency could use to participate with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in developing space NPS technical safety standards;	Review of document A/AC.105/C.1/L.271/Rev.1 has been carried out and consensus has been reached on the potential value of holding a joint workshop (see chap. III below).
	(d) Prepare a draft outline of the objectives, scope and attributes for an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned and currently foreseeable space NPS applications;	Completed (see A/AC.105/L.253).
	(e) Prepare a draft set of potential implementation options for establishing an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for the safety of planned and currently foreseeable space NPS applications;	Completed (see A/AC.105/L.254).
	(f) If appropriate, make a preliminary decision on whether to recommend co-sponsorship with IAEA of a technical standard development effort starting in 2006.	The Working Group considers that the various options need to be explored further before a final recommendation can be made (see chaps. III and IV below).

### **III. Potential benefits of holding a joint workshop with the International Atomic Energy Agency**

3. Formal and informal discussions within the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, and between the Working Group and representatives of IAEA, have led to the conclusion that further work on any of the potential options for cooperating with IAEA in developing NPS technical safety standards would be assisted significantly by holding a joint workshop, as proposed in the note by the Secretariat of 23 September 2003 (A/AC.105/C.1/L.268). The objective of such a joint workshop would be an exchange of views between the Working Group and IAEA on the objective, scope and general attributes of a potential safety framework

for NPS. Such an exchange would improve mutual understanding of the respective roles and methods of working of IAEA and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and assist in examining the main issues that would arise in carrying out such a joint exercise successfully.

4. For maximum benefit, the workshop would require careful planning and the commitment of significant resources, in particular from the members of the Working Group, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the secretariat of IAEA. The success of the workshop would depend on mobilizing broad technical expertise from the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the member States of IAEA for participation in the workshop.

5. Allowance would also need to be made for the time and effort required after the joint meeting to digest the results of the meeting and make recommendations to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

#### IV. Practical issues associated with holding a joint workshop

6. As stated above, the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space and IAEA agreed on the potential benefits to both parties of holding a joint workshop. If the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee accepts the recommendation of the Working Group to hold the joint workshop, the following timetable is envisaged:

<i>Action</i>	<i>Date</i>
Approval by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee	February 2005
Working Group on NPS reviews of progress and agreement on work activities or continuation of such activities by the Working Group on NPS, including agreement on dates, venue, structure, potential participants, subjects and authors of papers, secretarial arrangements and so on with IAEA	During the forty-eighth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2005
Invitations and requests for papers sent out by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the IAEA secretariat	Immediately following the forty-eighth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2005
Submission of papers to the Office for Outer Space Affairs; the option of translation into relevant languages will be considered at the detailed planning stage.	At least six weeks before the date of the workshop
Holding of the workshop	During the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in February 2006

<i>Action</i>	<i>Date</i>
Draft report on the workshop to be prepared by members of the Working Group on NPS and representatives of IAEA	Immediately following the workshop, during the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in February 2006
Draft report on the workshop to be sent by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and IAEA to all participants for their comments and agreement	Within one month of the end of the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in February 2006
Comments and any proposed additional material to be returned by participants to the Office for Outer Space Affairs and IAEA	Within eight weeks of receipt of draft report
Updated report on the workshop to be prepared by members of the Working Group on NPS and representatives of IAEA	During the forty-ninth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2006
Draft report of the Working Group on NPS based on the final outline of the objectives, scope and attributes of an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations, taking into account the results of the joint technical workshop as contained in the updated report on the workshop	During the forty-ninth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2006
Incorporation of the results from the updated report on the workshop in the Working Group's final report on the present plan of work (see chap. V below)	During the forty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in 2007

## V. Implications for the current work plan

7. The current work plan does not contain any specific allowance for the time and resources needed to organize and hold a joint workshop with IAEA. In order to accommodate this, it is suggested that the work plan should be amended as follows:

### 2005

(a) Review information from national and regional space agencies on the content of relevant national (including bilateral and multilateral) space NPS programmes and applications planned or currently foreseeable;

(b) Prepare a final outline of the objectives, scope and attributes of an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations for assuring the safety of planned and currently foreseeable space NPS applications;

(c) Organize and plan for a joint technical workshop with IAEA, to be held during the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in February 2006;

(d) Hold an intersessional meeting during the forty-eighth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2005, to finalize the plans for the joint technical workshop with IAEA.

## **2006**

(a) Hold a joint technical workshop with IAEA during the first two days of the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and prepare a draft report on the workshop;

(b) Hold an informal meeting of the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space during the forty-ninth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2006, to prepare an updated report on the joint technical workshop to be made available to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and IAEA;

(c) Hold an informal meeting of the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space during the forty-ninth session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in June 2006, to prepare a draft report based on the final outline of the objectives, scope and attributes of an international technically based framework of goals and recommendations, taking account of the updated draft report of the joint technical workshop.

## **2007**

(a) Prepare the final report and recommend an implementation option to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

(b) If the recommended implementation option is acceptable to the Subcommittee, prepare a new work plan to carry it out;

(c) If the recommended implementation option involves further joint activity with IAEA, commence early discussions with the Agency to carry this out.

## **VI. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

8. The members of the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space have concluded that further work on any of the potential options for cooperating with IAEA in developing NPS technical safety standards would be assisted significantly by holding a joint technical workshop. Members have also concluded that the earliest practicable time for holding such a joint workshop would be February 2006. The success of the workshop would depend on mobilizing broad technical expertise from the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the member States of IAEA for participation in the workshop.

### **Recommendations**

9. The members of the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space recommend that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee:

- (a) Note the progress that has been made to date in achieving the work plan for the period 2003-2006;
- (b) Approve the proposal for a joint technical workshop with IAEA and authorize the Working Group to proceed with its organization;
- (c) Endorse the amended work plan set forth in chapter V above.

## Annex

### **Proposed terms of reference for a joint technical workshop between the Working Group on Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space and the International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss the scope and general attributes of a potential safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space**

#### **1. Objective**

1. The objective of the proposed workshop would be an exchange of views between the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the objective, scope and general attributes of a potential safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space.

#### **2. Terms of reference**

2. The workshop would:

(a) Briefly review relevant background information, such as:

(i) Report of the Working Group on a review of international documents and national processes potentially relevant to the peaceful uses of nuclear power sources in outer space (A/AC.105/781);

(ii) A working paper to be developed by IAEA on its processes and procedures for developing general safety standards and obtaining the endorsement of its member States;

(b) Consider working papers, one or more to be prepared by member States of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the unique features associated with the use of nuclear power sources in outer space applications that bear on potential safety standards, and one to be prepared by the IAEA experts on the scope and general attributes of a potential safety framework from the perspective of safety standard setters;

(c) Discuss the possible scope of a potential safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space;

(d) Discuss a set of potential attributes of a potential safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space, taking account of the note by the Secretariat of 15 March 2004 (A/AC.105/L.253);

(e) If appropriate, consider potentially relevant international standards and national processes that could be considered examples of components of a potential safety framework for nuclear power sources in outer space (see the document referred to in paragraph 2 (a) (i) above);

(f) Prepare an agreed joint report of the technical workshop for submission to IAEA and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

### **3. Duration**

3. Provisionally, it is assumed that the technical workshop would last two days, though the actual duration (of either two or three days) would need to be determined at the detailed planning stage. During the first day, after the formal introductions, the background documents, IAEA working paper and member States' working papers would be presented. The papers would provide a basis for discussion of the potential scope, general attributes and components of a potential safety framework for nuclear power source applications in outer space.

4. On the second day, participants would continue their discussions in the morning. During the afternoon, they would draft the outline of an initial report to IAEA and the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, presenting the consensus on the topics covered during the workshop.

### **4. Venue and date**

5. The technical workshop should be organized by the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the secretariat of IAEA and held in Vienna during the first two days of the forty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, to be held in February 2006.

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