Chairmen’s Summary Report on the
Third International Atomic Energy Agency Workshop on
Lessons Learned from the Integrated Regulatory Review Service

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Introduction

The third workshop on lessons learned from missions performed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) took place in Washington, DC, on October 26–28, 2011.

Approximately 60 senior regulators from 22 IAEA Member States (MSs) took part in the workshop, which was cohosted by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in cooperation with IAEA and cochaired by R. W. Borchardt and Denis Flory. NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko opened the workshop. In addition, Denis Flory, Deputy Director General of IAEA, made opening remarks.

As stated during the workshop, IRRS missions are important international cooperation activities contributing to nuclear safety, and openness and transparency are important to the IRRS program and nuclear safety. The workshop served as an example of this transparency. The first workshop took place in France in 2007, and the second workshop occurred in Spain in 2008.

Based upon Member State feedback, enhancing the IRRS missions is included in the IAEA’s Action Plan on Nuclear Safety. The Plan calls for ensuring that the missions are more comprehensive and that Member States use the missions to strengthen the effectiveness of national regulatory bodies.

The workshop started with a set of presentations from the IAEA on the highlights derived from the 29 IRRS missions and follow ups conducted over the period 2006-2010, based on a thorough review of all missions’ recommendations, suggestions and good practices conducted by the IAEA. The report of this review will soon be published.

Inviting a Mission

Workshop participants discussed the importance of preparing for a mission and, in particular, how good preparation can significantly contribute to a successful mission. The benefits of conducting a full-scope mission were discussed. Definition of the scope of the mission needs to be carefully studied. The value of a full-scope mission is widely recognized and appreciated.

When responsibilities are spread between several regulatory entities, the pros and cons of tailoring the scope to that of a regulatory body versus involving several regulatory bodies needs to be carefully
studied. In this context, it was suggested that the State should request the IRRS mission, and not a single Regulatory Body.

In addition, workshop participants discussed the value of the IAEA self-assessment tool to the mission host’s self-assessment. The value of the SAT tool has been recognized to help go through the self-assessment process in an organized and exhaustive way. Some participants provided feedback that the questionnaires should be much simpler and less repetitive. The second version of the IAEA Self-Assessment tool, to be released early 2012, does address this issue, and a second IAEA self-assessment technical meeting will take place in 2012 to collect and discuss feedback from Member States. Finally, participants noted that the conduct of a self-assessment provides a benefit for improving safety even if an IRRS mission does not occur.

Participants felt that consideration should be given to the amount of advance reference material provided to the IRRS team. Translation of the material requires significant resources, and the IRRS team finds the quantity of material to review challenging.

The resource needed to properly plan, conduct and follow up all IRRS missions should be better evaluated, both for the host country and for the IAEA.

**Hosting a Mission**

All MSs attending the workshop supported hosting an IRRS mission. The MSs agreed that IRRS missions improve nuclear and radiation safety through self-assessments, the dissemination of good practices, the international exchange of experience and the public confidence in the effectiveness of the regulatory body.

**Results of a Mission**

MSs agreed that addressing IRRS mission recommendations and suggestions requires a detailed action plan. Some MSs prepare a detailed action plan after the self-assessment and before the mission; other MSs prepare a detailed action plan only after the mission.

In some cases, mission findings have contributed to fundamental changes in the nuclear regulatory program of an MS.

Participants noted that the closure of some recommendations and suggestions requires the cooperation of government organizations other than the nuclear regulator that hosted the mission. The contribution of these government organizations to the IRRS process should be
discussed further, as well as the political dimension of the IRRS. However, participants agreed that the technical dimension of the IRSS, consisting of the review of the regulatory body activities, should prevail.

Participants noted that special attention should be given to the wording of the findings. The findings need to be clearly understandable and actionable so that they are useful to the host country.

While all countries have chosen to make their IRRS mission reports publicly available, participants emphasized a need for this openness to continue and for the wide communication of mission findings.

**Follow-up Missions**

Participants recognized that follow-up missions serve as an independent review of an MS implementation of IRRS recommendations and suggestions and noted that sufficient time between the mission and the follow-up mission should be given to allow the MS to complete its actions.

In addition, participants stated that consideration should be given to alternative methods for reviewing actions in response to a mission’s findings and that alternatives to follow-up missions could conserve MS and IAEA resources and thereby improve the value of the IRRS program. However, workshop participants did not agree to any changes or alternatives to performance of a follow up mission.

**Addressing Fukushima**

Two missions and one follow up mission have been conducted since the accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi (FD). These missions considered the actions of the MS to address FD through the use of a new and temporary FD-specific module and through the existing IRRS modules. Workshop participants expressed support for including this review during missions, especially as part of the existing IRRS modules, and stressed the necessity for flexibility because information on FD is still being gathered. For example, IAEA may need to update its standards currently in use to address FD issues in the future.

In addition, participants suggested that the IRRS program’s consideration of FD should find synergies in complementary programs that are also addressing this issue, such as the operating safety review team missions, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the Joint Convention.
Electronic Web Site

The workshop included a presentation on the nuclear safety and security regulatory network portal (REGNET). This portal contains information on the IRRS and other programs, such as the operating safety review team program, and serves as an electronic tool to improve the IRRS program’s openness to increase the sharing of information among MSs. Many MSs supported this effort, and significant discussion on its uses and benefits took place.

General

Recognizing that an IRRS mission addresses much more than the responsibilities and activities of the regulatory body, more consideration should be given to additional outreach to government bodies for bringing attention to the value of IRRS missions. This could include greater participation by representatives of these bodies at the mission entrance and exit meetings.

Inviting the media to participate in the opening and exit meeting was also discussed, and it was concluded that while this would contribute to the openness and transparency, it should be left to the host country to decide.

Workshop participants suggested that IAEA host a seminar with past and potential future IRRS team leaders to share experiences and improve consistency in mission implementation. Part of this discussion could include a better definition of “good practice.”

The next IRRS lessons learned workshop should take place no later than 2.5 years following this workshop.

Actions

1. Workshop comments regarding self-assessment performance will be addressed during the 2012 self-assessment tool technical meeting.

2. IAEA will complete construction of its electronic portal for sharing IRRS information within one year.

3. IAEA will provide written guidance to IRRS team members regarding the review of advance reference material. This action is complete.
4. IAEA will address the synergies with operating safety review team missions, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the Joint Convention regarding the review of MS and facility activities in response to FD at the next IRRS lessons learned workshop.

Conclusion

The workshop provided an important opportunity to strengthen the international peer review process. The support and improvement proposals expressed by participants will contribute to the implementation of the IAEA nuclear safety action plan.