

Parliaments Matter

Engaging parliamentarians in nuclear security

Report of a high level workshop

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Background

- A key element of nuclear security is the universal adherence to and robust implementation of:
 - The Convention for the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and its 2005 Amendment
 - International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT)
- As of 31 August 2024, out of 193 UN Member States, there were 164 Parties to the CPPNM, 136 to its Amendment and 124 Parties to ICSANT
- Common challenge for adherence in many of these States: ***lack of political prioritization or a lack of awareness within the national parliament and among high level political officials***
- VCDNP and IPU originated this workshop as a pilot effort to address this issue with parliamentarians
- The workshop and report preparation were funded by the US National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)

High Level Workshop on Legal Instruments for Nuclear Security

- **Dates:** 23-24 April 2024
- **Convened:** by VCDNP and IPU, at VCDNP headquarters in Vienna, Austria
- **Involved:** 15 MPs and senior officials from Bahamas, Iraq, Mongolia, Somalia, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia
- **Goal:** Motivate parliamentarians to become champions for the CPPNM, its 2005 Amendment and ICSANT



Highlights of the workshop

- Opening remarks by IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi
- A tour of the IAEA laboratory at Seibersdorf
- Involvement of many members of the Vienna diplomatic community and staff of international organisations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)



Testimonials from participants

- “It was a very comprehensive workshop and the initiative to include MPs was fantastic!”
- “It was important to bring MPs to the table to have this conversation in the same room as regulators.”
- “We are looking for champions in our own countries who can champion this cause with the same passion you have done so.”



Conclusions and recommendations

Outreach to parliamentarians is essential

Parliamentarians have a key role to play in adhering to legal instruments for nuclear security but are often unaware of nuclear security and its relevance to their countries.

RECOMMENDATION: Outreach on nuclear security and legal instruments should actively seek to engage parliamentarians in future activities, including international conferences, noting the important role that parliamentarians can play in adhering to these instruments.

Take parliamentarians' priorities into account

Parliamentarians typically are balancing multiple priorities and need to reflect the interests of their constituents. Nuclear issues, including nuclear security, may not be perceived as relevant to their countries and constituents, and could be viewed as a distraction from other, more urgent issues. They may also not be aware of the contributions nuclear science and technology can have in addressing their countries' urgent needs, including towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

RECOMMENDATION: Understand and take priorities of parliamentarians into account when engaging them in nuclear security. One promising path is to highlight peaceful uses of nuclear science and technologies in interactions with them – particularly non-power applications – and stress the value of nuclear security in ensuring the continued and expanded use of these technologies.

Connect national experts with parliamentarians

It can be highly effective to bring parliamentarians and regulators (or national experts) together to discuss universalization of legal instruments for nuclear security, as the national experts can provide needed context both for the parliamentarians and for the international experts organizing and speaking at the event.

RECOMMENDATION: Future events should be organized to bring parliamentarians and regulators (or national experts) together to discuss nuclear security, to progress towards the universalization of legal instruments for nuclear security. IPU and IAEA could be natural partners for such outreach.

Continuous and coordinated outreach

Awareness still needs to be raised regarding the importance and relevance of nuclear security and associated legal instruments in countries where engagement with the nuclear security community has historically been low. Different organisations may have different pathways to engage these countries, all of which could be valuable, particularly in countries where no natural nuclear security interlocutor is in place. However, these efforts need to be coordinated by a single organization in order to avoid duplication and conflicts.

RECOMMENDATION: Outreach on legal instruments for nuclear security should continue to be undertaken by multiple organisations to address various stakeholders and perspectives. These efforts should be well coordinated by a single organization, for example, the IAEA.

Game-based approaches help

The approach taken by the scenario exercise was engaging as well as successful in helping parliamentarians in the workshop to understand how nuclear security is relevant to their countries. A similar “game-based” approach could be used by regulators and other organisations for outreach with parliamentarians and other non-specialist audiences, particularly if designed in a way that it could be easily translated into local languages. This could take the form of a video game available online or a physical game, or a hybrid of the two.

RECOMMENDATION: The use of interactive exercises and other game-based approaches should be encouraged for in-country use by regulators and other stakeholders for outreach with parliamentarians and other non-specialist audiences.

Language diversity to increase impact

Communicating with parliamentarians in local or regional languages could increase the effectiveness of outreach as well as the number of possible interlocutors.

RECOMMENDATION: Future engagement with parliamentarians on this topic should seek to engage them in other UN languages, such as French, Arabic and Spanish, whether via interpretation or separate workshops.

Next steps

- VCDNP and IPU to continue follow up activities over the next six months:
 - Directly with parliamentarians, including via letters to the Speakers of the Parliaments involved
 - Possible meeting on the margins of the IPU General Assembly
 - Follow-up brief
- VCDNP to explore how the NGO community can support the work of IPU, IAEA, UNODC and others to support outreach on nuclear security to parliaments around the world

Thank you

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