

Factsheet: Third Meeting of the U.S.-Japan Bilateral Commission on Civil Nuclear Cooperation

The third meeting of the U.S.-Japan Bilateral Commission on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was held on June 12, 2014 in Tokyo, with Japan's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Shinsuke Sugiyama and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel B. Poneman leading the discussions as Co-Chairs. The delegations included participants representing a wide range of governmental agencies.

Established at the U.S.-Japan summit held in Washington, D.C. in April 2012, the Bilateral Commission serves as a standing senior-level forum to foster a comprehensive strategic dialogue and joint activities related to the safe and secure use of civil nuclear energy and the response to the accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station (NPS).

The first meeting of the Bilateral Commission (BLC) was held on July 24, 2012, in Tokyo, at which time five working groups were launched to coordinate bilateral cooperation. They cover the following subjects:

- Nuclear security;
- Civil nuclear energy research and development;
- Safety and regulatory issues;
- Emergency management; and
- Decommissioning and environmental management.

The second meeting of the BLC was held on November 4, 2013, in Washington, D.C., during which each of the Working Groups reported on the status of its activities. Both sides discussed the next steps for each working group and how to further enhance bilateral cooperation in each field.

During the third meeting of the BLC on June 12, 2014, each of the Working Groups reported on the status of its activities, and agreed to specific activities to perform before the next BLC meeting.

With respect to nuclear security, the United States and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen the nuclear security posture of both countries and to reduce the threat that terrorists could acquire nuclear material. The Nuclear Security Working Group reported on key activities undertaken since the second BLC meeting, including technical meetings and exchanges, and capacity-building efforts. In support of the March 2014 announcement at The Hague Nuclear Security Summit, the United States and Japan will continue to make utmost efforts to complete the timely removal of highly-enriched uranium and plutonium from the Fast Critical Assembly (FCA) to the United States.

On civil nuclear research and development, the United States and Japan discussed ongoing joint projects in the areas of advanced reactor, light-water reactor, and fuel cycle and waste management R&D. The BLC reviewed the outcomes of the Civil Nuclear R&D Working Group (CNWG) meetings held in Tokyo in February 2014, as well as the results from a probabilistic risk assessment (PRA) roundtable also held in Tokyo. The United States offered to perform a technical review of a planned Japanese PRA roadmap. The United States and Japan also indicated their intention to explore potential R&D collaboration under the CNWG in the area of PRA methodologies and their applications to enhance nuclear safety. Both sides agreed that the next meeting of the CNWG and its sub-working groups will be held in November 2014 at Argonne National Laboratory.

On nuclear safety and regulation, the United States and Japan reviewed the results of technical discussions on the current status of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant, reviews regarding conformity with new regulatory requirements, emergency preparedness and response, approaches to PRA, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's and the Japan Nuclear Regulatory Authority's approaches to aircraft impact assessments, and the US experience with the International Atomic Energy Agency's International Physical Protection Advisory Service missions. The United States and Japan agreed to enhanced information sharing between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority on PRA and related topics and confirmed plans for the next NRC-NRA Steering Committee Meeting, which will be held in Winter 2014 in Tokyo.

Regarding civil nuclear liability, the United States and Japan reaffirmed their support to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC). Japan reaffirmed its intention to submit the CSC to the Diet within 2014 and to work with the United States to work together to establish a global nuclear liability regime by encouraging other countries to join the CSC, thereby achieving a major objective of the Action Plan on Nuclear Safety adopted by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On emergency response, the United States and Japan continue to share actions and best practices in ensuring effective emergency response, data monitoring and information systems, and managing complex disasters. The United States and Japan agreed to rebuild momentum for the Emergency Response Working Group, specifically by conducting regular, working level communications between EMWG sessions, and implementing an agreed work plan. They exchanged invitations to observe exercises related to nuclear emergency management.

On decommissioning and environmental management, the United States and Japan reiterated their commitment to cooperation on cleanup efforts at Fukushima Dai-ichi. The Decommissioning and Environmental Management Working Group participants reported on the results from their two meetings in January and April 2014. The United States reaffirmed its commitment to provide a technical expert to participate in Japan's review of its Request for Proposals regarding contaminated water treatment. In addition, Japan was presented with the option for U.S. senior executives to consult with them and provide their experience in environmental clean-up activities and technologies on the organizational and management issues involved in large-scale and long-term onsite and offsite environmental clean-up activities at Fukushima. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will continue to facilitate technical exchanges with subject matter experts to address many of Fukushima's critical cleanup challenges. Both sides also agreed to continue holding quarterly teleconferences to exchange information and to discuss specific technical areas and future cooperative activities in support of Fukushima's cleanup and to continue direct partnerships with U.S. DOE and EPA National Laboratories to address technical cleanup issues at Fukushima.

Japan and the United States committed to further strengthening information-sharing and cooperation within the five working groups and to report their outcomes to the next meeting of the U.S. – Japan Bilateral Commission on Civil Nuclear Cooperation to be held at a date to be agreed in the United States, supplemented as necessary by videoconferences.