

Thirteenth annual Japan-UK Nuclear Dialogue: summary of discussions

Date: 31 October 2024

Venue: Mita Kaigisho, Tokyo

Co-Chairs:

- Ms HAYASHI Mitsuko (Ambassador, Deputy Director General, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Science Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan)
- Mr Chris HEFFER (Director, Nuclear Power, Infrastructure and Decommissioning, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, UK)

Background

The 'Japan-UK Framework on Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation', annexed to the joint statement at the Japan-UK summit meeting in April 2012, stated that Japan and the UK would launch an annual Dialogue at senior level to strengthen bilateral cooperation across the full range of civil nuclear activities.

The thirteenth annual meeting was hosted in Tokyo by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on the 31 October 2024.

Session 1: Decommissioning and Waste Management

Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) presented on recent developments in decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and on decommissioning and waste management policy, progress and structures. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) gave an overview on the decommissioning of nuclear research facilities in Japan. Japan's Ministry of Environment (MOE) shared progress on offsite environmental restoration in the affected area of Fukushima and recycling of removed soil.

METI also updated the UK on the release of Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) treated water from Fukushima Daiichi. The UK reiterated its support for the science behind the discharge of ALPS treated water and Japan's collaboration with the IAEA on this matter.

The UK Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) gave an update on their current decommissioning projects and the organisational structure of the NDA. The NDA and the UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) gave update presentations on the range of collaborations ongoing between the NDA Group and their Japanese counterparts and between UK and Japanese supply chain.

The two sides welcomed the long-running, deep Japan-UK collaboration in decommissioning. Both sides noted the number of shared challenges between Japan and the UK in decommissioning and the opportunities to collaborate even further in both directions.

Session 2: Public Communications

The UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Japan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) gave updates on the status of public opinion towards nuclear energy in their

countries. MOFA updated on their international efforts to provide scientific and fact-based coordination on ALPS treated water discharge from Fukushima Daiichi. The NDA provided an overview of their efforts to ensure positive local social impact through decommissioning.

The two sides discussed the importance of local, national and international perceptions of nuclear, and of continuing to exchange opinions and sharing best practice in this area.

Session 3: Research and Development

MEXT presented an update on current nuclear research and development (R&D) projects in Japan. DESNZ provided an update on the UK's next generation reactor R&D programmes, and NDA presented on current and planned R&D for decommissioning in the UK, as well as student sponsorship programmes for decommissioning work.

The two sides presented on collaborative R&D ongoing between Japan and the UK, including in robotics, decommissioning and on High Temperature Gas Reactors (HTGRs).

MEXT and DESNZ gave presentations on the status of fusion technology and policy in their respective countries, noting strong recent progress in these areas. Both sides highlighted their ambition to collaborate more closely in fusion energy.

Both sides noted the strong collaboration between Japan and the UK in R&D and the opportunities to enhance collaboration together in a range of areas, particularly in HTGRs, decommissioning and robotics, as well as in personnel exchange.

Session 4: Safety and Regulation

The UK Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) gave updates on regulation in their respective countries and their ongoing collaboration, including personnel exchange. DESNZ provided an update on ongoing nuclear security collaboration between the UK and Japan.

Japan's Cabinet Office (CAO) and DESNZ each gave a presentation on their emergency preparedness procedures, crisis management systems, and off-site nuclear disaster management measures. The two expressed a desire to continue exchanging information on this topic.

The two sides welcomed the ongoing regulatory exchange and collaboration on security, helping enhance nuclear safety in both countries through sharing experience and best practice.

Session 5: Nuclear Policy

METI and DESNZ gave updates on their nuclear energy policies, with a particular focus on next generation reactors, financing of new nuclear, skills and workforce programmes, and fuel supply chains. The two sides noted the value of continuing to exchange information on nuclear policy to enable learning from practices in other countries.

METI and DESNZ gave an overview of actions they are taking to uphold their Sapporo 5 commitments. Both sides underlined the importance of reducing reliance on Russian nuclear fuel supplies, and the opportunities to further collaborate with each other and with like-minded countries to achieve this.

Closing Remarks

The co-chairs Mr. Chris HEFFER and Ms. HAYASHI Mitsuko recognised the breadth and depth of UK-Japan collaboration on nuclear energy, the benefits to both countries from these links, and the opportunities to further grow collaboration going forward.

The co-chairs reaffirmed their commitment to the UK-Japan civil nuclear relationship and noted they were looking forward to meeting in the UK next year for the Fourteenth Japan-UK Civil Nuclear Dialogue.