

REFLECTIONS ON THE UAE NEW NUCLEAR PROGRAMME FROM THE INLA CONFERENCE (PART 2 OF 7): 4 NOVEMBER 2018

Delegates to the International Nuclear Law Association 'INLA' congress in Abu Dhabi on 4 November 2018 have now heard several key presentations about the UAE nuclear programme from knowledgeable speakers.

Prospect has been invited to attend the bi-annual meeting of the International Nuclear Lawyers Association (INLA) in Abu Dhabi from 4-8 November 2018 – [click here to see further information about the event](#)

Jacques Lavoie, INLA President and General Counsel of the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation 'ENEC' introduced the UAE programme, and was able to report that the Barakah NPP was 90% complete, with Unit 100% complete.

Obaid Al Mutawa, Deputy General Counsel at ENEC gave a brief history of the UAE programme, established to meet an anticipated trebling in energy demand in the Emirates.

David Scott, Advisor to the Executive Affairs Authority, gave a more detailed account of the evolution of the UAE programme. He reviewed and recalled the 2008 UAE White Paper, reflecting leading commitments to the highest principles and best practice, transparency, non-proliferation, safety and security, and cooperation with the IAEA.

2002 had seen a sharp oil price rise. There had been high growth in energy demand, population, and development, outstripping energy infrastructure. By 2006 there was not enough natural gas to support demand for air conditioning during the Gulf summer. Energy security reflections led to the establishment of a working group to consider options, the UAE then being 96% dependent on gas generation. By 2008, nuclear energy was recommended as part of the energy mix.

The UAE programme saw the establishment of an International Advisory Board. This worked both ways, bringing in know-how, and generating confidence overseas. Early reports were quite critical, but the public saw them being resolved. The UAE saw this as an important way of generating confidence in the programme in the early stages, now being replaced by more structured IAEA reviews. Town hall style meetings had also taken place to go out and engage with the public.

On non-proliferation, the UAE addressed the issue straight out in the legislation, which made it illegal to proceed otherwise. The UAE had ratified the Additional Protocol with IAEA.

FANR was set up as a substantially independent regulator in 2009. KEPCO was chosen as Prime Contractor. The UAE wanted an established design, and found that it worked better for a new nuclear country to use established technology. The UAE joined WANO, and joined the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on Spent Fuel Management. Supervision by regulators included oversight by the Critical Infrastructure authority.

Cooperation with the IAEA was assured by full and unfettered access, but UAE has also always drawn on their expertise. The UAE has signed Bilateral Agreements on Nuclear Cooperation with a number of countries, including the UK, and the regulator FANR had signed corresponding agreements with foreign regulators and TSOs, again including the UK.

On sustainability, the UAE had been building nuclear capacity, through education, scholarship and training programmes, so now UAE has hundreds of trained engineers, PhDs, and qualified personnel, with the contribution from UAE itself increasing.

Dr Zoryana Vovchok, Director of the Department of Legal Affairs, FANR spoke about the establishment of FANR by the law of 2009, and FANR's approach to the licensing of the first UAE NPP, from initial licences to construction stage licensing. By 2016, FANR had progressed to issuing Licences for transportation of Unirradiated Nuclear Fuel to ENEC, and for Handling and Storage of Unirradiated Nuclear Fuel to NAWAH ENERGY COMPANY.

Dr Vovchok gave an account of the extra work to take into account lessons learned from Fukushima, and further directions to ENEC to undertake assessments and extra stress tests and described FANR Regulations and Regulatory Guides, and the need to keep them updated.

About the Author

William Wilson is a specialist environmental, regulatory and nuclear lawyer with over 25 years experience in government, private practice and consultancy. He worked as a senior lawyer at the UK Department of the Environment/DETR/Defra, and helped to build up the environmental and nuclear practices at another major law firm, as well as running his own environmental policy consultancies. William has experience of all aspects of environmental law, including water, waste, air quality and industrial emissions, REACH and chemicals regulation, environmental protection, environmental permitting, litigation, legislative drafting, managing primary legislation, negotiating EU Directives and drafting secondary legislation.

Prospect Law is a multi-disciplinary practice with specialist expertise in the energy and environmental sectors with particular experience in the low carbon energy sector. The firm is made up of lawyers, engineers, surveyors and finance experts.

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