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Abstract:

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

“Management of Severe Nuclear Accidents”

The Committee

The International Atomic Energy Agency seeks to promote peaceful use of nuclear energy and to inhibit its use for any military purpose. Its creation was proposed by the American President Dwight D. Eisenhower as an international organization by addressing the General Assembly in 1953, when its constitution was finally drafted and completed and came into action in July 1957.

The Agency is guided by interests and needs of member states and focuses nowadays on three main pillars to underpin its mission: Safety & Security, Science & Technology, Safeguards & Verification.

It is one of the few organizations which is not under the direct control of the United Nations, however it reports to both the General Assembly and the Security Council. Unlike other specialized agencies the IAEA does most of its work with the Security Council, not the ECOSOC, and can act upon request by its member states.

It has a total number of 159 member states, which meet once a year as the General Conference, to approve actions and budgets passed by the Board of Governors and serves as a forum to debate on current issues and policies. Secretariat is headed by the Director General, which is selected by the Board as well and approved by the General Conference.

At VIMUN 2014 we simulate the Board of Governors, which consists of 35 member states, thirteen of those are were designated by the previous board as either of the ten countries that are the most advanced in atomic energy technology plus the most advanced from any of the eight regional groups not represented by the first ten. Then another 22 member states are elected by the General Conference to two-year terms, eleven each year. The 20 member states elected to the Board by the General Conference are apportioned geographically. The Board of Governors holds five yearly meetings and makes recommendations to the General Conference on activities and budgetary issues

Topic

The topic of the IAEA's role in the management of severe nuclear accidents has re-surfaced due to the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi NPP. As strengthening nuclear safety is one of three pillars, it is still sovereign states that determine the health and safety regulation of nuclear power facilities up to a great extent. At the same time it is also evident that nuclear power can have significant health and political effects transcending state boundaries. There still remains the question how a proper balance between autonomous state decision-making and international or interests can be achieved.

Following the accident in Fukushima the IAEA helped to channel international assistance to Japan and began sharing information about the accident worldwide. As part of this effort the Director General requested the IAEA staff to produce an authoritative, factual and balanced assessment of the accident, addressing the causes and consequences as well as lessons learned. The "IAEA Fukushima Report" will be finalized by the end of 2014.

The actual simulation of the Board of Governors should assess the lessons that have been learnt following the accident in Fukushima. In this context the changes that have been made in the IAEA operations and mechanisms should be assessed, particularly those changes in the gathering and sharing of information by the IAEA.

During the handling of the Fukushima incident the IAEA was criticized for not acting quickly enough and not providing extensive information to the general public. This criticism, however, lacks some foundation as the IAEA's mandate depends upon the decision of the member states of the IAEA. This is largely because member states have not devolved sufficient authority to the IAEA and failed to agree to make the IAEA the centerpiece of the nuclear security regime. Until and unless member states agree on a strengthened or expanded role for the Agency, the IAEA cannot be expected to unilaterally assert greater authority on nuclear security issues. Whether board members can reach a compromise and deliver a recommendation for strengthening the role of the IAEA or not, will be one of major discussions at the simulated sessions.