

NEW PUBLICATION

Multilateralization of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle: Assessing the Existing Proposals

Global energy demands are driving a potential expansion in the use of nuclear energy worldwide. It is estimated that the global nuclear power capacity could double by 2030. This could result in dissemination of sensitive nuclear technologies that present obvious risks of proliferation. Certain international institutional mechanisms for controlling access to sensitive materials, facilities and technologies are needed for dealing with this problem. Over the past few years, 12 proposals have been put forward by states, nuclear industry and international organizations, aimed at checking the spread of uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing technologies. This book presents an overview and analysis of these proposals, including an evaluation of the projected international mechanisms.

Multilateralization of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle: Assessing the Existing Proposals

Yury Yudin

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In each issue of *Disarmament Forum*, UNIDIR Focus highlights one activity of the Institute, outlining the project's methodology, recent research developments or its outcomes. UNIDIR Focus also describes a new UNIDIR publication. You can find summaries and contact information for all of the Institute's present and past activities, and download or order our publications, online at <www.unidir.org>.

NEW PROJECT

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty: Understanding the Critical Issues

On 29 May 2009, the Conference on Disarmament (CD)—after more than a decade of division—agreed to a programme of work that included the launch of negotiations on “a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of the document CD/1299 of 24 March 1995”. The document, known as the “Shannon mandate” after special coordinator Ambassador Gerald E. Shannon of Canada, launched an ad hoc committee to produce “a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.” Unfortunately, the ad hoc committee’s existence was short-lived, and all efforts to re-establish the mandate were fruitless until this year’s break-through: hopes are high that substantive work on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) will get under way early in the new session, beginning late in January 2010.

The turnover of diplomats in Geneva since the original agreement on the Shannon mandate, and the multitude of issues that personnel in smaller delegations often have to deal with make it difficult for the CD to retain its institutional memory. There is a real risk that the lack of historic knowledge and technical know-how among delegations may cause inertia and affect the prospects for progress toward a new treaty.

This project aims at raising awareness among diplomats within the CD, and those responsible for disarmament in the capitals, on the history of the FMCT discussions in the CD, the events and changes since these discussions, the critical issues to be dealt with by the negotiators, and the potential obstacles that will need to be overcome in order to achieve a treaty. The ultimate goal is to help speed the start of FMCT negotiations as well as deepen the level of discussion.

The project will produce a short reference bibliography of resources related to an FMCT and a briefing book covering the historical development of a mandate to negotiate, essential treaty elements such as scope and verification, and possible negotiating strategies. Three briefings for disarmament diplomats will be held in order to introduce the papers and encourage dialogue on critical issues.

For more information, please contact:

Tim Caughley

Resident Senior Fellow

Tel.: +41 (0)22 917 1149

Fax: +41 (0)22 917 0176

E-mail: tcaughley@unog.ch