

Message from the Director-General

The trend towards renewed interest in nuclear power was largely confirmed in 2005, both within and outside the OECD area.

Early in the year, ministers from around the world gathered at the international conference on Nuclear Power for the 21st Century, held in Paris, France, showing in most cases renewed or strengthened interest in nuclear energy's capacity to enhance security of energy supply, reduce environmental impacts of energy production and provide electricity at affordable costs. The importance of providing reliable, affordable, clean energy was echoed by ministers attending the Meeting of the International Energy Agency (IEA) Governing Board at Ministerial Level in May.

During the summer, the US Energy Policy Act of 2005 laid the official groundwork for nuclear energy to take on new life across the United States. It provides, *inter alia*, a wide range of measures to support currently operating nuclear power plants, incentives for building new plants and risk protection for companies pursuing the construction of new reactors. Other US initiatives, including the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), are adding to the recent momentum building in favour of nuclear energy use. In Japan, the year saw two new reactors come on line, as well as the adoption of a new Policy Framework for Nuclear Energy. Other country developments are described on page 6.

At the NEA Steering Committee policy debate in October, many NEA member countries upheld that nuclear energy has a role to play in contributing to security of electricity supply. They also agreed that governments have a role to play in ensuring security of energy supply, as a complement to market forces.

Against this backdrop, the NEA Secretariat is playing an active role in helping to develop the scientific, technological and legal bases that will assist those member countries that wish to make use of nuclear energy, to do so in a safe, environmentally friendly and economical manner. In addition to the many activities in its regular programme of work, the NEA provides Technical Secretariat services for the Generation IV International Forum (GIF), a major international initiative aimed at developing the next generation of nuclear energy systems for commercialisation by 2030. These systems are to offer significant advances in terms of sustainability, safety and reliability, economics, proliferation resistance and physical protection. Further details about GIF and the full range of NEA activities can be found in this year's *Annual Report*.



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