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First Report on the Consultative Assembly of the European Nuclear Energy Agengy of the O.E.E.C.

Report[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Gerard de GEER, Sweden

1. 1958 - 10th Session - Second part

A. Draft Recommendation

The Assembly,

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1. Having received the first report on the activities of the European Nuclear Energy Agency of O.E.E.C,

2. Thanks the Council of O.E.E.C. for the transmission of the report and congratulates it on the promptness with which the Agency has been set up;

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3. Stressing again the importance it attaches to the peaceful character of European co-operation in the field of nuclear energy and the necessity of rapidly developing this vital source of power and factor of industrial evolution;

4. Reaffirming its belief in the usefulness of joint undertakings as a means of co-operation in the field of nuclear energy,

5. Welcomes the conclusion of the Convention on the constitution of the European Company for the Chemical Processing of Irradiated Fuels (Eurochemic) and of the Agreement for the joint operation of the boiling water reactor at Halden, Norway, and notes with satisfaction that preparatory work on other joint experimental reactor projects is well advanced;

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6. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Council of O.E.E.C. that they should :

6.1. make arrangements for the continued, transmission to the Consultative Assembly in future of annual reports of the European Nuclear Energy Agency;

6.2. proceed as soon as possible with the ratification of the OEEC Convention on Security Control and ensure that, as envisaged in that Convention, the security control systems, of E.N.E.A. and Euratom should be worked out in close collaboration between the two organisations and in close contact with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in order to facilitate the establishment of a unified world system of control;

6.3. conclude as soon as possible an agreement on uniform health and safety standards in close liaison with the Euratom Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency;

6.4. bring to an early conclusion the work now in progress in E.N.E.A. on a draft convention on third-party liability of the operators of nuclear installations;

6.5. proceed with the ratification of the Eurochemic Convention;

6.6. undertake by joint effort further experimental reactor projects and examine with the Euratom Commission arrangements whereby all interested OEEC countries could contribute to and benefit from the research and training programmes relating to power reactors to be set up jointly by Euratom and the United States Government;

6.7. ensure that future ENEA reports regularly review the national nuclear power programmes of member countries against the background of up-to-date forecasts of requirements and availabilities of all kinds of energy for Western Europe.

B. Explanatory Memorandum

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1. The Consultative Assembly has repeatedly in the past stressed the need for rapid and effective co-operative action among Western European countries for the development and utilisation of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It has thus lent its support both to the negotiations on the Treaty setting up the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the OEEC negotiations which led to the establishment of the European Nuclear Energy Agency (E.N.E.A.), believing that there need be no incompatibility between the objectives of the two organisations on condition that appropriate measures are taken to ensure the closest collaboration between them.

2. In the time that has elapsed since the Assembly last debated the question of European organisation in the field of nuclear energy, in October last year, both organisations have come into being, Euratom starting operations on 1st January 1958 and E.N.E.A. a month later, on 1st February 1958.

3. This is the more gratifying as there have been fresh indications in the meantime to confirm at once the urgency of developing nuclear energy both as a source of power and as a factor of industrial evolution and the necessity of international co-operation on almost all aspects of nuclear activities if substantial and rapid progress is to be made. The inadequacy of present national nuclear power programmes in face of the forecasted Western European deficit in domestic supplies of classical energy ten to twenty years hence, and the evidence of the great difficulties lying ahead in reducing the cost of nuclear power to competitive levels brought out at the Second United Nations International Conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, recently held in Geneva, amply justify reiterating the Assembly's appeal to the Western European Governments to make haste and extend to one another all possible assistance through the organisations they have set up for this purpose.

4. When, as the first of the two European nuclear energy organisations, the E.N.E.A. now presents its first Report on the Activities of the Agency, the Assembly will no doubt wish to congratulate the Council of O.E.E.C. on the rapidity with which the Agency has been set up and to thank it for transmitting the Report.

5. It will be noted from the Report itself that the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy has proposed that the activities of the Agency should be made the subject of an annual Report to the Council of Europe, thus meeting a request made, earlier by the Assembly. In view of the importance and the nature of the subject-matter as well as for practical reasons, it would seem appropriate that arrangements should be made between the Council of Europe and O.E.E.C. to ensure that, as in the present case, the activities of the Agency are annually made the subject of a separate report and that future reports are transmitted at such times that the Assembly can conveniently examine and discuss them simultaneously with reports of Euratom. In order to enable the Assembly to discharge its principal function in this field, future reports of the Agency should regularly review the national nuclear power programmes of member countries against the background of up-to-date forecasts of requirements and availabilities of all kinds of energy for Western Europe, and set out the Agency's own recommendations concerning the national programmes.

6. The fact that E.N.E.A. is at the planning stage of its work, laying foundations which will be decisive for the future, is, however, a reason for the Assembly to examine and give its views on the Agency's First Report at the first opportunity.

7. By preserving a number of specialised technical Commissions which had been set up earlier in O.E.E.C. and by acquiring the assistance of a Committee of top-level experts in nuclear science and engineering, the E.N.E.A. has been able to make good progress in planning its work in the various spheres of activity laid down in its Statute. Certain concrete results have also been achieved, but it is more important at the present juncture to observe that the main emphasis of the Agency's work has been on establishing the legal framework which is the first prerequisite for a sound and vigorous development in the field of nuclear energy. Broadly speaking, co-operation in nuclear energy development falls under three heads: the legal framework —comprising security control, safety and health protection, third-party liability and insurance- training and research, and reactor development and nuclear power production— involving inter alia industrial planning and investment programming. While it is true that action must be taken in all three directions concurrently, the legal framework must be given first priority as being the means of creating the necessary climate of confidence between countries, in private enterprise and in the general public.

8. With regard to security control, the situation is that the Agency is waiting for the Convention on the Establishment of a Security Control in the field of Nuclear Energy, which was signed in December last year, to come into force as soon as it has been ratified by at least ten of the Signatories. Article 16 of the Convention

provides that Euratom will be entrusted with the responsibility of control in the territory of the Six on conditions to be agreed between the two organisations. Since delays in bringing the security control into effect would retard progress of the practical work of the Agency, it is essential that Governments should proceed with the ratification of this Convention and the conclusion of the agreement with Euratom envisaged therein, as speedily as possible. In view of the advantages it would present to arrive at a unified world system of security control, it is encouraging to note that E.N.E.A. may negotiate an agreement of co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (I. A.E. A.) on this matter and it is to be hoped that such an agreement will also be concluded at an early date.

9. Equally important for creating the necessary climate of confidence in the public at large, among trade unions, entrepreneurs and insurers, is to arrive as soon as possible at an agreement on uniform basic standards for health and safety regulations and legislation and on third-party liability of operators of nuclear installations and transporters of nuclear materials. Ultimately, universal agreements are to be hoped for, and contacts with the I.A.E.A. are designed to facilitate such a development, but this should not be allowed to delay a regional agreement, common to E.N.E.A. and Euratom. ENEA experts are in the process of drafting agreements on these two matters, and Governments should be asked to bring these negotiations to an early conclusion.

10. The Agency has also got off to a good start in the field of nuclear industry and reactor development where one may point to two concrete achievements. Preparatory work, i.e. technical studies, choice of site, etc. for the construction of the European Company for the Chemical Processing of Irradiated Fuels (Eurochemic) has thus been carried forward rapidly by a Study and Research Office set up in the framework of E.N.E.A. In order to permit this important European enterprise to start operations as soon as possible, it may be hoped that the Convention on the constitution of Eurochemic, which was signed in December last year, will be ratified as soon as possible by the Signatory Governments and the necessary capital placed at the Company's disposal.

11. In June this year, an Agreement was concluded on the joint operation of the boiling water reactor built at Halden, Norway, between representatives of the Austrian and Swiss Governments, the British, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish atomic energy authorities and Euratom. Other studies on joint experimental reactor projects are under way. In view of present uncertainties concerning the future prospects of different types of reactors, this is, obviously, a most important branch of the Agency's activities and one where joint action on a flexible formula holds great promises, as it is designed at once to avoid wasteful duplication and achieve the realisation of projects. that countries would hesitate to embark on singly by reason of the technical difficulties and, in some cases, the investments involved.

12. So far E.N.E.A. has not, it seems, examined the possibility of joint undertakings for the study and construction of nuclear power reactors. Nothing in its statutes would prevent it from doing so, however, and, while it may be wise to wait some time before taking a definitive line on this, the question should not be lost sight of by the Assembly.

13. As is known, the Agreement between Euratom and the United States Government on coroperation in the peaceful uses ot atomic energy involves a joint nuclear power programme of substantial size (some six to eight power reactors with a total installed electric capacity of 1 million KW to be constructed by 1963), and in connection therewith a very important joint research programme. The two programmes will be centred on enriched uranium reactors. So far there is not a single reactor fuelled with enriched uranium in operation in Western Europe, although several are planned—also outside the Euratom countries. It would, therefore, undoubtedly be of great interest and offer advantages to all concerned, if arrangements could be made to ensure that all OEEC countries interested in the matter could contribute to and benefit from the joint Euratom - United States research programme. TheE.N.E.A. would undoubtedly be the right forum in which to raise this question, in view of the fact that the United States is directly associated with the work of the Agency.

14. It is also gratifying to read in the Report that attention is being given to the training of specialists in research and industry. As mentioned before, the availability of technical and scientific manpower in sufficient numbers and with the required qualifications is another condition of progress. This is evidently a long-term proposition and one which the Assembly may more fruitfully give its attention at a later opportunity.

15. In conclusion, it is the opinion of your Rapporteur that E.N.E.A. is to be congratulated on having successfully concentrated its activities on essentials in the first six months of its existence.