

Report on NPT Side Event at the 2024 NPT PrepCom:

Sustainable Safeguards Implementation in Africa

Experience of Finland, EU, and AFCONE, Working Together in
Navigating Systemic Challenges

Executive Summary

The AFCONE and STUK-sponsored side-event at the 2024 NPT PrepCom focused on sustainable safeguards implementation in Africa, highlighting the collaboration between AFCONE, the European Union, and Finland. This report summarises the key objectives, discussions, and outcomes of the event.

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the side-event, capturing the main discussions, outcomes, and their implications for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Africa, and nuclear non-proliferation efforts in Africa and globally

Event Title:

Sustainable Safeguards Implementation in Africa – Experience of AFCONE, EU, and Finland Working Together in Navigating Systemic Challenges

Date and Time:

Tuesday, 30 July 2024, 13:15 – 14:30

Venue:

Meeting Room XXII, at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland.

Overview:

On 30th July 2024, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) and the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland (STUK) hosted a well-attended side event during the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting. The event was attended by over 50 participants and focused on the collaborative efforts of AFCONE, the European Union, and Finland in strengthening nuclear material control systems across Africa. This initiative is part of the "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" programme, which aims to enhance the implementation of IAEA safeguards in the region.

About AFCONE

The African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) plays a pivotal role in promoting peaceful nuclear activities and ensuring nuclear non-proliferation across the African continent. The Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee (NPT PrepCom) is a crucial forum for discussing and reviewing progress towards the goals of the NPT, which aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy

About STUK

The Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) is a government agency tasked with nuclear safety and radiation monitoring in Finland. The agency has a long and rich history in promoting safeguards globally and is also a scientific research and education organization. The agency works in collaboration with the EU and other countries, as well as with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), AFCONE, and other organizations.

Moderator:

The session was moderated by **H.E. Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.**

Key Speakers and Highlights:

1. **H.E. Ambassador Emmanuel Kwame Asiedu Antwi, Ambassador of Ghana,** highlighted Ghana's achievements in the nuclear safeguards landscape, including the successful ISSAS mission by the IAEA. He credited AFCONE's comprehensive training and support for these accomplishments and underscored the importance of collective efforts among African nations.

2. **Enobot Agboraw, Executive Secretary of AFCONE,** provided an overview of AFCONE's role in supporting African states in fulfilling their commitments under the Pelindaba Treaty and IAEA safeguards. He emphasised the importance of regional cooperation and knowledge sharing in addressing nuclear threats.

3. **Elina Martikka, Head of Unit, International Co-operation, Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland,** discussed Finland's extensive experience in nuclear energy, particularly in the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel. She explained how Finland's cooperation with AFCONE, supported by the European Commission, has been crucial in building capacity among Pelindaba Treaty State Parties and supporting IAEA inspection activities.

4. **Dr. Olamide Samuel, Special Envoy of the Executive Secretary of AFCONE,** addressed the contemporary challenges in safeguards implementation in Africa. He highlighted the flexible and adaptive approach of the "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" programme, which is designed to evolve based on real needs and lessons learned.

Key Discussions and Presentations

The AFCONE-STUK side event provided a comprehensive analysis of the current landscape of nuclear non-proliferation in Africa, emphasising the crucial role of regional and international

cooperation. The discussions underscored the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing nuclear threats and enhancing safeguards across the continent.

Keynote Address by the Ambassador of Ghana

The Ambassador of Ghana in Geneva highlighted the significant role of AFCONE and STUK in transforming Ghana's nuclear safeguards regulatory landscape. The keynote address emphasised the successful implementation of IAEA safeguards, with Ghana receiving commendations during the recent IAEA ISSAS mission to Ghana. This success was attributed to the comprehensive training and support facilitated by AFCONE, which has been instrumental in helping African states meet their commitments under the Pelindaba Treaty. The Ambassador noted that the collaboration with AFCONE and STUK has fostered unity and a shared sense of purpose among African nations, showcasing the benefits of cooperation, knowledge sharing, and mutual support.

Historical Overview and Context

Remarks by the Executive Secretary of AFCONE provided a historical context for the "Uplifting Safeguards in Africa" programme, highlighting the widespread adoption of comprehensive safeguards agreements (CSA) and the Additional Protocol among African countries. With 53 out of 55 African nations having comprehensive safeguards agreements with the IAEA, and 54 having signed the Pelindaba Treaty, the region demonstrates a strong commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

Finland's Cooperation with AFCONE

Finland's extensive experience in nuclear energy, including the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel, was highlighted as a model for new nuclear energy states in Africa. The cooperation project "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa," co-financed by the European Commission and Finland, aims to build capacity in Pelindaba Treaty State Parties and support IAEA inspection activities. This collaboration includes training and capacity-building tailored to the specific needs of African nations, enhancing their ability to implement effective nuclear safeguards.

Regional Security and Nuclear Safety

The discussions stressed the need for strong commitment from states and close cooperation between political decision-makers, technical experts, and nuclear safety authorities. Integrating IAEA safeguards activities into the planning and design phases of nuclear facilities was identified as a critical step in ensuring nuclear safety and security.

International Cooperation

International partnerships were recognized as pivotal in enhancing nuclear security in Africa. The cooperation project led by Finland and supported by the European Commission was cited as an exemplary model. Training events and outreach activities organised in collaboration with AFCONE and STUK have already benefited participants from approximately 25 African countries in the last 16 months, underscoring the value of such international cooperation.

The "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" Programme

The "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" programme was initiated with a clear vision to enhance the implementation of IAEA safeguards in Africa. The programme aims to create an environment where African safeguards experts can network, share experiences, and engage in collective learning. The establishment of AFCONE's Regional Collaboration Centres for

safeguards plays a crucial role in achieving this vision, serving as hubs for training and collaboration.

The programme emphasises a flexible training approach, designed to adapt based on lessons learned and evolving needs. This adaptability ensures that the training remains relevant and effective, with outreach events targeting decision-makers to raise awareness of safeguards obligations and the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy use, to facilitate knowledge management, and sustainability of the programme outcomes.

The "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" programme has significantly impacted the capacity building of individual states and the overall capabilities of the AFCONE secretariat. This initiative has enhanced AFCONE's role in promoting nuclear safeguards, safety and compliance across Africa, raising the profile and visibility of the organisation. The programme's success underscores the importance of sustained attention at both operational and governmental levels, with National Regulatory Organizations playing a crucial role in its effective implementation.

Interactive Discussions During Q&A Session

During the Q&A session following the presentations at the side event, several key topics and concerns were raised, reflecting the diverse interests and challenges faced by African states in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and security.

1. **Expansion of Focus Areas:**

A participant raised a question about expanding the pilot project's focus beyond safeguards to include areas like nuclear security. The Executive Secretary (ES) of AFCONE responded, outlining the Strategic Plan (2023-2027), which includes seven significant projects aimed at advancing nuclear energy and contributing to peace, security, and development in Africa. These projects also cover nuclear security. The ES expressed gratitude to the European Commission and the Finnish government for their financial support and emphasised the need for partnerships to fund the remaining projects. The ES also highlighted the need for increased African participation in nuclear diplomacy, suggesting a summer school for African diplomats and officials to enhance their engagement in multilateral nuclear forums.

2. **Enhancing African Participation and Capacity:**

A Panellist stressed the importance of enhancing African states' participation in nuclear fora, with a focus on AFCONE's medium and long-term mandate under the Pelindaba Treaty. The discussions also touched on the challenge of connecting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation explicitly to peace and security in Africa. Another panellist noted that the core programme aims to strengthen African capacity in nuclear material accountancy and control, including in uranium mining at the front end of the nuclear fuel cycle. A participant commended the effective collaboration between STUK's expertise and AFCONE's understanding of the continent's specific needs.

3. **Universalizing NPT Ratification:**

A participant inquired about progress in reducing the number of African countries that have not concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA. AFCONE has been engaging with South Sudan and is working to universalize and promote universalization of Comprehensive

Safeguards Agreements in Africa, as well as universalization of the Treaty of Pelindaba, noting that 11 African countries are yet to ratify the Pelindaba Treaty. A representative from South Sudan expressed support and appreciation for AFCONE's work, acknowledging the engagement with his country regarding the signing and ratification of the Pelindaba Treaty. He explained that delays were due to the country's status as a new nation with other pressing priorities. The ES discussed plans for specific programmes addressing other aspects of the nuclear landscape, including the need for meaningful engagement with IAEA's Technical Cooperation (TC) programme to design projects that meet the specific needs of African states.

A significant challenge in international nuclear non-proliferation efforts is the collaboration with countries that are not parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear-Weapons (NPT). This issue is particularly relevant in the context of South Sudan, which remains outside the NPT framework. As a result, countries like Finland, which adhere strictly to NPT protocols and commitments, face substantial limitations in engaging in nuclear-related cooperation with non-NPT states.

Finland's inability to work with South Sudan on NPT-related matters stems from its commitment to upholding the principles and obligations of the NPT. The treaty, which aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, promote disarmament, and facilitate the peaceful use of nuclear energy, establishes a legal and normative framework that member states are obliged to follow. Engaging with non-NPT parties could potentially undermine these principles and the overall integrity of the treaty.

This restriction poses a significant barrier to addressing nuclear security and non-proliferation issues in regions where non-NPT states are present. It limits the scope of international cooperation and assistance that can be extended to these countries, potentially leaving gaps in global nuclear governance. The case of South Sudan exemplifies the complexities and challenges faced by the international community in ensuring comprehensive and inclusive approaches to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

4. Capacity and Staffing Challenges:

A participant enquired about the current capacity of AFCONE, particularly concerning the number of staff and experts available to support ambitious projects. The ES acknowledged the limitations, mentioning that AFCONE currently operates with seven staff members and four experts. Part of the ongoing programme aims to address these capacity-building needs.

5. Future Initiatives:

In response to a final question from Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, Olamide Samuel and the ES emphasised the importance of capacity building for African diplomats and developing a unified African position on nuclear issues. The proposed summer school initiative was highlighted as a critical step towards achieving these goals.

The session underscored the importance of continued dialogue, capacity building, and international cooperation to advance safeguards, nuclear non-proliferation and security in Africa. The participants demonstrated a strong commitment to overcoming the challenges and leveraging opportunities in this critical area.

Outcomes and Conclusions

The AFCONE side event highlighted several key outcomes regarding nuclear non-proliferation and safeguards in Africa. These outcomes included:

1. **Enhanced Regional and International Cooperation:** The event underscored the importance of collaboration between African nations and international partners, such as Finland and the European Commission, in enhancing nuclear safeguards and security. This cooperation is crucial for effectively addressing nuclear threats and fulfilling the commitments of the Pelindaba Treaty.

2. **Ghana's Progress and AFCONE's Support:** Ghana's successful implementation of IAEA safeguards, as affirmed by the ISSAS mission, was showcased as a significant achievement. This progress was largely attributed to the training and support provided through the AFCONE - STUK programme, highlighting AFCONE's pivotal role in supporting African states.

3. **Capacity Building through the "Uplifting Nuclear Safeguards in Africa" Programme:** The programme, co-financed by the European Commission and Finland, aims to build capacity among Pelindaba Treaty State Parties. It focuses on providing training and capacity-building tailored to African needs, enhancing the ability of these nations to implement effective nuclear safeguards.

4. **Importance of Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements (CSA) and Additional Protocols:** The widespread adoption of CSAs under the NPT and the Additional Protocols by African countries was emphasised. This demonstrates a strong regional commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

5. **Establishment of AFCONE's Regional Collaboration Centres for safeguards:** These centres were highlighted as critical hubs for training, collaboration, and the proactive implementation of nuclear safeguards in Africa. They play a vital role in fostering networks among African safeguards experts and supporting collective learning.

6. **Impact on AFCONE's Capacity and Visibility:** The programme has significantly strengthened the capabilities of the AFCONE secretariat, enhancing its role in promoting nuclear safeguards, safety and compliance across Africa. This increased capacity and visibility have made AFCONE a more effective organisation in the region.

Overall, the event demonstrated a strong commitment from African nations and their international partners to improve nuclear safeguards, enhance regional security, and promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy through collective efforts and shared expertise.

Recommendations

For AFCONE

Strengthen Regional Networks: Enhance collaboration among African states through regional networks and forums.

Capacity Building: Invest in training programmes to build expertise in nuclear safety and security, and nuclear diplomacy.

Public Awareness: Increase public awareness and engagement on nuclear non-proliferation issues.

For African States

Policy Implementation: Ensure robust implementation of safeguards provisions at the national level.

Resource Allocation: Allocate sufficient resources for nuclear safeguards, security and safety initiatives.

International Collaboration: Engage more actively in international non-proliferation efforts and seek partnerships for technological, policy, and financial support.