

Academy Workshop

Nuclear Power in the Middle East

From December 13 to 15, 2009, government officials and policy experts from sixteen countries gathered in Abu Dhabi – capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – to discuss the political, technical, and nonproliferation considerations related to the global and regional expansion of nuclear power. The Academy organized the three-day meeting on *Nuclear Power in the Middle East* as part of its initiative on the Global Nuclear Future. The project, led by Steven E. Miller (Harvard University) and Scott D. Sagan (Stanford University), is working to identify, refine, and promote measures that will limit the safety, security, and proliferation risks associated with the anticipated global expansion of nuclear power.

More than a dozen nations in the Middle East have expressed interest in nuclear power, and the plans for the UAE are among the most advanced in the region. Importantly, however, the UAE has voluntarily undertaken not to pursue proliferation-sensitive technologies (uranium enrichment and reprocessing for plutonium) that could provide a pathway to nuclear weapons. Instead, the country is choosing to rely on the international market for these services.

The participants in the Abu Dhabi meeting brought a diverse range of expertise and experience in nuclear program development, regulation, and nonproliferation and disarmament efforts to the discussions. The meeting included ambassadors and other senior officials from the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the League of Arab States, and the Arab Atomic Energy Agency, as well as high-ranking representatives from various national governments and think tanks. The attendees came from Algeria, Brazil, China, Egypt, Finland, Iran,



Academy CEO Leslie Berlowitz, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte (United Nations), and UAE Permanent Representative to the IAEA Hamad Al Kaabi

Italy, Malaysia, Norway, the Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the UAE, and the United States.

U.S. Ambassador to the UAE Richard Olson, in his opening remarks, discussed the bilateral nuclear cooperation pact between the UAE and the United States. The agreement “establishes a firm foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation in civil nuclear energy,” Olson said. “It incorporates the UAE’s commitment to renounce any intention to develop domestic enrichment and reprocessing capabilities in favor of long-term commitments to obtain nuclear fuel from reliable and responsible international suppliers. . . . More broadly, [the agreement] is a tangible expression of the United States’ desire to cooperate with states in the Middle East and around the world that want to develop nuclear power peacefully and in a manner consistent with the highest nonproliferation, safety, and security standards.”

Ambassador Hamad Al Kaabi, the UAE Permanent Representative to the IAEA, noting that energy demand in the UAE is projected to triple between 2007 and 2020, remarked that his government is aspiring to satisfy the country’s long-term energy needs with nuclear power. “Nuclear power is a viable option for us,” he said. “Our government has adopted policy principles such as transparency, cooperation with the IAEA, and high standards of safety that we are using to develop the infrastructure for a domestic nuclear industry.”

Over the course of the meeting, the participants discussed a number of complex issues, including how best to manage the spread of nuclear power and the emerging nuclear order, as well as how to



Project Coleader Scott D. Sagan (Stanford University), Ambassador to the UAE Richard Olson (U.S. Department of State), and Project Coleader Steven E. Miller (Harvard University)

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strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime. They also considered the priorities for the May 2010 Review Conference for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) – the international agreement that serves as a cornerstone of the regime.

Many of the conference participants expressed their support for the Academy's project on the Global Nuclear Future and their pleasure in having had an opportunity to meet and discuss issues of common interest with such a diverse group of colleagues, many of whom were meeting each other for the first time.

The Academy is planning a follow-up meeting in New York during the NPT Review Conference and another international meeting in Southeast Asia in late 2010. Prospects for strengthening the non-proliferation regime depend largely on the willingness of the non-nuclear-weapons states (including the nuclear power aspirants among them) to support and implement reform efforts. To gauge the prospects for improving the nuclear nonproliferation regime and to assess its adequacy for the future, it is essential to understand the preferences and interests of the nuclear have-nots and to appreciate their concerns and the solutions that are acceptable to them. The Academy will convene experts and policy-makers from non-nuclear-weapons states in Southeast Asia, including countries pursuing nuclear energy programs, to consider the regional implications of nuclear power programs and to incorporate their views into a new strategy for strengthening the nonproliferation regime. The Initiative will advance this work by engaging with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and utilizing the relationships built with influential experts and officials in



Saideh Lotfian (University of Tehran, Iran) and Mustafa Kibaroglu (Bilkent University, Turkey)

those countries, including Noramly Bin Muslim (Chairman, Malaysian Atomic Energy Licensing Board) and Jayantha Dhanapala (President, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs). The Academy hopes to promote a dialogue between the nuclear haves and have-nots and craft solutions that are local and region-specific.

More information about the Global Nuclear Future Initiative is available on the Academy's website at <http://www.amacad.org/projects/globalNuclear.aspx>. ■



Conference participants (left to right): Minister Counsellor Mostefa Zeghlache (Embassy of Algeria to the UAE); Director of Disarmament Affairs Khaled Shamaa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt), Director of Multilateral Relations Wael Al-Assad (League of Arab States), Professor of Political Science Saideh Lotfian (University of Tehran), Secretary General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino (Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs), High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte (United Nations), Senior Research Fellow Sverre Lodgaard (Norwegian Institute for International Affairs), and Chairman Rolf Ekéus (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)