

You are in : [Home](#) » [News Centre](#) » [News](#) » [Cleaner Future](#)

- News Centre**
- Top Stories
- Feature Stories
- In Focus
- Press Releases
- Media Advisories
- Statements
- IAEA Meetings
- Multimedia
- Transcripts

Top Stories

Looking To a Cleaner Future

Promoting Sustainable Environmental Remediation in Member States

Staff Report

4 December 2009

To better promote and support environmental safety and responsible remediation, the IAEA has launched a new initiative in the area of environmental remediation. Dubbed ENVIRONET, it intends to create networks among Member States, enabling countries to help each other find sustainable solutions to return radiologically contaminated sites to a safe and environmentally sound state.

Launched during the *53rd IAEA General Conference* in September 2009, ENVIRONET recently held its first technical meeting in Vienna, which 18 Member States and three multilateral organisations attended.

"The main aim of this meeting is integration, coordination and engagement of the different ideas put forth by the Member States," stated Horst Monken-Fernandes, Nuclear Engineer at the IAEA's Waste Technology Section. "The meeting also helped broaden participation in and discuss the structure of the network."

Peter Booth, Senior Technologist at the UK National Nuclear Laboratory and chair of the meeting, added that the key is to find sustainable ways to clean the contaminated sites. "All states represented here have something to learn from each other," he emphasized. "Some countries may be more experienced in the field of remediation but there is no one solution that fits all... that is why exchanging ideas is crucial."

The issues are complex since sources of radiological contamination vary. "Contamination is not always a result of nuclear fuel cycle operations. It can also be a byproduct of oil and gas industries and mineral mining," declared Booth. "That is why it is important that countries that do not have nuclear power plants also take part in this initiative," stressed Monken-Fernandes.

A subsequent meeting, planned for June 2010 in Chicago, USA, intends to consolidate the ideas put forth, better capture Member States' differing needs and draw a plan to match those needs.

While ENVIRONET is one of the Agency's more recent initiatives, the IAEA continually develops and supports initiatives to ensure environmental remediation. In May 2009, the IAEA organised an international conference in Kazakhstan on the remediation of land contaminated by radioactive material and residues.

"The idea of all such IAEA initiatives," affirmed Monken-Fernandes, "is to clean-up the existing contaminated sites and prevent the generation of future legacy sites by not repeating mistakes made in the past."



Networking for a cleaner environment: Participants at the first ENVIRONET technical meeting discuss solutions for environmental remediation. (Photo: G. Verlini/IAEA)

Story Resources

- [Ten Years of Progress in Environmental Remediation](#), 15 May 2009
- [Environmental Remediation](#)
- [IAEA Department of Nuclear Energy](#)
- [IAEA Waste Technology Section](#)

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