

DANGEROUS GOODS PANEL (DGP)**NINETEENTH MEETING****Montreal, 27 October to 7 November 2003****PROBLEMS WITH THE ACCEPTANCE OF RADIOACTIVE
MATERIAL FOR TRANSPORT BY AIR**

(Presented by IAEA)

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 During the last few years there are increasing problems with the transport of radioactive material by air. Some of these problems relate to the stricter requirements for the transport of radioactive material involving high levels of activity while other problems are experienced with the acceptance of packages with low levels of activity and packages with short lived medical isotopes. These problems have raised considerable attention at the 7-11 July International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material in Vienna, Austria. This conference was hosted by the IAEA, co-sponsored by other international organizations including ICAO and held in co-operation with IATA.

1.2 At the conclusion of the conference, the conference president, Ambassador Hughes from Australia, in his Summary and Findings stated that the Conference suggested that the IAEA convene a discussion forum between relevant entities to assist in alleviating problems associated with refusals by carriers, ports and handling facilities to accept consignments of radioactive material. He also stated that the Conference further found that enhanced efforts or separate treatment may be warranted for the transport of radioactive material for medical applications. The conference president also sent a letter to the IAEA requesting an action plan on denial of services. In this letter he referred to two air transport issues that were of particular concern to Australia. Specifically he raised the denial of shipments by carriers which in the case of short-lived medical isotopes can be life threatening. He stated that this is particularly the case for large sparsely inhabited countries such as Australia, that rely heavily on the transport of single packages of radioactive material to remote areas for urgent medical needs.

1.3 He also referred to recent moves by a working group of the ICAO Dangerous Goods Panel to propose a ban on transport of small packages of radioactive material in the aircraft cabin because such a ban would result in small planes (that do not have a cargo hold) being precluded from delivering short lived medical isotopes to remote areas within Australia and many other countries.

1.4 The ambassador requested that the IAEA convene a working group of interested parties to develop an action plan that will address the slow but sure increase of the occurrence of the denial of shipments by all modes transport.

1.5 In addition, the ambassador on behalf of Australia requested the IAEA to urgently approach the Dangerous Goods Panel of ICAO to request that the working groups recommendation to ban the transport of small packages of radioactive material in the aircraft cabin, is not implemented.

2. FOLLOW-UP ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

2.1 The 15-19 September 2003 IAEA General Conference in resolution GC(47)/RES/7 commends the Agency for having convened the International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material, welcomes the constructive discussions of issues at the Conference and the President's Summary and Findings, and requests the Agency to develop an Action Plan, in consultation with Member States and for approval by the Board, if possible in March 2004, based on the results of the Conference and within the Agency's competence.

2.2 The Agency is arranging a Technical Meeting in Vienna, during December 2003, to develop an action plan based on the findings of the International Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material. All Member States and relevant international organizations will be invited.

2.3 In addition the identified issues will be raised at meetings of ICAO and other relevant international organizations.

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