



International ICGR'07 Conference in Bern

Moritz Leuenberger, Member of the Swiss Federal Council: "All of us bear responsibility for the safe disposal of radioactive waste."

This morning saw the start of the international conference on "Geological Repositories: A Common Objective, a Variety of Paths" in the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern. In his opening address, Moritz Leuenberger, a Member of the Swiss Federal Council, stressed the responsibility borne by the current generation for safe disposal of radioactive waste and the need for societal and democratic acceptance of the decision-making process. For the next two days, until the evening of 16th October, around 200 participants from 19 nations will discuss political and societal aspects of radioactive waste disposal programmes.

In his opening address, Minister Leuenberger appealed to our sense of responsibility regarding the issue of safe waste disposal: "Whether or not we are in favour of nuclear power; whether or not we use electricity from nuclear power plants; whether or not we have, at some time, demonstrated for or against nuclear power – all of us bear responsibility for the safe disposal of radioactive waste. The collective responsibility should take precedence over individual attitude."

The Minister went on to stress the importance of allowing sufficient time for the repository implementation process and of ensuring that this process is transparent: "Radioactive waste will remain hazardous for generations to come. Finding a safe solution takes time – time that can be used to allow critics to express their opinions, time that allows us to further develop the necessary technologies."

The address by the Minister set the tone for the start of the international conference on "Geological Repositories: A Common Objective, a Variety of Paths". Over the next two days, around 200 participants – high-level decision-makers from the areas of politics and industry, regulatory authorities and waste disposal organisations from 19 countries – will discuss technical, political and societal aspects of waste disposal. A central theme will be comparing the different decisions that have been reached in different countries.

The conference is sponsored by the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), the OECD/NEA (Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), the European Commission and EDRAM (International Association for Environmentally Safe Disposal of Radioactive Materials); it is organised by Nagra as a member of EDRAM.

Further information, including speeches, presentations, a summary overview and raw materials for the media, can be found on the Internet at www.icgr2007.org.

Contact person:
Heinz Sager, ICGR'07 media coordinator

079 700 70 75