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Nuclear safety, a new meeting between the inspectorates of Italy and Switzerland to take stock of the activities carried out

The 8th meeting of the Italian-Swiss Commission (CIS) for cooperation on nuclear safety took place today. Participants in the meeting, held via videoconference, were the director of ISIN, Maurizio Pernice, and the deputy director general of the IFSN (Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate) Georg Schwarz.

"Since the last CIS meeting - explained Pernice - ISIN has done a lot from a technical and administrative point of view, also through strategic appointments for the Inspectorate, and transmitted the Report on the activities carried out and on nuclear safety on the national territory to the Government and Parliament".

During his speech, the director Pernice also recalled that, last May, the Ministry of Economic Development issued, on the advice of ISIN, the authorization decree for the decommissioning of the Latina power plant. "The decommissioning strategy includes two phases: making radioactive waste safe and, after the construction of the National Repository, dismantling all the plant structures. With the Latina power plant, the four former nuclear plants are now in the decommissioning phase".

Similarly, the IFSN experts updated the participants on the progress of the dismantling works of the Mühleberg plant, whose reactor was shut down after 47 years of operation.

During the meeting, the delicate issue of the health emergency was also addressed, with particular regard to the inevitable impact on the activities carried out. Following the measures adopted by the Government during the lockdown, the inspections suffered a setback but were nevertheless guaranteed in the event of emergencies or particular critical issues. Despite the difficulties of the moment, the partial interruption of the supervisory activities is subject to the request, to the operators, to provide weekly a report containing the updates on the operations in progress and the conditions of the personnel, in particular those assigned to safety functions of the plants. Due to the escalation of infections in recent weeks, and following the latest emergency measure adopted by the Italian government, ISIN will again request weekly reports.

The worldwide spread of COVID-19 has also influenced the work of the Swiss regulatory authority as well as of the operators of nuclear plants: in fact, significant changes in the working methods of the ENSI were necessary to ensure supervision.

The meeting between the Italian and Swiss inspectorates was therefore an opportunity to illustrate what has been done in their respective countries to ensure nuclear safety. The ISIN experts therefore recalled that, in December 2019, the National Program for the implementation of the policy for the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste was adopted by the Ministries of the Environment and Economic Development; last August, Italy formally submitted a request to the IAEA for the peer review mission ARTEMIS (Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation) for the evaluation of the implementation of the National Program, as requested from the Council Directive 2011/70 / Euratom. The ARTEMIS mission will be coordinated by ISIN.

A crucial event for our country is also that connected to the creation of the National Deposit: in January, SOGIN presented a new National Chart to ISIN, modified according to the recent update in the official Data Base; in March 2020 an updated version was sent to the competent Ministries, after the verifications carried out by the ISIN experts, in collaboration with ISPRA. When the document is published, a national debate will be launched with the aim of finding an agreement with the regions involved.

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