

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM ON THE AGREEMENT EXTENDING THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF GENERATION IV NUCLEAR ENERGY SYSTEMS

Agreement Extending the Framework Agreement for International Collaboration on Research and Development of Generation IV Nuclear Energy Systems

Command Paper No: 9597

SUBJECT MATTER

1. The UK is a founding member of the Generation IV International Forum (GIF), which is an international organisation established to further the development of advanced nuclear fission reactors. Although the UK is a founding member, which entitles us to sit on the Central Policy Group and Expert Groups, we are not a party to the Research & Development Framework Agreement, which allows direct participation in research projects. Although the UK signed the Framework Agreement in 2005, subject to ratification, it has yet to express its consent to be bound¹. There are 14 members of the GIF with Australia joining as the most recent.
2. The lack of direct UK involvement has been partially mitigated by our membership of Euratom, which is also a GIF member and represents the common interests of Euratom member states. Until now, the UK and its research community has had limited input into GIF via the projects that Euratom has chosen to participate in and by UK experts attending meetings on behalf of Euratom. The UK also has access to the findings of these projects as a result of its Euratom membership.
3. This access would be particularly valuable for the UK's R&D work on Small Modular Reactors and Advanced Modular Reactors in the near to medium term. Therefore, in light of the UK potentially not having access to the R&D work under the Framework agreement via Euratom, it is in the UK's best interests to ratify the GIF Framework Agreement and become an active member.
4. In addition, the access to the research that GIF makes available to active members will allow UK nuclear R&D to make a significant contribution to the Clean Growth Strategy which aims to contribute to the UK's carbon reduction targets. The GIF research strands that we would wish to join are Very High Temperature Reactors and Sodium Fast Reactors.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

5. Richard Harrington, Parliamentary Under - Secretary of State, Minister for Business and Energy at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, has primary responsibility for the accession to the GIF Framework Agreement. The Secretary of State

¹ The Agreement was published and laid before Parliament as Cm6613 Miscellaneous series No 2 (2005)

for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has overall responsibility for UK policy relating to GIF.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6. Active UK involvement in the GIF has been advocated by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee (May 2017) and the Nuclear Innovation and Research Advisory Board (December 2016) in their respective reports. The rationale for this was that the direction of UK nuclear innovation would encompass areas of activity and a level of integration that involvement via Euratom could not deliver on its own. The decision for the UK to leave Euratom has strengthened this rationale. An “active” membership status in the GIF, endowed by ratification to the Framework Agreement, would be a way of guaranteeing continuation of access to the research findings of projects that the UK currently accesses through its Euratom membership and wishes to continue to access. It would also open up the possibility of involvement in projects in which Euratom is not involved.
7. Active GIF membership status requires a country, through national or bi-lateral programmes, to contribute a level of funding to specific areas of research relevant to the technology areas covered by the Forum. This would not require additional research funding, as elements of the planned UK Nuclear Innovation Programme could be considered as meeting membership requirements.
8. Annual membership costs towards the administration of the GIF and its workstreams would be required but these are in the range of €80k - €150k. We are still exploring these figures as they depend upon the number of R&D strands the UK wishes to join and the number of members in the forum. We would probably wish to participate in 2-4 of the 6 research strands.
9. We expect a ceiling of €450k to the end of the current Spending Review period depending on the number of work strands joined and how far through the current accounting year we become active members. The UK as a signatory to a research strand will share the findings of its R&D in the area, but not the Intellectual Property.

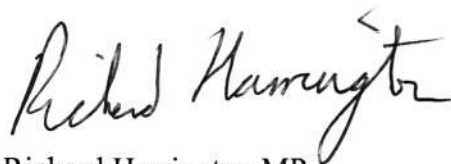
IMPLEMENTATION

10. No legislative measures will be necessary for the Agreement as amended to be implemented by the UK. BEIS officials have held discussions with the co-ordinator of the GIF Secretariat and they have informed us that once the UK has completed its internal procedures and deposited the Instrument of Ratification to the Framework Agreement which allows for active membership with the OECD, it enters into force 90 days later.

CONSULTATIONS

11. The civil nuclear industry and its associated R&D structure are in favour of the UK becoming part of the GIF’s framework agreement and the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee are strongly in favour of the UK ratifying the Framework Agreement.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Harrington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'R' and a long, sweeping tail.

Richard Harrington MP

Parliamentary Undersecretary of State

Minister for Business and Energy

