

Report on RRFM 2010

For the first time the annual Research Reactor Fuel Management (RRFM) conference took place outside Europe in Marrakech, Morocco, from 21. – 25. March 2010. It was organised by the European Nuclear Society (www.euronuclear.org) in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (www.iaea.org), which as this year's host organisation presented its achievements in starting Morocco's first research reactor. About 200 participants from 30 countries working in the fields of research reactor operation and fuel management used the opportunity to present their work, exchange ideas and make contacts.



As the name of the conference implies the focus was on fuel management and development for HEU to LEU nuclear fuel conversion in accordance with the US threat reduction and spent nuclear fuel acceptance programs. The aim of the RRFM in general is to provide a forum for personal discussion between research reactor operators and relevant US program managers as well as improving cooperation and idea exchange within the research reactor community. Thematically the program this year was divided in 6 sessions: **International Programs, Nuclear Fuel Cycle, Utilisation of Research Reactors, Innovative Methods in Research Reactor Analysis and Design, Research Reactor Operation, Maintenance and Aging and New Research Reactor Projects**. Overall the largest one was of course *Nuclear Fuel Cycle* with the development of Mo based fuel, which is needed for the conversion of high power research reactors and where significant research is still needed. This was closely followed by status reports and future plans around HEU to LEU conversion spread throughout the conference. Additional hot topics were options for future Mo-99 production, improving the utilisation of research reactors and reactor aging and maintenance. Several presentations were also devoted to new research reactor projects in various stages of planning and construction like PALLAS and JHR. Due to the tightly packed schedule of 68 planned oral presentations and a poster session with 28 participants in two and a half days, several sessions had to proceed in parallel on Tuesday 23rd. After the RRFM closing session several unaffiliated meetings like a TRIGA users meeting were held on Wednesday afternoon to capitalize on the fact that a lot of the interested people were already gathered in Marrakech.

As conclusion of the conference a technical visit to the Moroccan nuclear research centre near Rabat was offered on 25th. Unfortunately I could not attend but colleagues told me that beside the lengthy travel it was well worth the visit. With the new TRIGA Mark II reactor the role of the centre is bound to be both as a research facility and in preparation for a possible future deployment of nuclear energy in Morocco.

The surrounding social program was tightly spaced as well, starting with welcome drinks after the pre-registration on 21st, continuing the AREVA – CEA sponsored Moroccan style dinner the following day and finishing with the conference dinner on 23rd. Together with the excellent catering during the coffee breaks and lunches, this made for a very pleasant and relaxing atmosphere in which to discuss the day's work and to meet new people.

For me personally the conference was very helpful in providing an overview over the international relations of the research reactor community and for offering very good networking opportunities because most of the European research reactors and quite a few from all over the world had representatives at the meetings. I would like to thank the ENS staff for the great conference organisation and I am looking forward to next year's RRFM in Rome.

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