

Belgium-France-Netherlands-United States Joint Statement Minimization of HEU and the Reliable Supply of Medical Radioisotopes

Gathered in Seoul on the occasion of the second Nuclear Security Summit, leaders of Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the United States reaffirm their commitment to minimize the use of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) for civilian purposes, where technically and economically feasible, in order to advance the goal of nuclear security, as stated in the Washington Final Communiqué and Work Plan. Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and the United States have committed to a set of activities designed to concurrently minimize the use of HEU and ensure a reliable supply of medical isotopes for patients worldwide in need of vital medical diagnostic treatments.

Currently, in some facilities, HEU is still indispensable to produce medical radioisotopes used for radiopharmaceutical products. Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, as leading European countries involved in producing isotopes, have a special responsibility to ensure their reliable supply, for the benefit of the international medical community and patients worldwide. They have demonstrated their ability to find solutions for temporary shortages by prompt redirection of medical radioisotope production during the recent supply crises.

The four countries acknowledge that HEU, which can be directly used for the manufacture of nuclear explosive devices, is particularly sensitive and requires special precautions. For this reason, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and the United States underscore the importance of activities to continue to ensure that security measures employed at all facilities using HEU, including medical isotope production facilities, provide protection at least comparable to commitments in international treaties and to the recommendations set forth in International Atomic Energy Agency information circular INFCIRC/225 as revised.

In this context, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France, in cooperation with the United States, reaffirm their determination to support conversion of European production industries to non-HEU-based processes by 2015, subject to regulatory approvals, to reach a sustainable medical isotope production for the benefit of patients in Europe, the United States and elsewhere. As a result, in the longer term, the use of HEU will be completely eliminated for medical isotopes that are

produced in Belgium, France, and The Netherlands and used in those countries and in the United States.

At the same time, with the objective of HEU minimization and with a view to an overall effective decrease of HEU-amounts, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands will deal in a responsible manner with existing large amounts of scrap HEU resulting from past activities by recycling or disposing them, with the support of the United States and other partners.

In light of these efforts and until this conversion has taken place, the United States is prepared to supply the three countries with the necessary HEU target material to ensure uninterrupted production of medical isotopes urgently needed for diagnosing heart disease, cancer, and studying organ structure and function, while achieving the goal of HEU minimization.