

DISCUSSION PAPER: A ROADMAP TO THE 2027 A/CPPNM REVIEW CONFERENCE

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I. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convened the first Conference of the States Parties (RevCon) to the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (A/CPPNM). A key outcome of the RevCon was the [request by a majority of States Parties](#) to the IAEA to convene the next RevCon no later than six years after the first RevCon.¹ The IAEA plans to convene the second RevCon of the A/CPPNM on April 5-9, 2027.

This paper provides a basis for discussion on key questions and recommendations for the 2027 RevCon. The paper (i) suggests goals and objectives for the RevCon, (ii) proposes considerations for the design of the RevCon, including deliverables and outcomes; and (iii) offers a proposed path forward for the preparatory process.

The [most important recommendation](#) in this paper is that to achieve a successful and substantive RevCon, States Parties must provide direction to the IAEA, ideally at or before the next Point of Contact (POC) meeting in September 2025, so the IAEA can begin convening preparatory meetings of the States Parties this year.

II. REVCON GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the RevCon, as stated in Article 16.1 of the A/CPPNM, is “...to review the implementation of this Convention and its adequacy as concerns the preamble, the whole of the operative part and the annexes in light of the then prevailing situation.” Although Article 16.1 states the minimum requirement for the RevCon, the goals for the 2027 RevCon should be much broader and more ambitious.²

The 2022 RevCon featured robust and substantive discussion through careful planning of the programme and during the negotiation of the outcome document. It is important that the 2027 RevCon meet or exceed the success of the 2022 RevCon and be as substantive as possible to meet key goals and objectives for the RevCon and demonstrate the value of holding future RevCons. The following goals can guide all aspects of the planning, from the preparatory process to the outcome document.

¹ See IAEA Information Circular (INFCIRC) 982, at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2022/infcirc982_up.pdf.

² NTI proposed similar goals for the 2020 RevCon. See Samantha Neakrase, “Strengthening Nuclear Security with a Sustainable CPPNM Regime,” prepared for the 2020 IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security, February 2020, https://media.nti.org/documents/IAEA_CN_278_95_Neakrase.pdf.

A. Promote the A/CPPNM as the Foundational Element of the Global Nuclear Security Architecture

The A/CPPNM is the only legally binding international agreement that requires countries to protect their civilian nuclear materials and facilities from theft or sabotage and is therefore foundational to the global nuclear security architecture. The 2027 RevCon will be an opportunity to emphasize the A/CPPNM's vital role in nuclear security and highlight the benefits of becoming a party to the treaty, even for states without nuclear materials or facilities.

B. Build a Strong, Effective, and Sustainable A/CPPNM Regime

States Parties should use the RevCon to continue to build a strong, effective, and sustainable A/CPPNM regime that is universal, fully implemented, and can maintain its relevance into the future as the prevailing situation inevitably changes. To build a strong, effective, and sustainable A/CPPNM regime, the RevCon should have the following objectives:

- *Universalization*: States Parties should use the RevCon to work toward achieving the remaining ratifications necessary for the A/CPPNM to replace the original CPPNM. Participation of non-parties in the RevCon supports this objective.
- *Strengthened implementation*: States Parties should use the RevCon to strengthen implementation of the A/CPPNM by facilitating substantive discussions in which States Parties share information about security progress, implementation challenges, best practices, and lessons learned. Substantive discussions will be enhanced by participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and nuclear industry. States Parties should also fulfill their Article 14 obligation to submit information to the IAEA on laws and regulations giving effect to the A/CPPNM or update prior submissions.
- *Continuity and sustainability*: States Parties should once again request that the IAEA convene a future RevCon, recognizing the need for treaty implementation to evolve as the prevailing situation evolves and for States Parties to share lessons with one another on how they are meeting new and emerging challenges.

C. Provide a vehicle for regular dialogue on treaty implementation and nuclear security

Since the end of the Nuclear Security Summits in 2016, attention on nuclear security has waned, particularly at senior levels of government as other issues such as climate change, the global pandemic, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have taken higher priority. The 2027 RevCon and the 2028 IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security (ICONS) are the next major opportunities to focus global high-level political attention on nuclear security both for reducing

the risk of non-state actor threats and for supporting the expansion of peaceful uses of nuclear technology for energy security and achieving sustainable development goals.

The A/CPPNM RevCon and ICONS have different but complementary roles. ICONS cannot be a substitute for a formal review of the A/CPPNM and a dialogue on its implementation. Likewise, the A/CPPNM RevCon cannot be a substitute for the broad and inclusive nature of ICONS, which includes all IAEA Member States (not just States Parties to the A/CPPNM) and a more robust interdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder programme agenda. Care should be taken to identify clear goals and objectives for each conference, so they can add unique and distinct value to global nuclear security dialogue.

D. Set a positive precedent for future review conferences, including a decision to hold additional review conferences in the future

The 2022 RevCon provided a firm basis on which to plan the second RevCon and the substantive discussions during the 2022 RevCon demonstrated the RevCon's value for States Parties. Importantly, the outcome document reflected the request of a majority of States Parties to the IAEA to convene a second RevCon no later than six years after the first RevCon. The 2027 RevCon should be designed to demonstrate the continued value of regular RevCons to strengthen implementation of the A/CPPNM, maintain attention on nuclear security, and provide information sharing. States Parties should once again request that the IAEA convene another RevCon.

III. REVCON DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The design of the RevCon will determine whether States Parties achieve the RevCon goals and objectives, including demonstrating the value of regular RevCons. The design of the RevCon should ensure that it is *inclusive* and reflects diverse perspectives; *informative*, providing an opportunity for dialogue that is useful to States Parties as they implement the treaty and to non-parties as they take steps to ratify the treaty; *substantive*, taking advantage of the broad language of Article 16 to design an agenda that enables in-depth dialogue on relevant nuclear security topics; *constructive*, with a collaborative and open atmosphere that helps build strong networks, strengthens trust, opens opportunities for further collaboration, and improves the likelihood of achieving consensus.

A. Rules of Procedure and Participation

The RevCon should be inclusive and reflect the different perspectives and roles of a variety of stakeholders and elevate underrepresented diverse regional and national voices.

- Participation of *non-parties* serves the universalization objective because the RevCon can highlight the benefits of becoming a party to the A/CPPNM and provide a venue to hear how other countries overcame challenges to doing so themselves.

- Participation of *NGOs* strengthens substantive discussions by incorporating research and analysis on topics such as emerging technologies that States Parties might not otherwise be exposed to. A process for NGOs to apply to participate should begin early to avoid the delays that led up to the 2022 RevCon and the presence of NGOs on the 2022 list should not be relitigated.
- Participation of *IGOs* like the United Nations Office of Crimes and Drugs (UNODC), and INTERPOL can highlight assistance opportunities that support becoming party to or implementing the A/CPPNM, for example through regulatory assistance and capacity building.
- Participation of *industry and operators* supports discussion of implementation challenges from an operational perspective.

In preparation for the 2022 RevCon, States Parties spent considerable time debating participation rules. There is no reason to reopen these discussions.

B. Elements of the Review

The RevCon must enable review of implementation and adequacy of the A/CPPNM in the light of the prevailing situation. The review is not limited to the text's operative parts and covers the preamble and annexes. Elements of the review can be reflected in national statements, topical discussions, side events, and the outcome document.

- *Implementation*: A review of implementation should not be a formal reporting or assessment exercise. Rather, States Parties should discuss how they are interpreting and putting into practice the A/CPPNM, including sharing progress made, lessons learned, implementation challenges, and ideas to address those challenges. Review of implementation should reflect national and regional perspectives and experiences.
- *Adequacy*: States Parties should consider whether the A/CPPNM should be interpreted as an evergreen document that does not require amendment as the prevailing situation changes. The A/CPPNM provides high-level nuclear security objectives and requirements but does not identify specific risks or practices. For example, the theft of nuclear materials and sabotage of nuclear facilities can be effectuated through armed attackers, bombs, drones, cyber-attacks, compromise by AI, or other means. States Parties can agree that while implementation must evolve as the prevailing situation evolves, the text is broad enough to capture evolving risks and practices without amendment and is therefore adequate.
- *Prevailing Situation*: A discussion of the prevailing situation is an opportunity to discuss trends and emerging challenges impacting nuclear security, including major changes since the 2022 RevCon and anticipated changes in the future. States Parties should assess

the prevailing situation at national, regional, and global levels, which might differ. Care should be taken not to get sidetracked by geopolitical tensions and polarization.

The RevCon programme, presentations, and outcome document should once again not be limited to a narrow definition of “physical protection” as some States Parties have asserted. The operative text cover other areas such as international cooperation and criminalization and the inclusion of Article 2A’s list of “Fundamental Principles,” which was introduced in the Amendment, reflects other elements of nuclear security, such as security culture, emergency response, and layers of protection such as “structural or other technical, personnel and organizational.” Article 16.1 also directs States Parties to review the preamble, which states that the A/CPPNM “complement[s] the safe use, storage and transport of nuclear material and the safe operation of nuclear facilities,” a nod to the safety-security interface. Because the text does not spell out specific theft or sabotage scenarios or possible drivers of risk, the A/CPPNM is broad enough to capture a range of topics, including cyberattacks, which can degrade physical protection systems, AI, and the nuclear security implications of expansion of nuclear power.

C. Programme

The organization of the 2022 RevCon programme³ around thematic areas rather than a provision-by-provision review was important to the RevCon’s success because it enabled an interesting and substantive discussion. The incorporation of presentations by States an opportunity for States Parties to share a range of perspectives and led to a more inclusive and interactive environment. However, Africa and Latin America were underrepresented regions, and the diversity of presenters in the thematic sessions can be improved in 2027. A dedicated panel on regional perspectives could also highlight the diverse experiences of nuclear security around the world. Gender, racial, and age diversity should also be encouraged.

States Parties should consider adding a session focused on the prevailing situation, which would provide a stronger foundation for discussion of implementation and adequacy. Because some topics relevant to the prevailing situation such as emerging technology might benefit from NGO or industry presence, while other topics might be considered sensitive, the session could be bifurcated between an open session with NGO participation and a private session without NGO participation.

Scenario-Based Policy Discussions (SBPD) are useful vehicles to highlight the importance of the A/CPPNM and should be incorporated again in 2027. The IAEA and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (the IAEA's long-time collaborator on SBPDs), assuming the IAEA chooses to continue this collaboration, should refresh the scenario so that it is not repetitive of previously used scenarios at the 2020 and 2024 ICONS, the 2022 RevCon, and the Nuclear Security

³ [IAEA ICONS Programme](#)

Summits. The SBPD could, for instance, demonstrate how the A/CPPNM adapts to changes to the prevailing situation.

D. Deliverables

The RevCon can be a vehicle for sustained attention, progress, and dialogue if it encourages States Parties to highlight progress, make new commitments, set ambitious principles for strengthening nuclear security, and agree to the next RevCon. There are several vehicles for these expressions of progress and commitment:

National Statements can be used to reflect State Parties' commitment to nuclear security. Elements of a strong national statement include:⁴

- Major steps taken to implement the A/CPPNM (e.g., submission of Article 14.1 information to the IAEA)
- New commitments to enhance nuclear security (e.g., updated regulations; implemented security culture program)
- Previous nuclear security accomplishments and progress made (e.g., converted all reactors from using HEU fuel to LEU fuel)
- Statements reinforcing nuclear security norms (e.g., a State Party without nuclear materials or facilities noting the importance of the A/CPPNM for all states)
- Requests for assistance (e.g., host an IAEA International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) mission)
- Determination (or not) of adequacy of the A/CPPNM
- Request for a future RevCon
- Lessons learned from nuclear security incidents

Joint Statements allow States Parties with similar interests, perspectives, or challenges to jointly state commitments to strengthening a particular nuclear security norm or set of practices. Joint statements made by countries during the Nuclear Security Summits were issued as [IAEA Informational Circulars \(INFCIRC\)](#)s, some of which are still active, such as insider threats ([INFCIRC/908](#)), transport security ([INFCIRC/909](#)), and, perhaps with the help of some recent efforts by Norway and the United States, HEU minimization ([INFCIRC/912](#)). At the 2024 ICONS, States Parties agreed to two new Joint Statements that have become INFCIRCs, one on the role of nuclear security in harnessing the power of nuclear energy ([INFCIRC/1217](#)) and one on advanced nuclear energy technologies ([INFCIRC/1216](#)). The RevCon could be an opportunity to seek additional signatories to nuclear security INFCIRCs, in addition to developing new joint statements.

⁴ In advance of the PrepCom, the United States offered a proposed national statement template for States Parties to use. The template included: statements of progress made, observations about changes to the prevailing situation, statements about how the State Party's laws and regulations have addressed those changes, and a statement of the adequacy of the A/CPPNM.

E. Outcome Document

The Outcome Document will be an important expression of States Parties' commitment to the A/CPPNM as the foundational document that continues to have significance and relevance to strengthening global nuclear security in an evolving world. The outcome document can both reflect this commitment and acknowledge the complex set of threats, technologies, and contexts that physical protection (and nuclear security) must consider.

The 2022 outcome document was subject to extensive negotiations as States Parties were beginning from a blank slate and did not want to repeat the short outcome document that was agreed at the 1997 RevCon for the original CPPNM. The 2022 RevCon outcome document was comprehensive and organized thematically. The 2027 RevCon can use the 2022 outcome document as a baseline and the preparatory process can identify ways to strengthen and update the text.

States Parties should begin the analysis of the outcome document to identify priority areas that could benefit from more robust and up-to-date language, particularly in the areas of emerging technology and expansion of nuclear power. States Parties can review IAEA General Conference nuclear security resolutions, the near-final drafts of the 2024 ICONS ministerial declaration (which did not achieve consensus), and the ICONS co-president statement for possible updates. Regional discussions would benefit this process, so that the outcome document can reflect a more diverse and inclusive range of perspectives.

States parties should also consider options for outcomes if they are unable to reach consensus.

F. Request for the Next RevCon

As in 2022, the most important outcome of the RevCon will be a request for another RevCon. To serve as a vehicle for nuclear security progress and dialogue and to help build a strong, effective, and sustainable treaty regime, the RevCon must become regularized.⁵

To request the next RevCon, States Parties can submit to the IAEA a *note verbale* using the same language as the 2022 request, which the IAEA published as INFCIRC/982.⁶ This request can be reflected in the outcome document as it was in 2022. A more ambitious approach would be for States Parties to use as a model the 1995 Decision on Strengthening the Review Process of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and agree to make regular review conferences a permanent feature, with each review conference setting the date for successive ones.

⁵ Samantha Neakrase, "Strengthening Nuclear Security With a Sustainable CPPNM Regime," *Arms Control Today*, June 2019, at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-06/features/strengthening-nuclear-security-sustainable-cppnm-regime>.

⁶ IAEA Information Circular (INFCIRC) 982, at https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/infcircs/2022/infcirc982_up.pdf.

IV. PREPARATORY PROCESS

To achieve a successful and substantive RevCon as outlined above, planning must begin as soon as possible. The preparations for the 2022 RevCon were extremely robust and began in late 2018.

November 9-10, 2017	Technical Meeting of the CPPNM and A/CPPNM Points of Contacts calls for an information planning meeting in December 2018
September 2018	The IAEA General Conference Nuclear Security Resolution calls on the Director General to consult with States Parties on planning for the RevCon
December 11-12, 2018	Informal Meeting of the States Parties approves a Provisional Roadmap
July 22-25, 2019	First Legal and Technical Expert Group Meeting
November 12-14, 2019	Second Legal and Technical Expert Group Meeting
December 7-11, 2020	Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) (part 1)
February 1, 2021	PrepCom (part 2)
2021	Original RevCon date, postponed to 2022 due to COVID
March 28-April 1, 2022	RevCon

The preparatory process for 2027 does not need to fully replicate the preparations for the 2022 RevCon. When planning began in 2018, States Parties started with a blank slate. Much of the preparatory process focused on agreeing to rules of procedure, developing the programme, and deliberating on the participation of states not party to the A/CPPNM, NGOs, IGOs, and industry. For the 2027 RevCon, States Parties can agree early on to use the same rules of procedure and participation guidelines as 2022 and to use the 2022 Programme and outcome document as starting points for discussion. Dispensing with these topics earlier in the process does not mean there should be fewer preparatory meetings. Instead, doing so leaves room for more substantive discussions as well as earlier negotiation of the outcome document.

A. September POC Meeting

The IAEA cannot begin these preparations without direction from the States Parties. The next opportunity for States Parties to provide this direction is the next POC meeting in September 2025. The IAEA can add a session on RevCon planning to the POC meeting agenda and request State Parties to prepare to provide their input in that session. The IAEA could also host a separate informal meeting of States Parties in September to discuss next steps. In 2018, States Parties added an additional day to the POC meeting for this purpose and could do so again at the September POC meeting.

States Parties should use the September meeting to (i) agree on a roadmap for the preparatory process, (ii) reach preliminary agreement to use the 2022 rules of procedure and participation

guidelines, and (iii) set a deadline by which to submit nominations for co-chairs of the expert groups (if any) and the PrepCom, and co-presidents of the RevCon.

Failing to take these steps at the September POC meeting risks losing valuable planning time during the remainder of 2025. Without further direction from States Parties, the IAEA will likely hold only a single PrepCom in 2026 to address procedural matters and set the programme. This will be a lost opportunity for substantive dialogue among States Parties and will reduce the likelihood of a substantive RevCon.

B. Other Elements of the Preparatory Process

The following are proposed elements for 2027 RevCon preparations after the POC meeting:

- *Legal and Technical Expert Group Meetings (Q4 2025 and Q2 2026)*: States Parties can once again incorporate expert group meetings to engage in substantive dialogue on thematic areas of the A/CPPNM, including implementation, adequacy, and changes to the prevailing situation. States Parties could agree on the draft rules of procedure and draft programme to submit to the PrepCom, noting adjustments from the 2022 versions.
- *Regional and Topical Working Groups (2026)*: In addition to, or in place of the legal and technical experts group meetings, regional or topical working groups could meet in 2026 to review implementation and adequacy of the A/CPPNM for specific thematic areas or through a regional lens and identify changes to the prevailing situation. The topical working groups could mirror the thematic areas of the programme (e.g., physical protection, international cooperation, criminalization, and universalization). Regional working groups, led by a country in the region, could identify unique regional challenges and changes to the prevailing regional situation. Regional and topical working groups could present their findings to the PrepCom, which could then be incorporated into the thematic discussions in the programme and into negotiations on the outcome document.
- *IAEA Regional Meetings (2026)*: In advance of the 2022 RevCon, the IAEA held a series of regional meetings to discuss universalization and implementation of the A/CPPNM. These meetings provided an added educational benefit and set the stage for the RevCon. The RevCon co-presidents could request these again, with a focus on eliciting regional perspectives on implementation challenges and nuclear security trends and the goal of encouraging more diverse presentations in the thematic sessions.
- *PrepCom (Q4 2026)*: At the PrepCom, States Parties will agree on the rules of procedure and the programme, which, if decided early, will allow the PrepCom to focus on substantive discussions and begin negotiations of the outcome document.

V. CONCLUSION

States Parties have an opportunity to design a substantive RevCon that can help continue to build a strong, effective, and sustainable treaty regime that helps States Parties strengthen implementation, serves as a vehicle for nuclear security progress and dialogue, and provides regular opportunities for high-level attention to strengthen the global nuclear security architecture. However, to achieve this vision, States Parties must provide direction to the IAEA as soon as possible so the preparatory process itself can be substantive and productive and lead to a successful RevCon.