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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2010

## **International Atomic Energy Agency Approves Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank**

**CNS Experts Available for Comment**

By a vote of 28 in favor and six abstentions the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors today authorized the creation of an IAEA owned and operated low-enriched uranium (LEU) bank, to fuel nuclear power plants, that could be accessed by eligible IAEA member states in case of a disruption of normal supply due to exceptional reasons. The LEU bank could be located in one or more IAEA member states, though thus far only Kazakhstan has offered to host the bank. The enterprise is funded by more than \$150 million in pledged contributions from the non-profit Nuclear Threat Initiative, and the governments of the United States, the European Union member states, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Norway.

Proponents of an LEU bank maintain that it will provide an assurance of supply, encouraging states to rely on the international market for enriched uranium, particularly at a time when more countries are considering relying on nuclear power generation. As a result, states may have less incentive to develop costly national uranium enrichment facilities. Such facilities could be used to enrich uranium beyond the level typically needed for power generation to the high levels required for nuclear weapons. As a result, LEU reserves are seen as one element of a more effective international nonproliferation architecture at a time when more states are expected to develop nuclear energy programs.

Some governments are skeptical of the fuel bank plan and are concerned that it represents an early step in curtailing the rights of all states to pursue their own nuclear fuel cycle options, in accordance with the provisions of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Such skepticism has held up approval of the fuel bank since it reached the required \$150 million funding threshold in March 2009.

For more information on the LEU reserve approved by the IAEA, please contact:

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