
UN's Atomic Energy Agency Singles Out Brazil as Example of Cooperation

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The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed El Baradei, praised Brazil's nuclear program saying that the Brazilian atomic energy program did not cause the same concern as in other countries.

The chief of the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency made his comments, earlier this week, while visiting in Brazil a uranium enrichment plant capable of producing fuel for nuclear reactors.

"Our inspectors are here all the time, and they are working in close cooperation with the Brazilian authorities" he said - implicitly comparing it with lesser access to Iran's program, which has been a source of concern to the US and European countries.

A US intelligence review released Wednesday concluded that Iran stopped developing atomic weapons in 2003. El Baradei called the report a "sigh of relief" because its findings jibed with his agency's conclusions.

Brazil has two operating nuclear plants and in June restarted work on long-planned third plant, stalled since the 1980s by lack of funds.

"Lately, we see a lot of interest into the expansion of nuclear power because of concerns about climate change, because of the competition for gas and oil, because of the increased need for energy to develop," said El Baradei while touring the plant in Resende, 165 kilometers northwest of Rio de Janeiro.

"We also need to understand that nuclear in many ways provides energy independence."

El Baradei said the agency is working closely with Brazil "to ensure that all nuclear facilities in Brazil are used in a safe, secure way and exclusively for peaceful purposes".

Brazil has signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and Brazil's constitution bans the military use of nuclear energy. Brazil also has the world's sixth-largest uranium reserves and the largest nuclear power industry in Latin America.

Brazil plans as many as seven new atomic plants to reduce its dependence on oil and hydroelectric power and plans to export enriched uranium to provide energy for other countries.

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