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IAEA-EURATOM: The third round of IAEA-EURATOM negotiations on safeguards required by the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) begins today, but an early agreement may not be possible.

The NPT, which entered into force in March 1970, requires the IAEA to verify that non-nuclear-weapon adherents do not divert fissionable materials from peaceful applications. These verification arrangements were to be in effect by next month, but they have been delayed for a number of reasons. The arrangements between the IAEA and EURATOM are the most sensitive, because they must take into account the only regional safeguards system in existence and involve several states with advanced non-military nuclear programs.

In an effort to move the negotiations with EURATOM along, the IAEA staff recently offered a forthcoming set of proposals to accept essentially the EURATOM position that, as a matter of routine, IAEA personnel need only verify EURATOM records rather than inspect civilian nuclear operations. West German industrialists have been especially insistent on this procedure, maintaining that more rigorous IAEA inspections could put them at a commercial disadvantage vis-a-vis nuclear competitors such as France. Bonn will not ratify the NPT until it is satisfied with the terms of the safeguards agreement.

France, which is not a party to the NPT nor to the talks with the IAEA, has lately been hinting that it may stir up new problems for its EURATOM partners. Paris professes to have difficulty with the EURATOM position on the IAEA's policing of international transfers of fissionable materials. The French also allege that any sanctions invoked against EURATOM as a community might affect France even though it is not a party to the agreement with the IAEA.

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The IAEA-EURATOM negotiations are also being closely watched by Tokyo. The Japanese want the safeguards on their facilities to be no more onerous than those on EURATOM and have conditioned their ratification of the NPT on this. The Soviets have recently maintained a low profile on safeguards questions, but Moscow also will be chary of granting too privileged a position to EURATOM. [REDACTED]

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