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INTERNATIONAL INTERLABORATORY COMPARISON EXERCISES FOR IAEA SAFEGUARDS

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The mission of IAEA safeguards is to deter, through early detection, the diversion of nuclear materials from peaceful uses, and to detect undeclared nuclear material and activities. To that end, several verification processes are involved, including the analytical characterization of nuclear material and environmental samples taken in the field by IAEA inspectors. To process these numerous samples with the quality and timeliness required, the IAEA relies on its own laboratories, operated by the Office of Safeguards Analytical Services (SGAS), Department of Safeguards, and on an international Network of Analytical Laboratories (NWAL). SGAS is responsible for the coordination of NWAL, which includes a responsibility to demonstrate to IAEA safeguards evaluators that the laboratories are performing to the required accuracy for safeguards measurements. One of the most efficient tools for verifying the analytical performance of a laboratory is participation in proficiency testing by means of interlaboratory comparison exercises. SGAS therefore organizes frequent exercises covering the major analytical techniques applicable to safeguards samples, the most established scheme being the Nuclear Material Round Robin, which has been running for almost a decade.