

The primary mission of the “Radioactive Waste and Clean-up” division is to propose, develop and assess solutions for a safe, acceptable and sustainable management of radioactive waste.

Managing the past and preparing the future.

We believe that nuclear energy will be necessary for the sustainable development of mankind in the 21st century, but we well understand that it would not be maintained if it is not proven that within benefits of nuclear energy a better protection of the environment is included.

“The scientists hesitate to make assertions in public because, by definition, they are never completely sure to be right. This behavior goes hand in hand with the attitude of humility and rigor, which characterizes the scientific spirit. But vis-a-vis with the militants who affirm without any other proof than their personal conviction, the scientist is in difficulty. The two languages are incompatible. However, we scientists, have the duty to defend the truth against the forgers. I consider that we must be able to moderate our prudence when the truth is obviously threatened: the respect of the truth implies to care with its defense.”

Translated from Christian de Duve, Nobel price in medicine, Hors-série Sciences et Avenir, p.6, November 2005

Therefore we claim that the current waste management practices are both technically and from the environmental point of view adequate,

Nevertheless we agree that alternative solutions could consolidate the present waste management. Therefore, the new and innovative reactors, fuel cycle and waste management processes and installations should be designed so that the waste generation can be kept in minimum. In addition to the design, the installations should be operated so as to create less waste; consideration should be given e.g. to keeping water chemistry clean and to other quality factors. SCK•CEN in general and the "Radioactive Waste and Clean-up" division in particular are present in international groups preparing the development of innovative nuclear reactors.

Therefore we also examine or develop new conditioning techniques to allow the responsible bodies to enlarge their scope and to make the best choices. It is the reason why we are testing new conditioning methods for bituminized waste, radioactive sodium or previously separated minor actinides.