

Uranium Mining Legacies Remediation and Renaissance Development: An International Overview.

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For the past 60 years the world's uranium mining industry has demonstrated a very variable record of environmental management, especially when it comes to remediation. Whilst we can now point to some sites as good remediation examples, sadly there are many locations that remain as a legacy from former times with little or no remediation, or even ineffective remediation. With the recent resurgence in interest in nuclear power as a part of the "greenhouse solution" in relation to climate change, uranium mining is going through a renaissance. As consequence uranium mining activity is expanding rapidly and there are concerns that legacy site remediation may be forgotten. Also industry members are keen to see that no new legacies are created that may lead to increased public concerns about the sustainability of mining. Thus there is a real requirement to reduce the real and perceived impacts of the historical operations. In addition, many former uranium mines are being considered for re-development as rising commodity prices make them economically interesting. Some sites are being examined to see if reworking of tailings is viable. Consequently the issue of remediating sites from former times as part of current and new operations, using modern international standards of safety, is a major concern. Also new countries are being drawn into the uranium production cycle for the first time and require assistance from all quarters to ensure that development is carried out in an appropriate manner.

This paper provides a brief overview to show how the International Atomic Energy Agency, the national regulating authorities and the world's uranium mining companies are all working together to address these very important matters in a number of locations.