

Tina Eboka re-elected as HLG-MR vice-chair

Tina Eboka, Group MD of the NTP Group of companies, a subsidiary of the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa), has been re-elected as vice chair of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency High-Level Group on the Security of Supply of Medical Radioisotopes (HLG-MR).



Tina Eboka

The announcement was made at the bi-annual meeting of the HLG-MR that took place in Paris recently. Eboka, who has headed the NTP Group since June 2014, was the first South African to be elected to the HLG-MR role, in 2016.

The High-Level Group on the Security of Medical Radioisotopes was established in 2009 by the OECD's inter-governmental Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) following a worldwide shortage of key medical radioisotope molybdenum-99 (Mo-99).

Mo-99

Mo-99 is used as a precursor for its decay product technetium-99m (Tc-99m). Tc-99m is used in over 40 million imaging procedures each year and plays a critical role in both the diagnosis and management of conditions including heart disease, neuroendocrine conditions, and cancers. Because the isotopes have short half-lives – just 66 hours for Mo-99 and six hours for Tc-99m – they cannot be stored or stockpiled, and must be produced daily in order to meet clinical demand.

Through state-owned company NTP Radioisotopes, South Africa is responsible for more than 20% of all global production

of Mo-99, and is one of the top three Mo-99 producers in the world.

Eboka's election as vice chair in 2016 marked the first time that a major isotope producer was chosen to serve in the HLG-MR executive. "This signalled that isotope producers – who carry the industry – should not take secondary roles in guiding the industry," said NTP Board Chair, Dr Namane Magau. "The re-election confirms Tina's phenomenal leadership talents, and is a continued acknowledgement of NTP Group's key role in global medical radioisotope production."

New chair

Jeff Chamberlin, director at the U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), was elected as the group's new chair.

The OECD HLG-MR is made up of representatives from some 40 governments and international agencies with interests in nuclear technology products, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Although South Africa is not an OECD member, it has been included in the HLG-MR since its inception because of the significant global role it plays in the manufacture and processing of medical radioisotopes.

NTP supplies Mo-99 and other key medical radioisotopes to 50 countries worldwide, and also produces 100% of local requirements. Working with the Department of Health, NTP supports isotope-based diagnosis and treatment at leading state hospitals including Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Pretoria, Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, and the Tygerberg Academic Hospital in the Western Cape.

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