



**Congressional  
Research Service**

Informing the legislative debate since 1914

---

# IAEA Budget and U.S. Contributions: In Brief

Updated April 2, 2021

**Congressional Research Service**

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R44384

## Introduction and Background

The United States has been a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) since the agency's 1957 founding. The IAEA Statute was approved on October 23, 1956, by the Conference on the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which was held at United Nations (U.N.) headquarters.<sup>1</sup> Article II of the Statute, which came into force on July 29, 1957, describes the agency's purpose:

The Agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. It shall ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it or at its request or under its supervision or control is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose.

The IAEA, an autonomous intergovernmental organization that has a relationship agreement with the U.N., has 172 member states, including the United States.<sup>2</sup> The agency's missions include promoting nuclear power, nuclear safety, nuclear security, and nuclear technology for medical and agricultural purposes, as well as implementing safeguards agreements in more than 180 countries.<sup>3</sup> Countries that are not members of the IAEA may still be subject to agency inspections or receive IAEA technical assistance.

The IAEA Board of Governors has 35 member states designated and elected by the General Conference, which consists of representatives of all members and is the IAEA's highest policymaking body. The board meets at the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, Austria, five times per year. The board's roles include making recommendations to the IAEA General Conference regarding the agency's program and budget, as well as appointing the IAEA Director General, with the approval of the General Conference. The General Conference meets annually to approve the agency's program and budget and to decide on other matters brought before it by the Board of Governors, the Director General, and member states. Each member state is represented by one delegate who may be accompanied by alternates and advisers. The General Conference approves the budget as recommended by the board, or returns the budget draft with recommendations to the board for resubmission.<sup>4</sup>

The IAEA Statute requires the agency's Board of Governors, with General Conference approval, to appoint the Director General, who serves for a four-year term and is the IAEA's "chief

---

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent on June 18, 1957 (T.I.A.S. 3873). The International Atomic Energy Statute was approved in P.L. 85-177, August 28, 1957 (22 U.S.C. 2021-2027).

<sup>2</sup> The IAEA is a "related organization" of the United Nations. Its relationship is guided by an agreement signed by both parties in 1957 (INFCIRC/11) that states, "The Agency undertakes to conduct its activities in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations Charter to promote peace and International co-operation, and in conformity with policies of the United Nations furthering the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament and in conformity with any international agreements entered into pursuant to such policies." The Director General of the IAEA is a member of the U.N. Chief Executive Board (CEB) that comprises the heads of U.N. and U.N.-related entities, and regularly participates in the meetings chaired by the U.N. Secretary General.

<sup>3</sup> IAEA safeguards are designed "to provide credible assurance to the international community that nuclear material and other specified items are not diverted from peaceful nuclear uses." (*The Safeguards System of the International Atomic Energy Agency*). The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) requires nonnuclear-weapon states parties to conclude comprehensive IAEA safeguards agreements. Such agreements apply safeguards "on all nuclear material in all nuclear activities in a State" (*IAEA Safeguards Glossary 2001 Edition*, International Nuclear Verification Series No. 3). The NPT defines a nuclear-weapon state as "one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device" prior to January 1, 1967. These states are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. All other countries are nonnuclear-weapon states.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the organization, structure, and programs of the IAEA, see <https://www.iaea.org>.

administrative officer” required to perform “duties in accordance with regulations” adopted by the board. The Director General is also “responsible for the appointment, organization, and functioning” of the IAEA staff.<sup>5</sup> In addition to preparing the agency’s annual budget estimate, the Director General’s responsibilities include “providing overall policy coordination, external relations with [IAEA] Member States and stakeholders, policy planning and strategy, as well as coordinating the activities” of offices which “liaise with the United Nations and its agencies.”<sup>6</sup> The current and sixth IAEA Director General, Argentinian diplomat Rafael Grossi, was appointed in December 2019 for a term of four years.

## IAEA Budget Process and 2021 Funding

According to the IAEA Statute, the board

shall apportion the expenses among members in accordance with a scale that is fixed by the General Conference as guided by United Nations principles adopted in assessing contributions of member states to the regular budget of the United Nations.<sup>7</sup>

The IAEA budget (typically estimated both in euros and U.S. dollars) is determined on a biannual calendar year basis; calendar year 2020 is the first year of the 2020-2021 biennium. The IAEA budget consists of three main parts: the regular operating budget, the Technical Cooperation Fund, and extrabudgetary contributions. For 2021, the IAEA’s regular budget assessment is \$387 million.<sup>8</sup> The IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) target figure for 2021 was \$89.6 million.<sup>9</sup>

The Director General prepares the budget estimate and sends it to the Board of Governors. After approving the budget, the board sends the budget to the General Conference for approval. If the General Conference does not approve the budget, the Conference provides recommendations and sends the budget proposal back to the board. The General Conference approves the board’s final budget proposal. Typically, the Conference approves the following year’s budget each September. Both General Conference and Board of Governors decisions regarding the IAEA budget require a two-thirds majority of those present and voting.

The TCF is an IAEA technical assistance program meant to help member states share and develop capacity in the peaceful use of nuclear science.<sup>10</sup> The IAEA Board of Governors sets annual target amounts for each member state’s contribution to the TCF, based on the state’s assessed portion of the regular budget.<sup>11</sup> The TCF provides assistance in seven areas: health and nutrition; food and agriculture; water and the environment; industrial applications/radiation technology; energy; nuclear knowledge development and management; and nuclear safety and security.

---

<sup>5</sup> The Statute of the IAEA Article VII A and B.

<sup>6</sup> The Statute of the IAEA Article XIV A; “Director General’s Office,” <https://www.iaea.org/about/organizational-structure/offices-reporting-to-the-director-general/director-generals-office>.

<sup>7</sup> The Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Article XIV: Finance, D. The U.N. General Assembly negotiates a scale of assessments for the regular budget every two years based on a country’s capacity to pay. The United States is currently assessed at 22% of the U.N. regular budget, the highest of any of the U.N. member states.

<sup>8</sup> IAEA General Conference, Regular Budget Appropriations for 2021, GC(64)/RES/5.

<sup>9</sup> “The Agency’s Budget Update for 2021,” IAEA, GC(64)/2.

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program website, <https://www.iaea.org/services/technical-cooperation-programme>.

<sup>11</sup> The United States’ assessment for 2021 is 22.4 million euros. IAEA General Conference, *Report on Contributions Pledged to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2021*, September 24, 2020, GC(64)/17/Rev.1.

In addition, member states make extrabudgetary voluntary contributions to the IAEA, which are meant to supplement the agency's work. Such contributions may go to the Technical Cooperation Extrabudgetary Fund, the Extrabudgetary Program Fund, or the IAEA Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) Fuel Bank. In-kind contributions may include donation of equipment or personnel.

The extrabudgetary TCF funding supports technical cooperation projects. The Extrabudgetary Program Fund is used to pay for specific IAEA projects. For example, 36 member states have contributed extrabudgetary monetary and in-kind support for a program called ReNuAL, which upgrades the IAEA Nuclear Applications Laboratories.<sup>12</sup> The Extrabudgetary Program Fund also includes the Nuclear Security Fund and the Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) fund.

The Nuclear Security Fund (NSF) is an extrabudgetary voluntary fund that supports the IAEA's activities to bolster member states' nuclear security.<sup>13</sup> Since 2009, a small portion of the Nuclear Security program's operating costs is part of the general IAEA budget, but the majority of funds continue to be dependent on voluntary extrabudgetary contributions. At the February 2020 Nuclear Security Conference, member states announced \$20 million in voluntary contributions to the Nuclear Security Fund.<sup>14</sup>

The PUI fund is for high-priority safety, security, and health cooperation projects such as providing diagnostic equipment and training assistance to help respond to disease outbreaks.<sup>15</sup> IAEA member states may also make voluntary contributions to support additional IAEA safeguards missions, such as monitoring Iranian implementation of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The IAEA created a separate extrabudgetary fund for the Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) Fuel Bank. Member states and the U.S. nongovernmental organization the Nuclear Threat Initiative donated \$150 million total in voluntary contributions to meet the costs of establishing the IAEA Fuel Bank and operating it for 20 years.<sup>16</sup> The United States contributed \$49 million to this project.

## U.S. Contributions to IAEA

The United States is the largest financial contributor to the IAEA, providing an estimated \$200 million annually in assessed and voluntary contributions. The share of U.S. assessed contributions is 25.3% of the regular IAEA budget.<sup>17</sup>

Congress appropriates assessed U.S. contributions to the IAEA's regular budget through the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account in annual Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (SFOPS) appropriations bills. **Table 1** highlights U.S.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.iaea.org/about/organizational-structure/department-of-nuclear-sciences-and-applications/seibersdorf-laboratories/reual>.

<sup>13</sup> See also GAO Report 19-429, Nuclear Security: The International Atomic Energy Agency Could Improve Priority Setting, Performance Measures, and Funding Stabilization, July 29, 2019, <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-429?source=ra>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/countries-to-provide-us-20-million-to-iaea-nuclear-security-fund>.

<sup>15</sup> "Peaceful Uses Initiative," Department of State website, <https://www.state.gov/peaceful-uses-initiative/>; see also <https://www.iaea.org/topics/covid-19/iaea-assistance-for-the-rapid-detection-and-management-of-covid-19>.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.iaea.org/topics/iaea-low-enriched-uranium-bank>.

<sup>17</sup> Other top IAEA contributors and their 2021-assessed rates are China (11.6%), Japan (8.2%), Germany (5.9%), France (4.3%), United Kingdom (4.4%), Brazil (2.8%), Canada (2.6%), the Russian Federation (2.4%), and Spain (2%). IAEA General Conference Resolution, "Scale of assessment of member states' contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2021," September 2020, GC(64)/RES/8.

assessed contributions to IAEA from FY2017 to FY2021; U.S. payments have ranged from \$101.1 to \$107.5 million.

**Table 1. U.S. Contributions to the IAEA’s Regular Budget Assessment, FY2017-FY2021 Request**

(current U.S. \$ in thousands)

FY2017 actual	FY2018 actual	FY2019 actual	FY2020 estimate	FY2021 request
101,095	108,338	104,262	104,490	107,562

**Source:** Department of State Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ), Appendix I, various years.

Assessed U.S. contributions to the IAEA may vary by year for a number of reasons, including agency budget modifications, changes to the U.S. assessment, and fluctuating exchange rates (IAEA assessment levels are calculated based on Euros instead of dollars). At times, the United States may be behind in its assessed payments due to the differences between the IAEA fiscal year (January 1-December 31) and the U.S. fiscal year (October 1-September 30).<sup>18</sup>

In addition, Congress generally appropriates \$15-\$20 million annually for IAEA contributions within the budgets of the Department of Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Geological Survey; the most consistent amount within these other agencies is the approximately \$10 million each year from Department of Energy funds.<sup>19</sup>

Most U.S. voluntary contributions are provided from the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) account within annual SFOPS appropriations. As shown in **Table 2**, since FY2017, Congress has appropriated \$94.8 million per year to IAEA through the NADR account.

**Table 2. U.S. Voluntary Contributions to IAEA, FY2017-FY2021 Request**

(current U.S. \$ in millions)

FY2017 actual	FY2018 actual	FY2019 actual	FY2020 estimated	FY2021 request
94.8	94.8	94.8	94.8	88.0

**Source:** Department of State CBJs, SFOPS appropriations acts and explanatory statements.

The United States primarily directs its voluntary (extrabudgetary) IAEA contributions to the TCF. According to the State Department, the United States has contributed over \$240 million to that fund since 2010.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> U.S. payments may also be delayed due to partially deferred payments from the 1980s, which cause a portion of the U.S. IAEA assessment (70%) to be delayed by a year. For example, most calendar year 2019 U.S. IAEA assessments are paid with U.S. FY2020 funds.

<sup>19</sup> For a description of these activities, see *U.S. Contributions to International Organizations, 2019*, Department of State, September 15, 2020, at <https://www.state.gov/u-s-contributions-to-international-organizations/>.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. statement as delivered by Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, “IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Agenda Item 2: Report of the Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee,” Vienna, Austria, November 18, 2020. <https://vienna.usmission.gov/iaea-bog-u-s-on-the-report-of-the-tacc/>.

The Peaceful Use Initiative (PUI) Fund, which the IAEA established in 2010, is another major recipient of U.S. extrabudgetary funds. The United States announced at the 2010 NPT Review Conference that it would contribute \$50 million over five years to PUI. In 2015, the United States renewed this pledge for another five years. In November 2020, the United States announced that it would provide an additional \$50 million to the PUI Fund through 2024.<sup>21</sup>

Section 307 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, requires the United States to withhold the U.S. proportionate share for certain IAEA programs or projects in Cuba. The United States is not required to withhold funds for programs or projects that provide for the discontinuation, dismantling, or safety inspection of nuclear facilities or related materials, or for the IAEA application of safeguards in Cuba. Section 307 does not require withholding of U.S. contributions with respect to programs for Iran.<sup>22</sup>

## **Author Information**

Paul K. Kerr  
Specialist in Nonproliferation

Luisa Blanchfield  
Specialist in International Relations

Mary Beth D. Nikitin  
Specialist in Nonproliferation

---

## **Disclaimer**

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. The United States has contributed \$117 million in voluntary contributions to the PUI.

<sup>22</sup> Email communications with Department of State officials, February 4, 2016.