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YELLOWCAKE PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION AT THE SIERRA PINTADA MINE, ARGENTINA: LACK OF SOCIAL LICENCE

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The Sierra Pintada uranium mine was in production between 1975 and 1995 when the operations were stopped for economic reasons. In 2004, a project was presented to the provincial authorities proposing the recommencement of production and the concomitant fulfilment of environmental liabilities. The response of the authorities was that before the recommencement of productive activities, the operator (Comisión Nacional de Energía Atómica) had to manage the existing environmental liabilities and establish a scale of priority for their management based on their characteristics. In 2006, a project was presented for the management of environmental liabilities as a first priority, which was technically approved although the required public hearing did not materialize. As a result, authorization was not granted to commence environmental management tasks. In 2014, a new project for remediation was presented and is being evaluated by the provincial authorities. During the entire period of operation and until the cessation of activities, Sierra Pintada had had general approvals for its normal operation. During the time of trying to resume production in synchrony with the remediation, the Government and the social licence were revoked. The mine site became a deposit with apparent resources, with all the facilities needed to resume production, but without authorization to operate. In this context, the future of the project is uncertain.

Country or International Organization

Argentina

Primary author: Mr DIEGUEZ, Sergio (National Commission of Atomic Energy)

Presenter: Mr DIEGUEZ, Sergio (National Commission of Atomic Energy)

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