



Council of the
European Union

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ENV 122
ENER 42
UNECE 2
RELEX 125

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Environmental concerns regarding Belarus nuclear power plant
- Information from the Lithuanian delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Lithuanian delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 28 February 2017.

Environmental concerns regarding Belarus nuclear power plant**- Information from the Lithuanian delegation -**

Belarus is building its first nuclear power plant (NPP), designed and constructed by the Russian state nuclear energy corporation Rosatom (design AES-2006), in the north-western part of Belarus, Grodno oblast, near Ostrovets. The distance from the construction site to the Lithuanian capital Vilnius is 40 km.

On a number of occasions Lithuania has raised concerns that implementation of the Belarus NPP project is not in line with the Espoo¹ and the Aarhus² Conventions: the site was selected without transboundary environmental impact assessment (EIA) and the transboundary EIA with Lithuania is still pending; the assessment of population density around the Belarus NPP does not include Vilnius (over 0.5 million people); there is a potential threat of radiological impact from any major accident on transboundary waters, Lithuania's environment and population have not been assessed.

In 2014, the Meetings of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the Aarhus Convention stated that Belarus was not developing the NPP project in compliance with the aforementioned Conventions. Among the recommendations of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention, Belarus was requested '*to invite the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for a Site and External Events Design (SEED) mission with a view to evaluating the site selection criteria*'. However, the SEED mission hosted in Belarus on 16-20 January 2017 has not been tasked to assess site-related issues. In addition, although Belarus reported that the stress tests for the Ostrovets NPP have been carried out, the European Commission has not yet received the national report from Belarus in order to start the peer review process of the stress tests.

¹ UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, decision of Belarus non-compliance VI/2
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/documents/2014/EIA/MOP/ECE_MP.EIA_20_Add.1%2088%92ECE_MP.EIA_SEA_4_Add.1_e.pdf

² UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, decision of Belarus non-compliance V/9c
https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/env/pp/mop5/Documents/Post_session_docs/ece_mp_pp_2014_2_add.1_eng.pdf

Lithuania calls on Belarus to suspend the construction works of the Ostrovets NPP and to appoint international experts for the review of the project, paying special attention to site investigation and selection. In particular, the following steps must be taken to ensure international scrutiny of the Belarus NPP project and to restore mutual confidence:

- Perform the stress tests for the Belarus NPP according to the EU methodology, as agreed with the European Commission on 23 June 2011, by signing a declaration on the stress tests.
- Accomplish the IAEA SEED mission in its full scope with a view to evaluating the site selection criteria, as recommended by the Espoo Convention Meeting of the Parties.
- Establish, together with Lithuania, an international experts' commission, as suggested by the Implementation Committee of the Espoo Convention.
- Ensure international supervision of the implementation of the Belarus NPP project in order to ensure compliance with international environmental and nuclear safety standards.

Nuclear and environmental safety at the European borders is a common European concern. Lithuania welcomes the support extended in this regard by the High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič in their letter of 31 January. Lithuania also welcomes the resolution of 24 November 2016 adopted by the European Parliament, calling on the European Commission to include Ostrovets NPP safety issues in its dialogue with Russia and Belarus, including by making any EU macro-financial support conditional on full compliance with international safety standards.

Lithuania proposes to reflect these issues in the relevant decisions of the seventh session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention and the third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment, to be held on 13-16 June 2017 in Minsk, Belarus.