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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: Any other business

Implementation of nuclear safety recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report of the Belarus NPP 'stress tests'
- Information from the Lithuanian delegation

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Lithuanian delegation.

Implementation of nuclear safety recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report of the Belarus NPP ‘stress tests’

Introduction

Safety and security of nuclear installations both in Member States and neighbouring countries is a key priority for the EU. In 2011 the EU has carried out risk and safety assessments ('stress tests') in all nuclear power plants (NPP) within the EU. A number of EU neighbouring countries, including Belarus, expressed their willingness to undertake similar ‘stress tests’ by joining a Joint Declaration in 2011.

It took 6 years for Belarus to engage in the ‘stress tests’ exercise and present its National Report for a peer review by the international team of regulators (peer review team, PRT). European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) endorsed the EU Peer Review Report of the Belarus NPP ‘stress tests’ on 2 July 2018. The stress test peer review exercise identified several safety deficiencies of the Belarus NPP design that are direct lessons of the Fukushima accident and also widened the scope of existing safety concerns (e.g. site selection, implementation of environmental conventions, etc.). The PRT, consisting of 14 EU member states’ experts, presented a set of important recommendations. It also recommended Belarus to prepare a National Action Plan containing all relevant safety improvement measures and associated implementation schedules. ***The PRT further recommended that the National Action Plan should be subject for a future review.*** Belarus initially planned to prepare the National Action Plan within 3 months, however, it was published only on 16 August 2019, i.e. in more than 1 year.

Main shortcomings of the National Action Plan

The National Action Plan does not include any Belarus' commitment to implement safety recommendations before the planned commissioning of the first unit of the NPP (according to publicly available information – end of 2019/beginning 2020). Absolute majority of measures of National Action Plan are scheduled to be implemented after start-up of Belarusian NPP in the period of 2021-2024. The plan includes mostly *additional studies and analyses* instead of *specific safety improvement measures, which means that real safety improvement could take even more, for the time being not determined, time.*

Way forward for common EU action

The importance of promoting and ensuring nuclear safety beyond the borders of the EU were repeatedly reiterated by the Council in its Conclusions since 2011.¹ However, the only fact of engagement in the 'stress test' and its' peer review activities do not per se guarantee improvement of the safety and should be considered as the first step in the process. Only due and proper implementation of recommendations at nuclear facilities can guarantee safety improvement 'on the ground'. In this context, the implementation of all the nuclear safety recommendations and management of nuclear safety risks is a collective responsibility of the EU Member States and the European Commission. The geographical position of Belarus on the Eastern border of the EU, neighbouring three EU Member States, is also an important factor in this regard.

Joint efforts of the European Commission and the EU member states are needed:

- a) convincing Belarus to immediately initiate a review of the National Action by ENSREG;
- b) calling ENSREG to set up the detailed plan for a peer review of the Belarusian National Action Plan;
- c) convincing Belarus to implement the agreed (as a result of NAP peer review) most important safety improvement measures before the commissioning of NPP.

Subject to the developments, Lithuania encourages the European Commission to ensure proper monitoring of the process as well as regular reporting to the Council.

¹ Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy (February 2019, February 2018), Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy (November 2018); Council Conclusions on European Consensus on Development (May 2017); Council Conclusions on EU Climate and Energy Diplomacies (March 2017); Council Conclusions on Belarus (February 2016), Council Conclusions on Energy Diplomacy (July 2015); European Council Conclusions (May 2013, June 2012, February, March, December 2011).

Nuclear safety in third countries was also highlighted in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (June 2016).