

Media Release

December 15, 2010

Petition Concerning Feasibility Study for Construction of Nuclear Power Plant in Viet Nam ~Japanese Government Support for Exports of Nuclear Power Plants~

Today a petition, endorsed by 79 groups (52 Japanese and 27 overseas) and 132 individuals (129 Japanese and 3 overseas), was submitted to Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Akihiro Ohata expressing concern about the Japanese Government's use of public funds for the promotion of exports of nuclear power plants.

Currently the Japanese Government is providing official support through top-level diplomacy, technical cooperation and feasibility studies to enable Japanese companies to export nuclear power plants to countries including the United States, Viet Nam, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Jordan.

At the end of October this year, at a meeting between the Prime Ministers of Japan and Viet Nam, it was announced that the Vietnamese Government had decided to choose Japan as its cooperation partner for building two reactors. The agreement included conducting feasibility studies and low-interest loans. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's Agency for Natural Resources and Energy has awarded 1.999 billion yen to Japan Atomic Power Company to carry out a feasibility study regarding Viet Nam's nuclear power plant construction project. If Japanese companies win construction contracts, it is envisaged that public finance and insurance will be provided by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and Nippon Export Investment and Insurance (NEXI).

The signatories believe “the current policy of promoting nuclear exports is the result of an underestimation of the financial risks, as well as the social and environmental risks associated with nuclear energy in relation to nuclear proliferation, accidents, radioactive waste, worker exposure to radiation and other issues.”

They say, “proceeding with nuclear projects in developing countries, which face additional problems in relation to issues such as governance, technical capacity and democratic participatory processes, entails great risks for local communities.”

Recognizing that nuclear exports are already being promoted, the signatories warned, “when the Japanese Government provides support for studies related to nuclear exports, or when it provides public credit for nuclear exports it is necessary to ensure adequate transparency and to carefully examine the ... nuclear risks.”

Specifically, they demanded the following in regard to feasibility studies carried out in relation to the construction of nuclear power plants overseas.

1. Since the Vietnamese feasibility study will be carried out with Japanese taxpayers' money, with the exception of details of bids, the study report should be published in its entirety.
2. The topics to be covered in the feasibility study should be decided taking into account the views of stakeholders, including NGOs.
3. The topics of the feasibility study should include consideration of whether or not information disclosure concerning the whole project and consultation with residents will be assured in the decision-making process for construction of the nuclear power plant.
4. The topics of the feasibility study should include consideration of whether or not information disclosure and consultation with residents concerning safety etc. will be assured in relation to operation of the nuclear power plant.
5. The feasibility study should also include an assessment of the risks posed by the project covering the radioactive waste management system, accident response, accident liability, protection of workers from exposure to radiation, safety assurance, as well as other social and environmental risks.

References

1. The petition and a list of endorsing groups and individuals is available on the following sites.
(English) <http://cnic.jp/english/topics/international/nukecoop/vietpetition15dec10.html>
(Japanese) <http://www.cnic.jp/modules/news/article.php?storyid=971>
2. Article about proposed nuclear exports to Vietnam
<http://cnic.jp/english/topics/international/nukecoop/vietjapan2nov10.html>
3. August 11, 2010 petition by US NGOs regarding financial risks of Japanese official support for nuclear exports to the United States
<http://cnic.jp/english/topics/international/nukecoop/usjapanlet11aug10pr.html>
4. Article about Japan's nuclear export policy
<http://cnic.jp/english/newsletter/nit138/nit138articles/exports.html>
5. Article about July 27, 2009 NGO submission concerning JBIC and NEXI public finance and insurance for nuclear exports
<http://cnic.jp/english/newsletter/nit132/nit132articles/jbic.html>

Contacts:

Philip White

International Liaison Officer, Citizens' Nuclear Information Center

Phone (office) +81-(0)3-3357-3800

Phone (home) +81-(0)3-3708-2898

E-mail: white@cnic.jp

Web: <http://cnic.jp/english/>