

NUCLEAR MONITOR

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OSPAR 2003: EXEMPTIONS FOR REPROCESSING INDUSTRY

At the 25-26 June OSPAR (Oslo-Paris Convention) ministerial meeting in German Bremen progress has been made by defining baseline levels for discharges of radioactivity by 2020. However, the agreement was only possible after three exemptions were allowed due to pressure from the U.K. and France. These exemptions will relieve the reprocessing industry from making significant reductions in discharges.

(590.5527) WISE Amsterdam – At the 1998 ministerial meeting of OSPAR countries in Sintra, Portugal, it was agreed that by 2020 “discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances are reduced to levels where the **additional concentrations** in the marine environment above **historic levels**, resulting from such discharges, emissions and losses are **close to zero**” (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 589.5523: “OSPAR 2003: discharges Sellafield far away from ‘close to zero’ target”).

This meant that the reprocessing industry was forced to work on significant reductions of discharges.

However, at the 1998 meeting no “baseline level” was laid down yet. Such a baseline level will define the amount of discharges that will be

seen as “historic levels”. According to the 1998 agreement, additional discharges above that level must be “close to zero” by 2020. So, laying down the baseline level will define how big the discharge levels can be in 2020.

At the Bremen meeting, the criteria for baseline level were accepted, although three exemptions were made for the reprocessing industry.

According to *NuclearFuel*, “A fair bit of horse trading was required to enable the U.K. and France to consent to a baseline flexible enough to be used”.

Two options were discussed at the ministerial meeting: the average annual discharge levels of 1996-2000 and the average annual discharge levels of 1993-2001.

The five-year period of 1996-2000 was unacceptable to the U.K. as it included a year (1998) in which discharges were quite low. Such a low-discharge year would reduce the annual average over 5 years substantially.

The French opposed the second option (1993-2001 as it included two years (2000-2001) of low-discharge levels.

Eventually, the chairman of the meeting, German environment minister Juergen Trittin, forced a compromise of 1995-2001. But that was only possible after formulating three exemptions for the reprocessing industry.

The **first exemption** was to define “an appropriate method for applying the baseline to the radionuclides iodine-129, carbon-14 and tritium”. These are three important substances that are released by reprocessing.

Although the agreed text suggests laying down special discharge levels for these isotopes, some think that it acts as a partial exemption clause for these isotopes. This exemption was included on behest of the French and will relieve the La Hague plant from the most difficult reductions.

The **second exemption** concerns “exceptional discharges” from

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decommissioning and clean-up activities at U.K.'s Sellafield complex.

Such activities have already resulted in increasing levels of discharges from Sellafield. Especially the increasing levels of technetium-99 have caused several protests by other countries, such as Ireland and Norway. Substantial reductions in technetium-99 discharges will therefore be difficult with this exemption.

The **third exemption** is to allow for the variability in operational discharge levels. Instead of defining yearly maximum levels, it will allow the reprocessing industry to discharge bigger amounts in a particular year.

Opening the way for "promises" to be expected by the U.K. and France that in subsequent years the discharges will be lower.

These three exemptions mean that progress of discharge reductions against the baseline "is not going to be the simple exercise it would first appear", said a meeting participant.

The ministers think that OSPAR 2003 will result in overall reductions by 2020, "but whether the result would be the required 'close to zero' levels was still impossible to ascertain".

Sources: *NuclearFuel*, 7 July 2003; www.ospar.org

Contact: WISE Amsterdam

SUMMER BREAK!!

Dear readers,

The *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* will take a summer break. Our next issue will be mailed out on 22 August.

We wish you happy holidays!!

WISE Amsterdam

BELGIUM: SAFETY NPPs AT RISK DUE TO LIBERALIZATION

"The safety of the people is at risk! It is obvious that the combination of liberalization, nuclear phase out and uncertainty about the future of acknowledged authorities is not beneficial for the safety of the public in the least". A remarkable strong statement which was not made by an anti-nuclear NGO but by a Belgian authority which conducts the safety inspections at Belgian NPPs.

(590.5528) WISE Amsterdam – The Association Vincotte Nuclear (AVN) is appointed by the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC). Its working domain is the protection of workers, public and environment against radiation and AVN is especially

involved in safety inspections and controls in Belgium's 7 NPPs.

On a 23 June press conference, the AVN presented its 2002 annual report and conclusions of a Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) review.

The Scientific and Technical Committee already has observed an increasing amount of incidents caused by human errors.

The present phase out plans (lifetime of NPPs set at 40 years) would have resulted in the risk that less investments will be made in necessary technical and human resources and reduced motivation of workers, which is a risk for safety at an NPP.

At the same time, a new law was adopted which appointed the FANC as the formal authority for inspections. AVN considers this work as their competence and doubts whether the FANC will be able to take over inspection work from AVN.

AVN doubts the professionalism in the long-term when the transition of responsibility for inspection work from AVN to FANC proceeds.

One of the provisions of the new law is that for inspection work, FANC will

In a press release, AVN stated that the liberalization of the electricity market and the nuclear phase out plans of the government are unfavorable factors for nuclear safety.

The 2002 annual report observes the consequences of the liberalization of the electricity market: optimization of production and cost reductions.

That has led to complete new structures, less engineering activities, hiring sub-contractors, etc.

And as a consequence, less finances for safety, an increased instability of the electricity organization, a turbulent transitional phase and a number of social problems.

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Editorial team: Robert Jan van den Berg (WISE Amsterdam), Michael Mariotte (NIRS). With **contributions** from Earthlife Africa Cape Town.

The next issue (591) will be mailed out 22 August 2003.

Oops! In the article "Swiss Referendum: results and analysis" (Nuclear Monitor 588) we included a wrong email address as contact. The correct address must be info@sortirdunucleaire.ch. Our apologies!

25 YEARS AGO

NIRS and WISE both celebrate their 25th anniversaries this year. This is the tenth article in a series, "25 years ago", comparing anti-nuclear news "then" and "now", to mark our first quarter-century of anti-nuclear campaigning.

Then

In issue 2 of *WISE Bulletin* we wrote about protest against the pro-nuclear policy of the European Community: "Protest against the European Community's pro-nuke policy was organized in Bremen on July 4-5. On the eve of a "summit" meeting of heads of government of the EEC Nine, the Federal German anti-nuke movement held a round table on EEC, the plutonium society, and know-how exports to Brazil. A big demo was held the day the EEC meeting started". (*WISE Bulletin*, July 1978)

Now

The *European Economic Community* has been reorganized during the last decades. The cooperation of countries is now being called the European Union (EU) and its "government" the European Commission (EC). But its pro-nuclear policy hasn't changed at all.

In 1957, when the EEC was established, the European Atomic Energy Agency Treaty (Euratom) was signed with its main goal the "speedy establishment and growth of nuclear industries". Since 1957, nuclear energy had a privileged position compared to other energy sources, like alternatives. Many subsidies were given to the nuclear industry and several research centers/reactors established.

In 2002, the EC introduced the "nuclear package", which consists of directives (binding legislation) on nuclear safety standards, waste disposal deadlines, decommissioning funds and the import of nuclear fuel into the EU. The "nuclear package" has raised many protests from anti-nuclear organizations. They demand an urgent reform of the Euratom Treaty, which they call to be an outdated dinosaur.

Another reason for a reform (or cancellation) of the Euratom Treaty is to stop the extension of Euratom loan ceiling. Originally intended for new NPPs in Europe, loans are now being used for projects in Mid-/Eastern Europe. Money is being used for upgrading unsafe reactors (for instance Kozloduy in Bulgaria) or proposed new NPPs (K2/R4 in Ukraine). Money is running out and the EC has proposed a Euro 2 billion (US\$ 2.3 billion) extension. (*WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*, 4 October 2002)

At this moment, the EU is being expanded from 15 to 25 countries in 2004 and a new European Constitutional Convention is under development. A massive campaign, including hundreds of organizations, was started to call for the cancellation of the Euratom Treaty in the new convention. A half-dozen or so treaties now have to be revised and the Euratom Treaty might be hopefully one of these. (*WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*, 6 December 2002)

In March 2003, the French pro-nuclear convention chairman Giscard D'Estaing called for the Euratom Treaty to be imported wholesale (with only minor technical amendments) into the new constitutional treaty. There is continuing pressure on delegates and countries not to accept the unchanged and outdated Euratom Treaty. Final decisions are expected in 2004. (*WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor*, 11 April 2003)

demand for tenders (any company can offer its services).

AVN believes that nuclear inspection work is not suitable for a tender-system, because of little amount of specialized companies, the high costs of such a tender-system, the risk of price-based selection (instead of technically required inspection methods, the cheapest contractor is being chosen) and little flexibility after signing contracts (unforeseen or special circumstances during inspection work).

AVN demands the government (in quite compelling language) to revise the law. After all, it is obvious that AVN fears to loose its monopoly on inspection work and has to reorganize and make cost reductions to take part in the tender-system.

Nevertheless, it has shown that due to the liberalization of the Belgian electricity market, the safety of Belgian NPPs is decreasing. In their own words: "The safety of the people is at risk!".

In a reaction to the developments,

Greenpeace Belgium said that the safety of NPPs must be assured, regardless of liberalization or phase out plans. The present conflict between AVN and FANC proves that the nuclear industry is single-minded by commercial interests.

Sources: AVN press release and information package, 23 June 2003 (www.avn.be); email from Greenpeace Belgium, 8 July 2003
Contact: WISE Amsterdam

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT APPROVES ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PBMR

On 25 June, the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) approved the Environmental Impact Assessment of the planned Pebble-Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR). It is an important step, but not the last, for the construction of the prototype PBMR at the Koeberg NPP site near Cape Town. South African NGOs will appeal the decision and are also preparing a court case later this year to prevent construction.

(590.5529) Earthlife Africa Cape

Town - In May, Earthlife Africa went to court to ask the judge to grant an urgent interdict which would prevent the DEAT from making a decision on the Environmental Impact Assessment process. Earthlife Africa believes that under the South African

constitution, we had a right to be heard by the decision-maker (the government) before they made their decision.

The matter was delayed twice but on 3 June, the court found that the matter was not urgent and we would have to go to court in the normal way. A court date with the DEAT was set for 9 September.

On 26 June, DEAT issued a press release approving the Environmental Impact Assessment, thereby clearing the first hurdle for the 110 MW prototype PBMR and an associated fuel plant at the Pelindaba site near Pretoria.

The record of decision has a list of conditions including that there must be a waste policy in place before the PBMR construction could begin, including a decommissioning plan and long-term management of high-level waste and spent fuel. In our opinion, this is meaningless – leaving such a critical issue to be decided after the PBMR has the go-ahead is putting the cart before the horse!

The press statement released by DEAT also clearly stated that the Department did not regard waste or safety as environmental issues and referred them to the Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs (waste), and to the National Nuclear Regulator (safety) separate processes respectively.

The present authorization is valid for 5 years, i.e. if construction does not begin within five years the

authorization will be invalidated.

In the opinion of Earthlife, there are many other issues some regarding the low level of public participation, the independence of the consultants, as well as the health risks and emergency procedures.

Interested and affected parties have 30 days to appeal to the minister to overturn the decision. The deadline for this appeal is 25 July. The appeal must be completed on a special form available from the DEAT. We would urge all people who qualify to appeal. Full details of the appeal process as well as a summary of the issues which Earthlife Africa will be appealing will be available on our website after 16 July.

The Legal Resources Centre (LRC) who are Earthlife Africa's lawyers are working on the details of the appeal and there is also a need to resolve the 9 September court issue. Further court action has not been ruled out.

Sources: Earthlife Africa Cape Town; Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 25 June 2003, www.environment.gov.za; Consortium for the PBMR Environmental Impact Assessment, 27 June 2003

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FURTHER PROCESS

The Record of Decision (ROD) of the **DEAT** is an important step, but not the last before the PBMR can be built.

The **South African Cabinet** has to allow electricity utility Eskom, the state-owned utility that is leading the project, to proceed with construction. Sources said that the Cabinet might wait with such a decision until the 30-day public comment period on the ROD has expired.

The **Department of Minerals & Energy** has to finalize a national nuclear waste policy, which must be in place before construction of the PBMR can begin.

The **National Nuclear Regulator** must issue a nuclear construction license and authorize the project from a safety viewpoint. Eskom expects to submit a safety analysis report in first-quarter 2004. The National Nuclear Regulator is expected to take about one year to review the report. First construction work on the site could begin in first-quarter 2005 and will take 2-3 years before the reactor can start fuel loading.

NuclearFuel, 3 July 2003

GERMANY: NUCLEAR INDUSTRY RETREATS FROM WASTE NEGOTIATING GROUP

The German nuclear utilities have announced that they will not participate in roundtable talks on the selection of a waste disposal site. The planned talks were a result of the work of the Working Group on Repository Site Selection (AKend). The nuclear utilities refuse to accept that the German government has put a moratorium on research in the Gorleben salt dome, which they think will be suitable for waste disposal.

(590.5530) WISE Amsterdam – The AKend commission was set up in 1999 by Green environment minister Jürgen Trittin and released its final report in December 2002. In its final report the commission made recommendations how Germany could find a waste disposal site by 2030.

The first step in the process was to establish site selection criteria to begin in 2004 with the establishment of a negotiating group (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 576.5456: “Fierce debate over German waste plans”).

This group would consist of representatives from nuclear utilities, political parties, churches, state governments and NGOs. In 2005, five regions in Germany will be assessed for potential sites and in 2010 at least two candidate sites must be selected. Waste disposal is expected to begin in 2030.

In the past, a lot of research had been conducted on the suitability of a salt dome at Gorleben for low- and high-level waste disposal.

Gorleben was once planned as Germany’s national waste center with a reprocessing plant, storage buildings for low- and high-level waste and an underground repository for future waste disposal. The reprocessing plant was cancelled due to fierce resistance but low-level waste and vitrified high-level waste from reprocessing is stored at the site.

An underground research laboratory was constructed in the salt dome and

the utilities spent Euros 1.3 billion (US\$ 1.5 billion) on research work. There have been significant doubts about the suitability of the Gorleben salt dome for waste disposal. The salt dome lacks a covering clay layer and as a result the salt is in direct contact with ground water. If radioactive waste containers would leak, the radionuclides could easily be spread

by the groundwater flow without being hindered by a protective clay layer on top of the dome.

In a June 2000 “consensus agreement” between the German government and the nuclear utilities a three to ten years moratorium on research at Gorleben was laid down although it was not completely

FRENCH WASTE PLANS

Two French MPs, Claude Birraux of the center-right UMP and Christian Bataille of the Socialist Party, have launched a new study on **long-term waste management options** for France. The Parliamentary Office for Evaluation of Science & Technology Options (Opecst) ordered the study as input to the planned debate on French waste policy to be held in 2006. The study would evaluate the present research in France and other countries. Birraux and Bataille recently finished a report on the future of France’s nuclear program, which included a proposal for the construction of a prototype EPR reactor (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 588: “In brief”). Bataille was the author of the 1991 Nuclear Waste Law, which laid down 2006 as date for the French parliament to make final decisions about France’s waste policy.

In its annual report 2002, the National Evaluation Commission (CNE) concludes that the **2006 deadline** is “extremely tight” for the work of the National Agency for Radioactive Waste (Andra). Andra is constructing an underground research laboratory in the Bure clay

formation but has faced a one year long delay in drilling work due to a fatal accident in 2002. According to CNE, research on radionuclide migration from the site will not be able to yield more than “preliminary” results by the 2006 deadline.

CNE remained reserved about the prospects for waste **transmutation**. Transmutation studies are at a preliminary stage and must still prove its feasibility, if ever possible. According to CNE, it can not substitute geological disposal as some long-lived isotopes are not transmutable and isotope separation work will release also radioactive waste. If transmutation would be technically feasible, the construction of a large number of special reactors would be needed (between 10% and 50% of the entire nuclear capacity). Inventories of transmutable elements could only be stabilized (no increase in net amounts) after several decades of operation. In other words, transmutation is only possible in the framework of new nuclear reactors.

NuclearFuel, 7 July 2003

rejected as potential site in the far future (see *WISE News Communiqué* 523.5186: "Germany: government and utilities reach agreement on phaseout").

The German government decided to start a new site selection process to study possible alternatives, other than Gorleben (see also *WISE News Communiqué* 555.5322: "Germany: Mega-problem of storing nuclear waste unsolved").

Gorleben is now the issue in the refusal of the German utilities to cooperate in the site selection negotiating group as recommended by AKend. The final report of AKend is said to have caused disagreements between government and industry.

In May, the E-On utility informed federal minister Trittin that the utilities would not participate in the

site selection discussions. The utilities want that Gorleben should be officially accepted as a candidate site. "The bottom line now is that the utilities aren't prepared to spend any more money on looking for alternative sites until a decision on the suitability of Gorleben is made", said one official.

German states which are ruled by the pro-nuclear Christian-Democrat CDU/CSU will support the position of the nuclear utilities.

In February, the CDU won parliament elections in the Lower Saxony state, in which Gorleben is located. Together with the pro-nuclear liberal FDP, they gained together 106 of the 183 parliament seats. Christian Ebert, state secretary of the environment ministry has announced that the consideration of Gorleben as disposal site is a prerequisite for cooperation

with the site selection negotiating group.

It is unclear yet how the process will continue. The federal government is reluctant to include Gorleben in the negotiating group and would rather look at alternative sites.

The nuclear industry and CDU-led states have now announced to boycott the talks as Gorleben is excluded from the options being discussed.

According to Lower Saxony CDU leader Christian Wulff, AKend had become "superfluous" as "a working group which is based solely on the expertise of Greenpeace and the Lutheran Church won't have any justification".

Sources: *NuclearFuel*, 7 July 2003; www.landestag-niedersachsen.de
Contact: WISE Amsterdam

BNFL ANNOUNCES 1 BILLION (BP) LOSS; PRIVATIZATION PLANS ABANDONED

UK's British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) announced on 9 July a loss of more than 1 billion British Pounds (US\$ 1.7 billion) for the fiscal year 2002-2003 (ending 31 March 2003), blaming the high cost of decommissioning nuclear power plants and persistent technical problems at the company's controversial Sellafield reprocessing plant for its financial beating.

(590.5531) Bellona Foundation –

The week before, Patricia Hewitt, British Secretary of State for Trade and Industry finally abandoned plans to partly privatize BNFL because of its consistent record of losses, meaning the company will remain under the financial wing of the British government.

According to the British newspaper *The Guardian*, Hewitt told the British House of Commons that privatizing the group was no longer an option. Her predecessor, Stephen Byers, had postponed last year's plans to privatize 49 percent of BNFL after issues of deficient quality control and poor management at the state-owned company were made public and erupted in scandal.

Clean-up activities

Clean-up activities at Sellafield and other sites have kept BNFL's accounts in the red. During the fiscal year 2001-2002, BNFL reported a whopping 1.9 billion British Pounds (US\$ 3.2 billion) loss, the largest in the company's history (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 571.5422: "Record loss as BNFL faces problem of 'exploding' waste").

All of this is having catastrophic results for the company's bottom line, and there seem to be no signs of improvement in sight.

The company is also between a rock and a hard place in terms of its duties. Over the last three years, BNFL shut three nuclear power

plants that were far beyond their engineered age limits. But now the plants must be decommissioned, and last year decommissioning costs skyrocketed by 415 million British Pounds (US\$ 693 million).

Adding to these woes are the company's unrelenting technical problems with Sellafield's Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP). Repeated delays in its reprocessing activities lead to increased economic losses and are a constant annoyance to BNFL's customers.

Two years ago, *The Independent* reported that all of BNFL's foreign THORP customers threatened to cancel their contracts with BNFL. German and Japanese companies,

firms in Switzerland, Holland and Italy, all warned BNFL that they could cancel contracts, which would have lost BNFL 6 billion British Pounds (US\$ 10 billion) (see *WISE News Communiqué* 549.5276: "Sellafield: THORP customers threaten to withdraw business; discharge levels 20 time German standards"). In all those cases an agreement was reached. But BNFL's current difficulties are adding up to a new confrontation.

This year German power companies have again threatened to cancel their contracts with Sellafield. Among the companies considering turning their back on Sellafield is Germany's largest nuclear company, Eon Energie AG, *NuclearFuel*, reported recently.

BNFL still optimistic

In a press release, the ever-optimistic BNFL Chairman Hugh Collum commented on the grim financial state of his company. "The last year was certainly demanding for BNFL, but it was one in which further progress was made in laying the ground for the company's future development. We have maintained the momentum established in the past three years, completing a reorganization that now aligns our worldwide business," he said in his statement.

Collum said that Secretary of State Hewitt recently announced that the government and the board of BNFL had agreed to conduct a joint review

U.S. serious setback for proposed LES enrichment plant. Trousdale County commissioners unanimously (17-0) voted in a special meeting on 3 July to place a set of restrictions on the proposed uranium enrichment plant that could signal the end of the project. The LES consortium wants to build the enrichment plant in Hartsville, Tennessee, which faces lot of opposition (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 582.5484: "LES delays license application"). The now adopted measures call for no air or water emissions, removal of depleted

NEW BNFL BOSS

Activists are planning a campaign against Michael Parker, the new chief executive of BNFL, highlighting his poor environmental track record in his previous job at Dow Chemical. Parker was appointed on 3 July, the same day as Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt said she had abandoned plans to privatize BNFL. Parker will be paid a basic salary of 550,000 British Pounds (US\$ 920,000) a year, 50% more than his predecessor Norman Askew. In February, Askew announced he would step down this summer after being CEO since March 2000

Michael Parker was fired in December 2002 as CEO of Dow after nine successive quarters of disappointing figures. The merger of Dow with Union Carbide in 1999

brought him up against activists campaigning for compensation for victims of the 1984 Bhopal disaster at an Indian Union Carbide chemical plant. But Bhopal is only one of the issues that brought friction between Parker and environmentalists. In Midland, Michigan (U.S.), local rivers have dioxin levels of up to 80 times the legal limit due to Dow's discharges. Dow struck a deal with the local environment department to raise the acceptable level of dioxin nine fold, making much of the pollution legal. A deal which was later nullified.

Greenpeace will now head a campaign highlighting Parker's actions at Dow and questioning his suitability as BNFL boss.

***The Independent*, 7 July 2003; www.bnfl.com**

to evaluate options for alternative strategies for BNFL.

Waste costs

Over the next few years BNFL's central role in nuclear waste clean-up issues will diminish as the British government introduces a so-called liabilities management authority, or LMA, which will take over BNFL's waste management responsibilities.

According to the recently announced plan, the LMA will take over the enormous clean-up costs so that

BNFL is spared from dealing with the 40.5 billion British Pounds (US\$ 67.6 billion) price tag of mopping up its own mess. Instead, British taxpayers, through the government's subsidization of LMA, will bear the brunt of nuclear waste eradication.

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uranium tailings and other wastes within three months and a maximum storage capacity of 2,000 tons. LES has stated it would need to store at least 39,500 tons of depleted uranium at the site. The adoption of the guidelines makes it less likely that LES will choose to build its proposed plant in Hartsville.

***WNA News Briefing* 2-8 July 2003; *The Tennessean*, 4 July 2003**

Euratom Treaty removed from draft European Constitution. On 10 July, the presidium of the European

Convention stepped back from its original proposal to include the Euratom Treaty in the future European Union Constitution (for explanation of the process, see "25 years ago" on page 3). In a reversal of an earlier proposal, the Convention has, in the final text, adopted a key amendment that would in effect position Euratom as a separate legal personality from the rest of the European Union. The move recognizes the growing opposition to the promotion of nuclear energy via the Euratom Treaty and paves the

way for further marginalization of Euratom in the future. Now EU member states could step out of Euratom without having to leave the EU altogether. However, this construction keeps a kind of status quo. A planned intergovernmental conference in October is urged to completely abandoning Euratom. On 9 July, before the presidium meeting in Brussels, Greenpeace activists delivered 15 barrels of fake radioactive waste in protest to the proposal to include Euratom in the Constitution.

Press release Greenpeace, 9 July 2003; Press release Friends of the Earth Europe/Greenpeace, 10 July 2003

European bank provide funds to make Chernobyl safe. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) agreed on 9 July to provide Ukraine millions of dollars to build a new shield over Chernobyl, site of 1986 disaster. The Bank will give the Ukraine about US\$ 85 million this year to stabilize the old 'sarcophagus' covering the gaping hole in reactor number 4, which some experts say is crumbling and leaking radioactivity into the environment. The EBRD also said it would start co-funding the US\$ 750 million project to kick-start work on a new arc to surround the reactor (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 582.5489: "International consortium to build Chernobyl 'shield'").

World Environment News, 10 July 2003; Reuters, 10 July 2003

Chen sets Taiwan nuclear phase-out vote. Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian announced 27 June that his government would hold a public referendum on the future of the country's nuclear energy program and the Lungmen ABWR project on or before 20 March 2004, the date of the next presidential elections. In October 2000, Chen announced that Taiwan would immediately halt construction of the two 1,350-MW ABWRs. The Legislative Yuan, controlled by opposition parties, challenged Chen's decision before Taiwan's constitutional court, and the court forced Chen to rescind the

cancellation in early 2001. Since then, Lungmen construction has gotten back on track (see *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 589.5524: "Taiwan: activists protest arrival of reactor").
Nucleonics Week, 3 July 2003

Sellafield pollution levels challenged. A study, to be published by the University College Dublin, Ireland, will reveal levels of plutonium in the sediment in the sea at the Solway Firth (between England and Scotland off the Irish Sea) far in excess of those highlighted by the government's green watchdog, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). The researchers also discovered that, instead of staying trapped in the sediment, the plutonium was dissolving and being carried north by currents. This challenges the official view, long held by Sellafield's BNFL, that heavy particles of plutonium sink to the bottom of the Irish Sea and are not distributed. It means that the quarter of a ton of plutonium dumped in the sea by Sellafield over the past 50 years will carry on contaminating the Scottish coast for many years to come. Julie Lucy, the study's main author, and her team collected samples of sediment on a research cruise around the firths of Solway and Esk in summer 2002. When analyzed, they turned out to be contaminated by up to 15,000 becquerels of radioactivity per kilogram with plutonium and americium-241. Samples taken in 2001 by SEPA showed levels of only 100-150 becquerels per kilogram in the Solway Firth. According to SEPA this can be explained by the fact the University College researchers took samples from deeper in the seabed.
Sunday Herald (Glasgow) 29 June 2003

Ireland threatened over Sellafield row. Ireland's attempt to sue the U.K. over discharges from BNFL's Sellafield-site has been thrown into disarray after the European Commission claimed its action was illegal. In an unexpected twist in the long-running battle, the EU has itself threatened to take legal action against Ireland unless Dublin drops

its claim over Sellafield's discharges into the Irish Sea. Ireland claims Britain has broken its legal obligations to protect the marine environment and has pursued its main case under the UN's Convention on the Law of the Sea. But the Convention's arbitration tribunal delivered one serious setback to Ireland's case. It refused Dublin's request for immediate measures that would in effect close the MOX plant pending the full hearing of the case, which will take place later this year. However, the EU told Ireland it has no legal right to take action under the UN Convention or through the second legal route being pursued by Dublin, the OSPAR pact on marine pollution. The Commission claims these actions improperly by-pass the EU's legal framework, which Ireland is obliged to follow as a member state. The UN Court of Arbitration in the Hague has dismissed on 1 July Ireland's efforts to gain access to confidential information about the operation of Sellafield. Ireland had claimed the right to access information about safety at the MOX fuel reprocessing facility at Sellafield under the OSPAR Convention. Despite rejecting Ireland's case, the UN court also dismissed U.K. assertions that Ireland had no right to sue in an international tribunal, that the tribunal lacked jurisdiction in the case and that the Irish claim was inadmissible.
Independent on Sunday, 29 June 2003; N-Base Briefing 28 June 2003; Irish Examiner, 2 July 2003

Nuclear sites U.K. classified by security risk. U.K.'s security regulator has classified nuclear sites into three risk categories, with the Sellafield and Dounreay sites designated as Category 1, requiring the highest level of alert. According to Michael Buckland-Smith, director of the Office for Civil Nuclear Security (OCNS), all other licensed nuclear sites fall within the medium category, requiring stringent baseline security measures. Recently the government decided to establish a Joint Terrorism Analysis Center following the heightened global

tensions after terrorist attacks in the U.S., Kenya, on Bali and elsewhere. The report on the work of the OCNS covers the period 1 April 2002 to 31 March 2003. Presently, the OCNS regulates 43 nuclear sites. The British newspaper *Mirror* reported on 2 July that Michael Buckland-Smith has admitted he cannot protect power plants fully from "determined" intruders. According to him no amount of razor wire and electric fences can keep sites safe. He warned ministers that the best they could do is to slow intruders down. Furthermore he stated that no practicable, cost-effective combination of perimeter fencing and other obstacles can prevent large number of demonstrators breaching outer barriers. **Platts London, 27 June 2003; BBC News, 16 June 2002; The Mirror, 2 July 2003**

Smoke from Japanese Fugen reactor site. An fire at a waste processing facility at the shutdown Fugen reactor, near the town of Tsugura, sent on 3 July smoke into the air but there were no reports of radiation leaks or injuries. A city spokesman said the accident occurred at an incinerator at the site. The incinerator is used to burn items contaminated with low-level amounts of radioactivity, such as workers' protective clothing. According to the facility's operator, Japan Nuclear Cycle Development Institute, a viewing window on an incinerator duct was found broken and wind may have stirred up ash inside the burning chamber, causing the smoke and setting off the alarm. Firefighters rushed to the scene after reports of an explosion heard by some workers, but they left after about two hours. On 30 March, the 148 MW Fugen reactor was shut down permanently because of high operating costs. **Associated Press, 4 July 2003**

Third reactor at Japanese Tomari NPP. Hokkaido Electric Power Co., a Japanese utility, said it received government approval to build a third reactor at its Tomari NPP in Hokkaido. It is the first time the government has approved

construction of a reactor since giving the go-ahead for Hokuriku Electric Power Co.'s Shika-2 ABWR reactor in April 1999. The utility plans to invest 290 billion Yen (US\$ 2.5 billion) to build Tomari-3. It will start construction of the 912 MW unit in November and plans to start operation in December 2009. Hokkaido Electric has two reactors at the Tomari NPP with a total capacity of 1.158 MW.

The Japan Times, 3 July 2003

Japanese Aomori town to invite spent fuel facility. The mayor of Mutsu, Aomori Prefecture, wants to invite Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) to set up interim storage facilities for spent fuel in the city. The central government claims the storage facilities are an indispensable element of the nation's nuclear fuel-cycle program. The volume of spent fuel from nuclear power plants is already projected to exceed the capacity of the Rokkasho reprocessing plant, now under construction in Aomori Prefecture. Tepco has proposed building two interim storage facilities capable of handling up to 6,000 tons of spent fuel at Mutsu's Sekinehama port. Tepco wants to put one facility into operation by 2010 and said it would remove the fuel from the facilities after 50 years. However, residents strongly oppose the storing of nuclear waste in their town.

The Japan Times, 27 June 2003

Western Australian Premier plans to block nuclear dump, but Woomera-dump within a year. The Western Australian State Government is trying to stop the Federal Government housing a planned radioactive waste dump in Western Australia. A proposed law will ban the transport and storage of nuclear waste generated in other States. Premier Geoff Gallop announced a plan to stonewall potential moves to dump nuclear waste in Western Australia. The State Government will amend the Nuclear Waste (Storage) Prohibition Act, which was introduced in 1999 to stop moves by the international consortium Pangea

Resources International to establish an international radioactive waste facility in outback Western Australia (see WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor 563.5373: "International nuclear dump plan shelved").

In March 2003, the South Australian Government passed legislation similar to that proposed by Gallop, but that did not stop the Federal Government choosing a sheep station near Woomera as the site for the nation's low-level radioactive waste dump (see WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor 587.5515: "Australia: planned waste dump faces opposition"). That nuclear waste dump could be open within a year after the Federal Government on 7 July dodged State opposition by compulsorily acquiring land for the site. Federal Finance Minister Nick Minchin said the commonwealth's acquisition of the land, known as "site 40a", rendered any South Australian move to oppose the dump as obsolete.

The West Australian, 7 July 2003 / Radio Australia, 7 July 2003

Director Russian nuclear safety inspectorate (GAN) resigns. Last week of June suddenly the director of the Russian nuclear safety inspectorate (GAN), Mr. Vishnevsky, resigned under pressure of the Ministry of atomic power (Minatom). According to Russian Ecodefense it was the result of a fight over licensing of nuclear reactors and other safety matters between GAN and Minatom, and it seems that the nuclear industry has finally won this round of fight against inspectors. GAN under Vishnevsky was the only tool to control Minatom, a highly corrupted ministry that repeatedly has violated laws and regulations over the last decade in order to gain more profit, Ecodefense said. Mr. Vishnevsky was the only high-ranked official in the government who went for open critics over Minatom proposals to import nuclear waste. He was also the core person in the process of suspending the license of "Mayak", a reprocessing plant in the Urals, earlier this year. That plant

dumps radioactive waste to the environment and Vishnevsky was the only official who challenged the illegal activities of "Mayak". New chief of GAN is ex-deputy minister of Minatom Andrei Malyshev, who focuses not on safety, but on development at any cost, like more reactor constructions, more contracts for reactors in other countries and more waste imports. Ecodefense and other environmental groups have criticized the replacement of Vishnevski. Fears are high that GAN will be stripped of its licensing and regulatory power by the government, and returned to its pre-Chernobyl state, when it was nothing more than a nominal safety arm of Minatom. **Ecodefense, 2 July 2003; Bellona Foundation, 4 July 2003**

Protest against life-time extension Russian Kola NPP. Russian environmental groups held on 29 and 30 June a fax-action protesting the decision to extend lifetime of the Kola NPP, located near Murmansk. On 29 June Kola-1 had operated 30 years. That day the reactor should have been shut down, because it was designed for a 30-years lifetime. However, it recently received license to operate for another 5 years. Kola-1 is the third reactor in Russia which received a license to operate beyond its 30-year design life. The first two reactors of the VVER-440/230 design and, according to many international experts, can not meet modern safety standards. In a letter, addressed to the director of the Kola plant and to the minister of atomic power, Rumyantsev, environmental groups demand the shut down of the oldest two reactors, provisions for decommissioning, the development of alternative energy sources and a ban on financial support of the Kola NPP. **Ecodefense Moscow, 30 June 2003; WNA News Briefing 2-8 July 2003**

Russian nuclear industry faces 36% cut in governmental funding The Russian Ministry for economic development has reduced the amount of governmental funding for new nuclear reactors. Rosenergoatom, the national operator of NPPs,

asked the Ministry to include a US\$ 1.2 billion nuclear investment program into the Russian budget for 2004. That investment included funds for the construction of several reactors such as Kalinin-3, Kursk-5, Beloyarsk-4 and Balakovo-5 and also funds for various work on existing reactors. But the Ministry reviewed the program and reduced costs down to US\$ 770 million. According to Rosenergoatom officials the reductions will slow down the process of constructing new reactors, as well as limiting the number of reactors under active construction. Earlier, Russian environmental groups, like Ecodefense, urged the Ministry not to fund new reactors. **Antiatom.ru, 27 June 2003**

Kazakhstan to build NPP within 15 years. Kazakhstan plans to build an NPP within 15 years on the shores of Lake Balkhash (in Karaganda region, central Kazakhstan), but opposition to the plan is growing among local citizens. Anti-nuclear groups in Kazakhstan announced earlier this year a campaign targeted at halting "any kind of plans to build nuclear reactors on Balkhash". Russian colleague organizations, like Ecodefense, support the campaign. According to a statement by Kazakh Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Vladimir Shkolnik, Kazakhstan plans to construct two to three reactors at Lake Balkhash. Shkolnik talked about his plan during a stay at the end of June in Canada, to attract more investment from the country. Environmental activists in both Russia and Kazakhstan announced they will direct efforts to halt possible foreign financial support for the project. **Antiatom.ru, 2 July 2003**

California balks over nuclear shipments. After uttering arguments by Californian state officials that a meandering route to transport low-level radioactive waste by truck from Nevada to a disposal facility in New Mexico on a 300-mile trip through California, is unnecessary and unsafe, the Department of Energy cancelled the shipment. Part of this

trip is along state Highway 127, which authorities say is not designed for heavy trucks, is poorly maintained in places and is popular with tourists. The Department of Energy however says the material is being shipped through California's high desert to avoid sending it through the crowded Las Vegas area. The truck shipments would start on 9 July. DOE-spokesman Joe Davis said that it is the first time ever that a state did not agree to let the Department of Energy use a route. According to Davis this even sets a "very dangerous" precedent for the future of waste shipments. **Guardian Unlimited, 9 July 2003; Las Vegas Sun, 9 July 2003**

Framatome ANP supplies replacement reactor vessel heads. French Framatome ANP has signed a contract with U.S. Florida Power & Light Company (FPL) to supply replacement reactor vessel heads for its four nuclear reactors: Turkey Point-3 and 4, and St. Lucie-1 and 2. The vessel heads will be replaced during regularly scheduled maintenance and refueling outages, scheduled to begin with Turkey Point Unit 3 in 2004, and continuing with Turkey Point Unit 4 and St. Lucie Unit 1 in 2005, and St. Lucie Unit 2 in 2006. Westinghouse Electric Co. will replace vessel heads at Point Beach-1 and -2 (2005) and Kewaunee (2004). Vessel heads will be replaced in the next five years at more than 26 reactors in the U.S. Vessel head replacements have been planned at the reactors as a consequence of the Davis-Besse accident, where leaking control rod nozzles had caused a hole in the vessel head because of corrosion by boric acid (see WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor 565.5385: "Millimeters from disaster"). **PRNewswire, 30 June 2003; NuclearFuel, 10 July 2003**

Worker: U.S. Duke Power did not protect employees from Oconee leak. An worker at the U.S. Oconee NPP says Duke Power did not take quick precautions to protect workers exposed to a chemical, leaking from a system late April. Some 100 workers

were inside the Ocone-3 containment building for almost days before they were given respirators and double coveralls as protection against potassium chromate left by the leak. Some workers came out with the yellow powder on their body the first day, said one of the workers. He quit his full-time job for a contractor at the nuclear plant over safety concerns. The incident didn't involve radiation exposure.

Potassium chromate is a strong oxidizer and can cause severe burns in contact, affect the respiratory system, liver, kidneys, eyes, skin and blood. It even can cause cancer.

The Greenville News, 29 June 2003

Nuke waste in canal on U.S.

Haddam Neck site. The anti-nuke citizens group Neighbors Opposed to Residential Atomic Dumps (NORAD) asked the owner of the shut-down Haddam Neck reactor in Connecticut

to reveal how much radioactive material has leached into the drainage canal on the site. The man-made canal next to the site connects to the Connecticut River. The 560 MW PWR was shut down in December 1996. The company plans to use the waterway to ship out the reactor pressure vessel late fall, a major millstone in the dismantling of the plant. But, in order to fit a barge big enough to carry the 320-ton steel vessel, the canal needs to be dredged. During a meeting with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Connecticut Yankee officials said test samples had turned up radioactive particles in the canal's sediment. NORAD members are concerned that dredging will stir up the polluted deposits, potentially contaminating the lower stem of the Connecticut River. According to the anti-nuke group the public has a right to know the nature, quantity, and location of

the radioactive material, as well as the risks posed by dredging the canal.
Middletown Press, 28 June 2003

Atomic Kittens? It's not the famous girls' band, but real radioactive cats... As we reported in our latest Nuclear Monitor 589 ("In brief"), the Scottish Dounreay site is troubled by digging rabbits. Now we've got the news that maybe cats got radioactive by eating the atomic bunnies. Tests are already being carried out after rabbits burrowed into nuclear waste pits around the site. Now a member of Scottish Parliament wants the tests to include cats and even buzzards. The Food Standards Agency is analyzing meat from rabbits around the nuclear site. It is, according to this Agency, a precautionary measure in the unlikely event of any rabbit meat entering the food chain.

Daily Record, 3 July 2003

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WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR MONITOR

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