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Press release | 21.03.2011

Energy Council - Nuclear Safety

Proposed stress tests cannot be used to gloss over fundamental decisions on nuclear power

EU energy ministers are gathering today in an extraordinary council meeting to discuss nuclear safety in Europe in the context of the current disaster at Fukushima in Japan. The Greens have expressed concern that the proposed stress tests are being used to divert attention from more fundamental questions on nuclear power, as well as concern with the format and independence of the proposed stress tests. Ahead of the extraordinary council, Greens/EFA co-president **Rebecca Harms** said:

"There are real concerns that the nuclear reactor stress tests that have been proposed by the European Commission are little more than a tool to gloss over more fundamental decisions on nuclear power. Stress tests of nuclear reactors could be an important step on the road to a phase out of nuclear power but only if they are based on robust criteria and, crucially, carried out by independent experts.

"That the nuclear industry will play a crucial role in defining the criteria raises serious question marks about the whole process. In the recent past, the nuclear industry engaged in an intense lobby to successfully prevent strict common safety standards for nuclear plants. It is also unclear how cumulative emergencies and multiple failures can be assessed in such a procedure or how human failure can be factored in, while the lack of urgency in devising and implementing the tests is also a concern.

"Clearly, there are a number of reactors in Europe where we already know the risk is not acceptable and where decisions should be made to shut the reactors without delay (1). The overarching priority now should be a coordinated EU phase-out of nuclear power."

Green energy spokesperson **Claude Turmes** added:

"It is about time that the EU gets it energy priorities right. It is unacceptable that for the upcoming years the Commission proposes to spend 5 times as much on the ITER nuclear fusion project than on renewables and energy efficiency. Other EU member states should follow Luxembourg and oppose this wrong-headed approach to energy research.

"Starting now and planning for the consequences will ensure a total phase out can be completed as early as possible. The forthcoming EU energy roadmap for 2050, to be presented by the Commission, should factor in this nuclear phase out and outline the necessary measures to promote energy efficiency and renewables, with a view to making the transition to a renewables-based economy in 2050 a reality."

(1) See Greens/EFA briefing assessing most dangerous reactors in Europe

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