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World Information Service on Energy
founded in 1978

Akkuyu NPP should not be allowed to start operation

In just six months, another fire broke at Akkuyu NPP construction. [Many accidents and disasters](#) have occurred since 2019 when the construction of the power plant started. Unfortunately, we may experience many more disasters due to the acceleration of the NPP's construction schedule.

PINAR DEMİRCAN

A fire broke out due to the explosion in the transformer at the construction site of the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant (NPP), which is under construction in Mersin's Gulnar district. The fire broke out in the morning hours on Sunday, 31 October 2021, and was extinguished by firefighters.

In the statement it made, The Akkuyu Nuclear Company claimed that the fire started as a result of a lightning strike on the energy transmission line located close to the control panel of the fire brigade. The company also stated that the fire broke out in the auxiliary transformer center area and no one was injured and all the units' duties regarding the emergency response procedure of the Akkuyu NPP site were carried out quickly. Accordingly, the lightning strike partially damaged the infrastructure of the power lines in the substation area. Power was restored to the site, and all the construction work resumed to normal at the construction site.

4 incidents since 2019

A few days ago, a construction license was granted for the fourth reactor of the nuclear power plant, which is under construction in Mersin. However, since 2019, when the foundations of the three reactors were laid and the construction began, cracks have been detected in the foundation; water leaks on the ground, work accidents, and two explosions have also been recorded. Despite concerns raised, the Erdogan administration still holds that Akkuyu NPP, which was scheduled to be operational on the 29 October Republic Day in 2023 at the latest, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Republic, will still be completed before this date. Apparently, this nuclear power plant is now a part of the election propaganda of the political administration. Under normal circumstances, nuclear power plant constructions require at least four years of high-security processes and high costs to be managed with cautious steps. However, general elections are foreseen to be held in 2023, and the operation date seems to be changed to be before 2023 October. This situation indicates that Akkuyu NPP will be used as power propaganda before the general elections during 2022 and it is intended to be a part of the election rhetoric.

Workers were not allowed to take a break during the pandemic

This acceleration has other ramifications as well. For example, with the slogan that Akkuyu NPP will be a gift for the 100th anniversary of the Republic, the workers in Akkuyu NPP were not allowed to take a day off during the pandemic period. Despite the supply material network



being very wide in nuclear power plant constructions, how can we believe that Akkuyu NPP construction was never in a lack of material or logistics during the Pandemic!

I also would like to remind you that the working conditions of the workers are quite strenuous and troublesome for thousands of people working and living together. While this population has come closer to being a municipality, the workers have been kept together in the barracks at a camp environment with inadequate infrastructure conditions. This situation made me write the [following article](#) in 2019 when 4 thousand workers were on-site; now I do not think that the facilities have been tripled to sustain the 13 thousand employees currently there.

In the meantime, transformer fires in the other VVER1200 project of Russia which gave construction directives by owning 100 percent of Akkuyu NPP's shares, had occurred in Belarus. The fact that the transformer fires had occurred in Belarus where the same VVER 1200 type reactor construction pointed out that there would be a similar technical disruption in the transformer of Akkuyu in Turkey.

Nuclear technology is more dangerous in Turkey

Nuclear power plants, as a technology of war, are also the enemy of ecology, and with its risks and dangers, nuclear power is not suitable and preferable under the conditions of the climate crisis, and in fact, it is not even an energy source. However, what I want to emphasize through this accident and what I need to underline is: Our country has



unique economic, political, and geological conditions that make nuclear energy technology even more dangerous. First comes the rhetoric that nuclear is a 'power' in the political sense of the word, which is extremely misleading because power is what will make you powerless when misused. Akkuyu NPP shows our weakness, even before it is built and functioning.

Hiding weaknesses doesn't make anyone strong

Indeed "lightning strike" is being mentioned as the cause of the accident by the government-sided media which try to claim that Akkuyu NPP management is not responsible for the occurrence of the fire.

But such an approach makes the problem even bigger since it is a hint of insufficiency of Akkuyu 's infrastructure. Eventually, civil society organizations and volunteer scientists will investigate the truth of this claim and we will know the truth. Unfortunately, we can learn the truth only through our own commitment and insistence. However, the consequences of accidents and leaks at nuclear power plants concern ecology and those who are exposed to these externalities. Therefore, it is necessary for the administrations to be transparent, not to hide the truth from the public, to take precautions, and to be able to compensate for the damage.

Lawsuits filed once more* against activists!

On the other hand, a law suitcase was filed against the 17 Members of the Mersin Anti-Nuclear Platform since they intended to make a press release against Akkuyu NPP where Buyukeceli Village is in the neighborhood this year.

They wanted to make a press statement at the site of the Akkuyu NPP to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and to draw attention to the risks of the nuclear power plant on 11 March 2021.

However, due to the intervention of the security guards, the action could not be carried out. Despite the fact that the action did not take place, lawsuits were filed against the activists.

Everyone in the world should oppose Akkuyu NPP!

The fact that both Turkey and Russia, the owner of the facility, are far from meeting the principles of transparency and accountability, shows that the transparency you would expect at a nuclear power plant built to world standards is not there.

In short, both the political conditions in Turkey, the accidents that occurred in other projects by Russia, and perhaps the fact that a nuclear power plant will be completed in three years for the first time in the world are extremely worrying. Even if it is not completed, it is targeted for such a short period. Lastly, the administration and the company taking pride in the mistake that workers did not cease work during the Pandemic, requires opposing the Akkuyu NPP's construction and becoming operational (same thought is also valid for the Sinop project if it starts construction), as well as opposing all nuclear power projects all over the world.

**The first time lawsuits were filed against the opposition to Nuclear power plant project was in 2010*

Aarhus Convention in the nuclear sector, Important developments 7th Meeting of Parties

Jan Haverkamp, WISE International

The 7th Meeting of Parties of the Aarhus Convention from 18 to 21 October 2021 showed several important developments for the nuclear sector. Jan Haverkamp participated in the MoP in Geneva for Greenpeace, WISE and Nuclear Transparency Watch.

The UN Aarhus Convention came into force 20 years ago and deals with access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. Initially it was only signed by parties from the UNECE region, but this year Guinea Bissau entered as first non-UNECE Party.

The Netherlands and Czech Republic in non-compliance for lack of public participation before nuclear lifetime extension Borssele and Dukovany

The Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee (ACCC) already earlier had concluded that both the Netherlands (for the Borssele nuclear power plant) and the Czech Republic (for Dukovany) were in non-compliance with the Convention for failing to organize public participation on the environment before decisions for lifetime extension were taken. The Meeting of Parties accepted these findings unanimously, and also supported the ACCC in its compliance review of both Parties that they had not taken yet the proper measures, including legal steps, to repair that situation. For the Netherlands, the ACCC concluded that the proposed legal changes (which still have to be adopted) obliging a uniform public preparatory procedure within the General Administrative Law Act for changes in operation time of nuclear installations are probably insufficient to come in line with the Convention. A major problem is that this procedure does not oblige an environmental impact assessment or provision of the information as required under art. 6(6) of the Aarhus Convention, nor that viewpoints concerning environmental issues are taken into due account. Another is that the Dutch proposals only look at operation time, not whether Dutch law indeed fulfils all obligations under art. 6(10) of the Convention that prescribes public participation on the environment in all cases where there is a reconsideration or update of the activity, unless it would be clearly inappropriate (see under). The Czech Republic had changed its legislation in such a way that the word “decision” was removed from anything related to lifetime extension of nuclear installations. The ACCC did not accept that this meant that there were no decisions. It made clear that there are always decision moments before prolonged operation of a nuclear plant is allowed.

These findings means that in all UNECE countries and in new signatory Party Guinea Bissau, decisions to change the factual operation time of nuclear power plants need to be preceded by a public participation procedure on the environment, meeting all the obligations under art. 6 of the Convention, including that all options (including

closure) should be open, sufficient environmental information should be provided and viewpoints from the public should be taken into due account. If national laws do not include such obligations, they need to be adapted to do so. This has clear consequences for, for instance, the upcoming decisions on post-40 year operation of French nuclear power plants, but also in other countries.

General findings on compliance – more clarity for the nuclear sector

Based on the findings of the ACCC during the 20 years of existence of the Convention, the MoP also accepted a document with general findings on compliance, where the ACCC clarifies obligations under the different articles of the Convention. Several of those are also highly relevant for the nuclear sector. Some of the many highlights:

- Parliamentary or governmental legislative acts, or those of other bodies or institutions, which are basically authorisations of activities (for example the construction or lifetime extension of nuclear power plants) are decisions under the Convention. They do not fall under the exception of decisions in the “legislative capacity” of parliaments and other bodies. This has direct consequences for, for instance, the parliament decisions in Belgium to prolong the lifetime of the Doel 1,2 and Tihange 1 nuclear reactors and similar cases.
- Clauses and agreements between Parties to the Convention and third parties, that impose a blanket prohibition on the disclosure of the terms of that agreement, and other information related thereto, have no effect on the Party’s obligation to provide access to environmental information under art. 4 of the Convention. That means that, as example, all environment related information (in the broad sense of the Aarhus Convention) in the construction contract for the Paks II nuclear power station in Hungary should be available on request.
- “For official use only” is not an exception under the Convention for access to information. Only grounds set out in art. 4(3) and (4) are valid arguments. This has, for instance, consequences for withholding information from Aarhus signatory countries by the IAEA in its USIE database on nuclear incidents. Parties to the Convention are obliged to share this information upon request.
- Information from preceding strategies, strategic environmental assessments, etc. need to be made available during environmental impact assessments, in order to frame major environmental policy proposals. Hungary, for example, was found in non-compliance for not providing information about its energy strategy in the EIA procedure for Paks II.

- During public participation processes, the Convention requires from competent authorities to publish the preferred as well as by the project promoter investigated alternative options. However, when during the process the public requests the assessment of other options, including the zero option, the competent authorities need to consider the option(s) suggested by the public and provide reasons when not accepting them. Not doing so is in non-compliance with the Convention. We see such a problem currently playing out in Ukraine, which did not investigate the zero-option for the construction of the Khmelnytsky 3,4 nuclear power plant in its recently approved environmental impact assessment, although this was explicitly requested by environmental NGOs.
- The comments and viewpoints from the public need to be considered by the competent authority – the one responsible for the decision. It is not sufficient when the project promoter comments them, a practice still usual in many countries.
- The ACCC also gave more clarity about when application of art. 6(2-9) (public participation on the environment) is “appropriate” under the obligation of art. 6(10) in the case of reconsiderations and updates of activities.
- Periodic Safety Reviews (PSRs) – The ACCC made it clear that PSRs of nuclear power plants are reconsiderations within art. 6(10) of the Convention, in many cases also leading to upgrades under art. 6(10). To determine whether that means that for a certain PSR it is “appropriate” to organise a public participation procedure on the environment, the competent authority will have to take a reasoned decision. For 10-year periodic safety reviews, the ACCC concluded that it is always “appropriate” to apply the provisions of art. 6(2-9), that is a public participation procedure on the environment.
- During court appeals, courts need to carry out their own assessments of the argumentation and evidence whether legal obligations are met. They cannot just refer to assessments from authorities.
- The ACCC also clarified and strengthened the obligations when injunctive relief should be granted by courts, a practice that is for nuclear cases seldom implemented.

Communication on lack of public participation before license changes Borssele nuclear plant in the Netherlands admitted WISE, Greenpeace and LAKA submitted a new communication to the ACCC to request assessment whether public participation before two license changes of the Borssele nuclear power plant

in the Netherlands in 2015 and 2018 would have been appropriate under art. 6(10) of the Convention. They argue that never any public participation had taken place about environmental issues for the operation period between 2013 and 2033 of the power station (case ACCC/C/2014/104 – see above). Therefore, the license changes in 2015 and 2018 had not been able to benefit from input from such a procedure. They furthermore argued that the impact of these license changes in themselves would make the obligation of public participation on the environment appropriate. They also advocated that changes in nuclear power stations should, just like changes in fossil (thermal) and wind power plants, automatically lead to the obligation for public participation on the environment, in line with Annex I of the Convention, and not be dependent on an assessment of likely negative impacts on the environment by the competent authority, as is the regulation now.

The ACCC decided to admit this communication for further assessment.

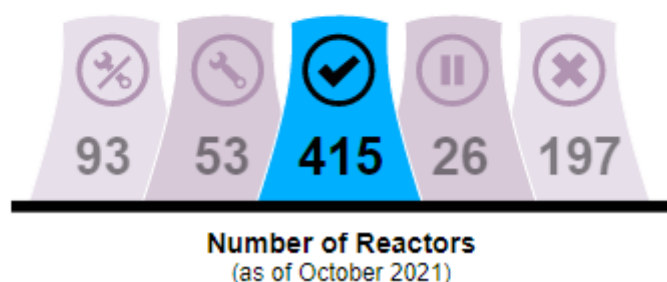
Harassment Belarus environmentalists strongly condemned – rapid response mechanism for protection environmental defenders A large part of the Meeting of Parties was dedicated to the findings from the ACCC that Belarus had been in non-compliance with art. 3(8) of the Convention because of the harassment of environmental activists, e.g. the Nuclear Transparency Watch member organisation EcoHome, from which Belarus cancelled registration earlier this summer after allegations of not providing proper documentation to the Ministry of Justice. This was another move in a long history of harassment of activists of EcoHome, including incarceration, random house and office searches and other. In spite of the condemnation of Belarus by the MoP, the Information Ministry closed down the EcoHome website per 1 November.

The resistance of Belarus to come to a consensus on these findings resulted in the first ever vote under the Aarhus Convention (decisions were so far always taken in consensus). With only support from Kazakhstan, Kyrgistan and Armenia, and abstention by Moldova, Belarus was completely outvoted and the Meeting of Parties accepted the findings of the ACCC, pleading for removal of certain privileges under the Convention when the registration of EcoHome would not be re-established before the first of December 2021. The MoP also supported the establishment of a rapid response mechanism on violations of art 3(8) of the Convention with a special envoy to be chosen in the coming years to enable fast follow up when environmental defenders are harassed.

NUCLEAR NEWS



World Nuclear Power Status



New to grid

In the United Arab Emirates Barakah-2 was connected to grid. The UAE is planning to operate 4 nuclear reactors at the Barakah site.

Closures

Pakistan, The oldest NPP, Kanupp1 near the city of Karachi closed in august this year. Kanupp1 was a 125MW CANDU reactor.

Source: <https://www.worldnuclearreport.org/>

ANTI-NUCLEAR NEWS



Petition: Meltdown for Europe's energy transition - Stop the greenwashing of nuclear power and gas

While the negotiations of the EU's "Fit-for-55" climate package are in progress, a fatal decision is looming. The climate neutrality and sustainability of Europe's energy supply is at stake. Specifically: **New nuclear and gas power plants are to be classified as "sustainable investments"**. This would mean that gas and nuclear energy would be painted green and cash floodgates would be opened for these energy sources. **It would send the EU's climate and energy policy on a completely wrong path!**

That's why the Greens in the EU launched a big petition to EU Commission President von der Leyen and EU Commissioner Timmermans. Sign right here and share the link with others:

www.act.greens-efa.eu/stopgreenwashing

