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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Oral Question B5-0223/2000

pursuant to Rule 42(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Nuala Ahern, Caroline Lucas, Jill Evans, Ian Hudghton, Jean Lambert,
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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on safety problems at British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield site

European Parliament resolution on safety problems at British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield site

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Union's duties under the Euratom Treaty, and specifically, Chapters 3 and 7 thereof, dealing with Health and safety and Safeguards, respectively, as well as the more general duty to promote sustainable development and environmental protection under the TEU and Article 6 of the EC Treaty,
- A. whereas in recent months, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) has had damning criticism levelled at it in reports by the UK Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII), firstly, on the falsification of mixed oxide nuclear fuel (MOX) data, and secondly, on safety procedures and the implementation of safety recommendations,
- B. whereas as a result, its main customers have stated their intention to halt business with BNFL, and even to return the MOX fuel, which is the subject of the falsification scandal, from Japan; whereas the head of the NII has expressed grave concern in particular about the tanks for liquid High Level Waste arising from reprocessing at Sellafield and the fact that these liquids have not been vitrified; whereas he has indicated that he would shut down reprocessing at Sellafield if the safety recommendations they have specified are not implemented in full,
- C. whereas the Union operates extensive on-site safeguard controls at BNFL's Sellafield plant, which depend on data from BNFL, and consequently the general safety culture problem identified by NII at BNFL is likely to affect the implementation of those EU controls, despite the double checking by EU inspectors,
- D. whereas, given the distances involved, it is not possible for all EU Safeguards inspectors to be based in Luxembourg; whereas there is a general risk of inspectors permanently based on-site relaxing their standards over time, a problem already corrected by the NII for its inspectors,
- E. whereas these problems highlight again the inconsistency of Euratom law, where safeguards are fairly comprehensive, but where the absence of a proper legal base for nuclear safety leaves EU citizens at risk from the installations of neighbouring states, and weakens the rather urgent negotiations on nuclear safety with accession states,
- F. whereas the Commission is committed under the OSPAR Convention to work towards substantial reductions in radioactive discharges to the sea by this year and close to zero concentrations in the marine environment by 2020,
- 1. Condemns unequivocally the falsification of the MOX test results by BNFL staff and the low levels of safety at BNFL and while welcoming the management changes at the company and the BNFL programme to improve the safety of their operations, does not see this as at all adequate in terms of meeting the genuine concerns of citizens or those of

neighbouring states;

2. Notes that reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel is the major source of radioactive pollution in the north-east Atlantic; believes that such pollution is unacceptable, and therefore applauds the resolutions submitted by Denmark and Ireland to the next OSPAR meeting, calling for immediate suspension or cessation of reprocessing;
3. Calls for the NII, since it is now absolutely clear that BNFL cannot operate their Sellafield site in a safe manner, to issue an order for the closure of both BNFL reprocessing plants, which should be closed permanently, and calls also for the cessation of MOX production at the pilot MDF plant, and asks that the new MOX plant should not be licensed;
4. Calls for a change in the role of Sellafield to one of a publicly funded body dealing appropriately with its part of the inheritance of the British nuclear industry, under the strictest government control, whereby all of the materials currently on site not due to be returned to clients would be classified as waste and where the production of the vitrification plant would be greatly increased, if necessary with French help, to make it possible to make all of the wastes as safe as possible as soon as possible, so as to avoid an inevitable and catastrophic accident at the High Level Waste tanks, or some other part of the site, as well as ongoing proliferation risks from the plutonium stockpile;
5. Calls on the Council and Commission, working together with Parliament, to reconsider the justification for nuclear reprocessing and the production of MOX fuel *per se*, based on Article 6(2) of Directive 96/29/EC, in the light of the implications of the recent accidents and incidents, a process which should include scientists from NGO's, who have made the kinds of critique of reprocessing and MOX fuel and their safety, that have now been validated by the UK NII;
6. Calls again for the Member States, particularly in view of the accession negotiations, to reach a minimum degree of agreement on nuclear safety standards at EU level, preferably via a Directive based on Article 203 of the Euratom Treaty, establishing harmonised minimum standards in the EU for the safe and reliable design, construction and operation of all nuclear installations, to implement generally agreed international safety standards, like secondary containment, cable separation, Probability Safety Assessment (PSA), etc, on the basis of the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as minimum standards for nuclear safety management systems, and the characteristics required of truly independent national nuclear regulatory institutions charged with implementing these standards;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the Member States, the accession states, the Japanese Government, the UK Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and BNFL.