



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**ENV 543
ATO 130**

NOTE

from : General Secretariat
to : Delegations

Subject : Information about the Informal Vienna Ministerial Meeting on the role of nuclear power in the climate change and energy efficiency debate (Dublin Follow-up)

Delegations will find annexed information from the delegations of AT/DE/IE/IT/LV/LU on the above subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 30 October 2007.

**Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers
1 October 2007 Vienna**

Information from the delegations of Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg

The Environment Ministers of Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Norway, supported by Luxembourg and Iceland, **met in Vienna on October 1, 2007**, in order to enhance cooperation and contribute further to the discussions on the **role of nuclear power** in the climate change and energy efficiency debates.

The principal issues discussed were nuclear safety and security; the need for more and better information to be provided to countries neighbouring nuclear states; issues of transparency regarding nuclear projects, transparency regarding the true costs of nuclear power as well as alternatives to nuclear power and the need to ensure the development and provision of sustainable energy supplies and services.

This meeting was a follow-up meeting to the one hosted by **Ireland on March 26, 2007, in Dublin**. At Italy's invitation, the next meeting will take place in Rome in 2008.

In this context it might be recalled that climate change and concerns regarding security of supply had spurred a new debate on nuclear power. In **March 2007**, the **European Council** also suggested that a "broad discussion takes place among all relevant stakeholders on the opportunities and risks of nuclear energy".

In their pertinent discussions, ministers reaffirmed that it remained the sovereign right of each country to decide on its energy mix, but emphasised their view that nuclear power was not compatible with the concept of sustainable development and that they were convinced that nuclear power did not provide a viable option to combat climate change.

Furthermore, they underlined their conviction that an increase in energy saving and efficiency combined with a switch to renewable sources of energy as well as concerted efforts to reduce deforestation and to develop other environmentally sound non-nuclear low greenhouse gas technologies, was the more sustainable way to meet the climate and energy challenges we face.

Delegations will find attached::

- The Ministerial Statement, Dublin Castle, 26 March 2007 (Annex I to the ANNEX)
- The Ministerial Statement, October 1, 2007, Vienna (Annex II to the ANNEX)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Dublin Castle

26 March 2007

We the Environment Ministers of Ireland, Iceland, Norway, and Austria, met in Dublin today (26 March 2007). Among the issues discussed was the current international debate on the future role of nuclear energy particularly in the context of climate change.

It is the shared view of the Ministers present that it remains the sovereign right of each country to decide on its energy mix. However, for Ireland, Iceland, Norway, and Austria, we voice serious concern that nuclear energy is being presented as a solution to climate change. It is our collective view that the current debate seeks to downplay the environmental, waste, proliferation, nuclear liability and safety issues and seeks to portray nuclear energy as a clean, safe and problem free response to climate change. The inherent risks and problems associated with the nuclear energy option remain and it can not therefore claim to be a clean alternative to fossil fuel use.

The trans boundary nature of the risks associated with nuclear energy and our collective responsibility towards the health and environment of our citizens dictates that we must ensure that their interests and concerns are represented in relation to all nuclear projects and installations. Only the highest levels of safety must be respected and maintained at all nuclear installations. In this regard the specific international liability regimes currently in place for the nuclear industry do not provide full scope compensation for potential damage or injury and provide a hidden subsidy to that industry.

The reality remains that after 50 years of nuclear power the issue of waste remains most intractable. The legacy of the nuclear industry for many generations to come continues to increase with little evidence of any real implementation of necessary long term solutions to the waste issue. Nuclear waste reprocessing, advocated as a solution to the management of nuclear waste, has long since lost its lustre and today the industry remains economically and environmentally untenable.

Reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel represents a key source of pollution risks and remains a significant source of radioactive pollution. In particular, we have continuing concerns regarding the ongoing reprocessing operations at Sellafield and the planned reopening of the THORP plant at that facility.

The planned reopening of the THORP plant follows the leak of 83,000 litres of highly radioactive and acidic liquid from an accountancy tank in April 2005 and the publication of an internal report on the incident by the operator which pointed to serious and extensive undermining and breakdown of the safety culture and practice in Sellafield. The importance of safety is underscored by the fact that reprocessing has resulted in the accumulation of very large volumes of extremely hazardous liquid high level waste (HLW) at Sellafield. This waste represents a considerable pollution risk both to the UK and neighbouring countries in the event of a serious accident or incident.

We call upon the United Kingdom Government to desist from reopening the plant on the grounds that this will inevitably increase radioactive discharges, the risk of radioactive pollution and because of the consistent and long standing poor safety performance at the plant over many years. Reprocessing should cease and effort and resources directed to the closure and decommissioning of the Sellafield Plant.

We request that, at a minimum, the safety case for reopening THORP be subject to an international expert peer review.

It was noted that the UK has committed to the Sintra strategy under the OSPAR Convention which provides for substantial and progressive reduction of discharges to the marine environment by 2020.

We re-emphasise our commitment to continue to articulate our shared concerns regarding nuclear energy and call upon nuclear countries to take decisive action in addressing the unresolved issues arising from the operation of nuclear facilities namely, safety concerns, pollution risks, radioactive discharges, nuclear liability, waste and proliferation risks.

It was agreed that the Dublin meeting had been very productive and worth while and that a further meeting of the Ministers and other interested States will take place in Vienna in the autumn of 2007.

Ministerial Statement
October 1, 2007, Vienna

The Environment Ministers of Austria, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Norway supported by Luxembourg and Iceland met in Vienna today, in order to enhance cooperation and contribute further to the discussions on the role of nuclear power in the climate change and energy efficiency debates.

The principal issues discussed were nuclear safety and security; the need for more and better information to be provided to countries neighbouring nuclear states; issues of transparency regarding nuclear projects, transparency regarding the true costs of nuclear power as well as alternatives to nuclear power and the need to ensure the development and provision of sustainable energy supplies and services.

In their discussions, Ministers

- Reaffirmed that it remains the sovereign right of each country to decide on its energy mix.
- Reiterated that the inherent safety, environmental and proliferation risks associated with the nuclear energy option remain.
- Emphasised their view that nuclear power is not compatible with the concept of sustainable development and that they are convinced that nuclear power does not provide a viable option to combat climate change.
- Called upon all governments to ensure that all aspects of nuclear power, including its risks, are clearly articulated to their citizens, in order to enable a balanced and informed debate to take place.
- Emphasised that the transboundary nature of the risks associated with nuclear power and their collective responsibility towards the health and environment of their citizens dictates that their interests and concerns are taken into account by nuclear states in relation to all nuclear projects and installations.

- Underlined that nuclear and non-nuclear states should make full use of the pertinent provisions of European as well as international law, including the Euratom Treaty, regarding public participation and consultations with countries which are likely to be exposed to adverse transboundary impacts of nuclear installations or projects. Furthermore, nuclear countries were invited to jointly work on the improvement of such provisions.
- Agreed to cooperate at regional and international level in order to secure the highest common safety standards for nuclear installations with due regard to the interests of all states
- Called on the EU to continue their work in the field of nuclear safety and to promote transparency, inter alia by encouraging the recently established High Level Group on Nuclear Safety and Waste Management to identify effective measures to support these goals.
- Reemphasised their commitment to articulate their shared concerns regarding nuclear power and – once again - called upon nuclear countries to take decisive action in addressing the unresolved issues arising from the operation of nuclear facilities namely, safety and security concerns, pollution risks, radioactive discharges, nuclear liability, waste and proliferation risks.
- Voiced their concern that a global growth in nuclear power would severely increase proliferation risks, and called on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to enhance its supporting role for national regulatory functions, including emergency preparedness, safety, facility and material security, and safeguards.
- Underlined their conviction that an increase in energy saving and efficiency combined with a switch to renewable sources of energy as well as concerted efforts to reduce deforestation and to develop other environmentally sound non-nuclear low greenhouse gas technologies, is the more sustainable way to meet the climate and energy challenges we face.
- Agreed that the Vienna meeting had been very productive and worth while and that a further meeting of the Ministers and those of other interested States will take place in Italy in 2008.