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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: Any other business

The importance of ensuring nuclear safety at the Belarusian NPP in
accordance with the EU recognised safety levels

- Information from the Lithuanian delegation

In view of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on 2 December, delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Lithuanian delegation.

Information Note by the Lithuanian Delegation

for the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, 2 December 2021

The importance of ensuring nuclear safety at the Belarusian NPP in accordance with the EU recognised safety levels

EU mechanisms within a modern international framework of nuclear safety requirements

Lithuania commends the efforts of the European Commission, ENSREG and the EU Member States to ensure the conduct of the official Peer Review process of the Stress Test National Action Plan (NAcP) prepared by Belarus. Lithuania especially welcomes the statement in the Final Report (to be approved by 24 November) that all the recommendations of the 2018 Stress Test Peer Review Report are equally important and should be implemented with no exceptions and in time.

However, stress tests and the implementation of the follow-up actions are only a part of the modern framework of the international nuclear safety requirements. Therefore, they cannot be used as a sole justification to authorise the operation of Belarusian NPP as “safe”.

It is clear that to avoid devastating nuclear accidents all modern safety requirements – package of Espoo, Nuclear Safety and Joint conventions, Vienna Nuclear Safety Declaration, contemporary IAEA Safety Standards, both EU directives – Nuclear Safety and Radioactive Waste Management, WENRA SRLs for existing reactors and Safety Objectives for new NPPs – should be urgently implemented with zero deviations.

The EU needs more effective tools to manage possible threats from third countries’ nuclear facilities. Current instruments, such as stress tests exercise, are not sufficient to reveal if all modern safety requirements are implemented.

European solidarity and nuclear safety beyond physical EU borders

Current hybrid attack by Belarusian regime on the EU borders demonstrates a complete disregard of human life. There is no doubt that there should be no expectations for transparency and trust in the EU-Belarus relations. We believe that the EU should use all economic measures to create and employ appropriate tools to defend its interests and ensure nuclear safety beyond physical EU borders.

Once again, Lithuania recalls the European Council Conclusions of 11 December 2020, where European leaders have unanimously called to ensure nuclear safety of the Belarusian NPP and prevent unsafely produced electricity imports. Lithuania also recalls Council conclusions of 25 January 2021 on Climate and energy diplomacy that echo the need to ensure highest environmental, nuclear safety and transparency standards in third countries. Common EU actions should be built on these statements maintaining pressure on Belarus and other third countries, which are or plan to develop nuclear power, to comply with the above-mentioned modern international nuclear safety requirements.

Call for support and actions

Further development of the Belarusian NPP project clearly shows that the EU needs to do more for the safety of our people. Therefore, we call upon the European Commission:

1. to ensure that Belarus would update NAcP and include safety measures proposed by ENSREG Peer Review Team in the spirit of continuous safety improvement, encourage Belarus to publish regular reports on the NAcP's content and status of its implementation and ensure close monitoring of the implementation of all stress tests recommendations;
2. to encourage the EU neighbouring countries, including Belarus, to participate in the EU topical peer reviews. Lithuania welcomes the invitation to third countries to participate in the second forthcoming EU topical peer review exercise dedicated to fire safety in this regard;
3. to prepare a report and propose additional EU level measures, which could help to ensure that neighbouring countries are continuously improving nuclear safety in line with the EU recognised safety levels.