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European Union

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#### INFORMATION NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

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Subject: Any other business

Implementation of nuclear safety recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report of the Belarus NPP 'stress tests'

- Information from the Lithuanian delegation

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Lithuanian delegation.

**Next steps on the implementation of nuclear safety  
recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report of the  
Belarus NPP ‘stress tests’**

***EU nuclear safety policy in the EU Neighbourhood***

- Safety and security of nuclear installations both in EU Member States and in neighbouring countries is a key priority for the EU. Importance of promoting and ensuring nuclear safety beyond the EU borders has been repeatedly reiterated by the Council in its Conclusions since 2011.<sup>1</sup>
- The European Commission has initiated and developed a number of instruments to increase nuclear safety at its borders. In 2011 the EU carried out risk and safety assessments ('stress tests') in all nuclear power plants (NPP) within the EU. The same year a number of EU neighbouring countries, including Belarus, expressed their willingness to undertake similar 'stress tests' by joining a Joint Declaration.
- The EU has been consistently sharing its best practices and experience in nuclear safety with the interested countries. Since 2013 the EU has provided technical assistance through the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation (INSC) with the aim to strengthen the national nuclear safety regulatory framework in Armenia, Belarus, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy (February 2019, February 2018), Council Conclusions on Water Diplomacy (November 2018); Council Conclusions on European Consensus on Development (May 2017); Council Conclusions on EU Climate and Energy Diplomacies (March 2017); Council Conclusions on Belarus (February 2016), Council Conclusions on Energy Diplomacy (July 2015); European Council Conclusions (May 2013, June 2012, February, March, December 2011).

Nuclear safety in third countries was also highlighted in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (June 2016).

### ***The implementation of nuclear safety recommendations in Belarus NPP***

- The NPP project developed by Belarus raises genuine concerns, as it might be commissioned neighbouring three EU Member States **without due and proper implementation of international recommendations.**
- On 2 July, 2018, the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) endorsed the EU peer review report on Belarus NPP stress tests, prepared by EU experts from 12 countries.
- The Belarusian **National Action plan (NACp)** was published only after more than one year, in August 2019 without request to ENSREG to conduct its peer review.
- NACp foresees only additional studies and analyses instead of specific safety improvement measures. Such situation means that **Belarus is going to commission its NPP without implementing any of the abovementioned international recommendations.**
- The European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) discussed the NACp and its preliminary assessment on November 14, 2019 and **invited Belarus to request ENSREG to conduct a peer review of the NACp and implement the agreed, as a result of the NACp review, the most important safety improvement measures before the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP.** The Group asked the Chair to write to the Belarusian regulator in this regard and to provide the feedback from ENSREG experts on the NACp prepared by Belarus.
- It should be also noted that the stress test exercise is only one segment of the whole list of Belarusian NPP related outstanding safety concerns. Other concerns such as the site selection and assessment, implementation of environmental conventions and IAEA safety standards, ensuring of safety culture are no less important.

### *The Role of the European Commission*

- Lithuania welcomes and appreciates the commitment by the European Commission and ENSREG to play an active role encouraging Belarus to implement nuclear safety recommendations outlined in the EU peer review report of the Belarusian NPP ‘stress tests’.
- We support the proposal of ENSREG to establish a single Board to oversee all stress tests’ peer reviews in third countries. In our view, the Board should be appointed shortly, following the receipt of nominations.
- Implementation of the EU stress tests recommendations is the absolute minimum requirement, whereas critical recommendations must be implemented before the commissioning.
- Subject to the developments and the absolute necessity to implement these recommendations, **Lithuania expects the European Commission would sustain continuity of the process and ensure proper monitoring of the process as well as regular reporting to the Council.**
- **Lithuania requests the European Commission to urgently address Belarus inviting them to request a peer review of their NAcP, to implement critical safety recommendations before the commissioning of the NPP and to attentively monitor (including regular onsite visits) implementation of the peer reviewed Belarusian NAcP.**
- Lithuania also asks the European Commission to fully use their power and expertise to influence the improvement of the overall nuclear safety at the EU borders and expects the EU Member States to express support to these endeavours. Transparency, accountability of recipient states and result oriented approach should be further introduced in the EU instruments supporting nuclear safety in its neighbourhood (e.g. the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation).