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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 17 March 2026
Environmental and safety implications of the Belarusian Nuclear Power
Plant in Ostrovets
- Information from Lithuania

Lithuania wishes to reiterate its longstanding environmental and safety related concerns regarding the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant in Ostrovets. The information announced last year by Belarusian officials about a potential expansion of the project by building the third nuclear reactor there has only deepened these concerns. It is important to recall that Belarus has been in non-compliance with Espoo Convention (the UNECE Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context) since 2014. Meetings of the Parties have repeatedly urged Belarus to properly evaluate reasonable alternatives and fully apply the Convention's requirements.

We maintain our position that the existing nuclear power plant just 40 kilometres from the densely populated Vilnius region, and any expansion of this project, presents an unacceptable risk. Moreover, the site was selected without complying with modern international safety standards and many technical requests from Lithuania – including the Lithuanian nuclear safety regulator VATESI's inquiries of May 2025 – remain unanswered.

We also see further intentions to expand nuclear energy facilities in Ostrovets. At the end of 2025, Lithuania received a notification from Belarus on the planned radioactive waste storage facility. The information provided indicates three alternatives for the project's implementation location, however media reports from last August suggested that Belarus may have already given preference to a site located closest to Vilnius and reportedly begun related works at the Ostrovets site. After reviewing the provided scoping document, Lithuania submitted 27 comments. The public in Lithuania expressed high concern regarding possible negative impact on groundwater and the Neris river.

Lithuania reiterates that both the continued operation and any possible expansion of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant and related projects should be suspended until all outstanding safety issues are thoroughly addressed and independently verified, including through full engagement with the Espoo Convention and other relevant international mechanisms.

Lithuania emphasizes that Belarus must be held accountable for its international obligations. We call on the European Commission and EU Member States to maintain unified pressure on Belarus and to demand transparent cooperation. We urge the Commission to utilize all available international instruments to prevent any further expansion of the project and the construction of new facilities until all questions raised by EU experts and neighboring countries are fully addressed. Nuclear safety and environmental protection know no borders; therefore, this must remain a top priority for the EU.
