

APPEAL FOR A NUCLEAR MORATORIUM IN JAPAN AND FOR THE IMMEDIATE REMOVAL OF NUCLEAR FUEL FROM THE FUKUSHIMA PLANT

This appeal aims to break through the wall of silence outside Japan that surrounds the catastrophe in Fukushima. The present Japanese government, guided by Prime Minister Noda, has de facto retreated from the desire expressed by his predecessor after the catastrophe to lead the country away from its dependence on nuclear energy, but among the public the debate is strong and opposition to nuclear energy is on the rise.

On an international level we are led to believe the accidents were trifling, that the situation is under control and the consequences for the Japanese population are minimal.

But the situation is totally different:

- in the three reactors in operation at the moment the accident occurred, the quantity of molten fuel -- which leaked from the vessel in unit 1 -- is greater than that of all previous accidents, and is completely uncontrollable. To state that "cold shutdown" has been achieved in the damaged reactors is senseless, inasmuch as that definition refers only to a core which is intact, while it turns out that the cores of units 1, 2, and 3 are partially or totally molten, with such a loss of control parameters that it cannot be excluded that they might achieve criticality configurations and locally uncontrolled chain reactions.

- The situation in the spent fuel pools has not been set right, and with repeated tremors of considerable intensity there is the risk that a new accident might be brought about with extremely grave and unforeseeable consequences, also because the fuel rods have been stored in higher-density racks. A group of experts from the Japanese Cabinet Office holds it likely that in the next few years an earthquake of magnitude 9 may occur in the ocean fault line and a tsunami with exceptionally high waves could strike not only the Fukushima utility but many others, too.

- The situation in the north-east region of the country is still extremely worrying: the seriousness of the radioactive contamination, regarding which the Japanese authorities from the outset implemented a cover-up operation, is showing no signs of abating; thousands have been uprooted from their homeland forever (including those transferred -- some on their own initiative -- from the polluted zone of Fukushima), have lost their livelihoods and prospects for the future, and live in distressing uncertainty.

- The Japanese government, however, has minimised the seriousness of the contamination, has raised the limit of contamination for children, and shown itself to be much more worried about restoring apparent normality rather than safeguarding the health of its citizens.

- On May 5th the last of the 50 commercially-operating nuclear reactors in Japan was idled for its periodical inspection (which this year includes tests and adjustments as a result of the Fukushima accidents) without compromising the supply of electrical energy to the country. Now a decisive contest is about to take place because, faced with the government and the nuclear industry's desire to reactivate the plants as soon as possible, a strong opposition on the part of the citizens is rising up.

We hold that these issues do not regard only Japan, but the whole international community, so we demand the Japanese authorities:

- **do not reactivate the currently idled nuclear reactors;**
- **intervene urgently to remove the fuel rods from the seriously-damaged pools and transfer them elsewhere;**
- **make immediate, even if belated, provisions for the evacuation of children from the contaminated zones;**
- **foster the institution of an international, interdisciplinary authority, under the aegis of the UN, to provide a solution to the situation in Fukushima, given the incapacity demonstrated by TEPCO to deal with the incident.**

SIGN THE PETITION