

Ambassador Viktor A. Gaisenak  
Permanent Mission of Belarus to the IAEA  
Hüttelbergstrasse 6  
1140 Vienna  
Austria

11/04/2006

Dear Ambassador Gaisenak,

Please find enclosed a letter signed by ten former Environment Ministers.

After reflecting on the lessons to be learned 20 years after the Chernobyl disaster, these prominent Europeans identify what must change: the International Atomic Energy Agency's role in promoting nuclear technology.

They call on Director General ElBaradei and Secretary-General Kofi Annan to propose amendments to the IAEA statute at the forthcoming IAEA Board of Governors and General Conference so that this United Nations Agency takes up its rightful role in fostering increased international peace and security without promoting nuclear technology. We urge you to support this call for reform of the IAEA as part of the overall UN reform process.

Assumptions made about nuclear technology when it was still a new technology in 1945, or 1957 when the Agency was established, or 1968 when the NPT was negotiated, simply have to be re-evaluated today. In the early days there were high hopes that nuclear energy would be safe, clean and cheap and that its proliferation risks could be contained. Experience has now given us the data to say that these assessments cannot be supported.

And the data is very clear.

History provides the data on proliferation, more than enough times to date. Nuclear reactors in India, Pakistan, Israel, and DPRK have produced nuclear materials, which were used to make nuclear weapons. Countries pursuing research, production and the use of nuclear energy for 'peaceful purposes' are contributing to the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology, which can all too easily lead to the development of nuclear weapons. Declarations by the G-8 and others to restrict the spread of nuclear material were shown to be as meaningless as the United States granted nuclear technology to India just this year. Safeguards have shown themselves time and again to be inherently fallible, while the availability of raw material for nuclear weapons continues to grow and itself poses a proliferation and security threat.

The economic data says it all: as you know, it doesn't add up without absurdly large subsidies. Through change of the IAEA statute, the Agency should cease to be broker and referee for a commercial industry, which is in decline, despite the rather glitzy PR exhibition underway. Creating opportunities for the nuclear cartel to continue to make profit is an inappropriate activity for any part of the multilateral project of the United Nations, which stands for and should more energetically uphold the principles of peace, security sustainable development, economic

justice, human rights and environmental protection that it espouses. While many links of the nuclear chain are state-owned, a great deal of the activities are commercially run or outsourced. UN Agencies should not be in the business of facilitating unprofitable and dangerous businesses, which create an unjustifiable and unsustainable toxicity liability for hundreds of thousands of years to come.

The data is disturbingly clear on the health impacts of radiation. The power industry has routinely exposed people to radiation, through contamination of water, air and the gene pool itself – an experiment that is not reversible. Radiation is inherently dangerous, and to be avoided when choosing a means to produce electricity, especially when there are so many cheaper, cleaner ways of getting it. The release of radiation from nuclear testing and the routine release of radiation through reactors have contributed to the cancer plague of the 20th century. Genetic impacts are discussed less frequently than cancer. We now know that radionuclides with a long half-life are cumulatively loaded into the environment and may result in ongoing impacts on health as well as long-term damage to the gene pool.

The data on waste, like the economic scandal, reveals a similarly vast and disturbing mess. Fewer, bigger reprocessing sites, a feature of the so-called Multilateral Nuclear Approaches model, will require the transport of nuclear material and waste between different centers. Waste will travel from nuclear power stations to repositories, to reprocessing centers, and then again as nuclear fuel. Low and high level waste resulting from the reprocessing will itself have to be transported. Almost all scenarios suggested in the Pellaud Report increased transportation requirements. There is an urgent need to stop the proliferation of the transportation of nuclear transports and to stop toxic radioactive poisons from traveling through high-density population areas and sensitive environments.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is an appropriate juncture to seriously question the viability and safety of nuclear power and the role of the IAEA in promoting this technology. As the former Environment Ministers point out, renewable technologies are available to guarantee the right to safe, clean and cheap energy. It's time to develop this capacity rather than investing more human and economic resources into more Chernobyls.

Sincerely



Dr. Ivan P Blokov  
Chernobyl Project Leader