

Open letter to: World leaders

Subject: The risks of nuclear reactors

7 March 2012

On behalf of the millions of people in the world who live with the threat of a nuclear disaster ruining their lives, we are writing to ask you to recognize that now is the time to put people ahead of the nuclear industry and hold the industry fully liable for the risks and damages of its disasters. It is time to remove the risks of nuclear from people's lives and shift our economies to clean, safe energy systems.

The earthquake and tsunami that devastated the east coast of Japan almost a year ago exposed the serious failures in the system for regulating nuclear reactors and for protecting people from nuclear accidents.

Tens of thousands died as a result of the destruction of the earthquake and tsunami. Hundreds of thousands continue to suffer from their impacts and also from the nuclear disaster that followed. Our thoughts remain with all those affected by these disasters.

The main lesson from the Fukushima nuclear disaster is that the significant failure of the institutions that were supposed to protect people from such an accident in fact enabled it. Years before the disaster, the risks of earthquakes and tsunamis were well known. Yet, the nuclear industry and its regulators chose to ignore the dangers.

The first to suffer from their negligence were first responders such as plant workers and firefighters who risked their health and even their lives to reduce the radiation risks for others.

Despite their efforts, more than 150,000 people have been forced to leave areas with the highest levels of radiation — losing their homes, communities and livelihoods. Many more still live in contaminated areas including pregnant women and children who are more vulnerable to the effects of radiation exposure.

The overall costs of the Fukushima accident, including compensation and decommissioning the Daiichi plant's six reactors, have been projected to reach \$500 to \$650 billion US dollars. Japanese law makes a nuclear operator fully liable for all the costs of a disaster, but in practice the Japanese people will end up paying almost all of the costs out of their taxes, not the nuclear industry.

The mistakes in Japan are repeated in every country in the world with nuclear reactors. No reactor is safe, and no regulatory system ensures safety. Millions of people are at risk, since at any time, any reactor could have a serious accident. Furthermore, even after 60 years of nuclear power, no one in the world can look us in the eye and say that a secure, long-term solution to storing radioactive waste exists. This highly hazardous waste must be stored safely for hundreds of thousands of years.

The nuclear industry often claims, incorrectly, that nuclear energy is needed to combat climate change. On the contrary, expensive and dangerous nuclear power diverts investment from renewable energy — the real solution to climate change.

Yet, in every country, decision makers and regulators are more concerned about protecting the profits of the nuclear industry than in fulfilling their responsibility to protect people.

It is now time to put people first.

Signed

Adenex, José María González/President, Spanish environmental NGO  
Aleksandr Yablokov, Russian United Democratic Party YABLOKO  
Aleksandr Zaytsev Murmansk regional public organisation "Kola Environmental Centre" Russia  
Alexey Toropov, Siberian Ecological Agency, Russia  
Alexey Zimenko, Russian Biodiversity Conservation Centre  
Alfiero Grandi, President of "Associazione per la riforma della sinistra", Italian Political Party  
Andrey Laletin, Friends of the Siberian Forests, Russia  
Andrey Talevlin, Russian Fund for Nature  
Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Laureate, 1984  
Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, President, African Monitor  
Askhat Kayumov, Ecological centre "Dront", Russia  
Bonnie Raitt: American blues singer-songwriter and a renowned slide guitar player. Raitt has received nine Grammy Awards in her career and is a lifelong political activist.  
Boris Rezhabek, North-Caucasian Department of International Ecological Fund and Institute Noospheric Research and Investigation, Russia  
Dr. Byungok Ahn, Head, Institute for Climate Change Action, Korea  
Dr. Do-Myung Paek, Chairman, Korean Doctors Association for Nuke-free society, Korea  
Ecologistas en Acción, Francisco Segura/ Coordinator, Spanish environmental NGO  
Ed Begley, Jr., Actor/Activist, acting in famous US television series St. Elsewhere  
Elena Stepanova, Russian Physicians for ecology  
Elisabetta Zamparutti - Leader of "Radicali Italiani" party, Italian political party  
Erich Pica, President, Friends of the Earth  
Father Hong-Pyo Park, Chairman, No Nukes Samchuck Coalition, Korea  
Father Kyu-hyun Mun, Director, Majungmool for Life & Peace, Korea  
Feodor Kronikovskiy, Russian Ecological group "Taiga"  
Gianni Mattioli - Leader of "Sinistra ecologia e libertà" party  
Grazia Francescato, Leader of "Sinistra, ecologia e Libertà" party, Italy  
Helen Kelly, President, Council of Trade Unions, New Zealand  
Ingrid Srinath, Secretary General, CIVICUS  
James Cromwell, American film and television actor  
Joanna Kerr, Chief Executive, Action Aid  
John Hall, Former U.S. Congressman  
Josh Karliner, International Team Coordinator, Health Care Without Harm  
Kelly Rigg, Founding Director, Varda Group  
Kjeld Jakobsen, President, Instituto para o Desenvolvimento da Cooperacao e Relacoes internacionais  
Kumi Naidoo, ED Greenpeace International  
Marina Silva, Brazilian environmentalist and politician (Running in the 2010 Brazilian elections)  
Massimo Scalia - Leader of "Ecologisti democratici" party  
Mauro Bulgarelli - President of "SI alle energie rinnovabili NO al nucleare"  
Mike Farrell, Actor/Activist, best known for his role in the television series M\*A\*S\*H (1975-83)  
Mikhail Piskunov, Russian Centre for Assistance to Citizen Initiatives  
Milya Kabirova, Russian Nuclear Victims Organisation "AIGUL"  
Mr. Anselmo Lee, Managing-Director, Korea Human Rights Foundations, Korea  
Mr. Heon-Soek Lee, Representative, Energy Justice Action, Korea  
Mr. Jin-Young Jeong, Chairman, Korean Teacher's Organisation for Ecological Education and Activity, Korea  
Mr. Kwang-soo Choi, Representative, Ecobuddha, Korea  
Mr. Nam Boo-Won, National General Secretary, YMCA of Korea  
Mr. Seung-Jo Roh, Representative, Climate & Energy Centre, Korea  
Mr. Yong-Hwi Kim, Secretary General, Cheondogyo Hanwool-Yeondae, Korea  
Ms. Mee-Jung Nam/Ms. Young-Sook Park, Co-Representatives, Korean Women's Environmental Network  
Ms. Sohee Im, Secretary General, Naummmunhwa Global Peace Activities, Korea  
Ms. Younghee Kim, Representative Lawyer, Lawyers Association for Nuke-free Korea

Ms. Young-sun Ji, Co-Representative, Korea Federation of Environmental Movement (KFEM)  
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Nikolai Zubov, Krasnoyarsk regional public organisation "Krasnoyarsk Regional Ecological Union",  
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Oliver Tickell, Founder, Kyoto2 Initiative  
Peter Yarrow, Singer/Activist, part of folk music trio Peter, Paul and Mary  
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Richard Harvey, International Human Rights Lawyer  
Robert Weissman, President, Public Citizen US-Organisation  
Rosa Lizarde, Global Coordinator, Feminist Task Force of the Global Call to Action Against  
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Sen. Francesco Ferrante - Senator and Leader of "Partito Democratico"  
Senator Bob Brown, Leader, Green Party Australia  
Senator Doug Cameron, Senator from New South Wales, Labour Party Australia  
Stefano Leoni - President of WWF Italy  
Suzanne Maxx, Founder/President, World Team Now  
Vittorio Cogliati Dezza / Ermete Realacci, President and Honorary President of Legambiente