



NEWS RELEASE

'Nuclear energy must play greater future role,' says science think-tank

Brussels, Tuesday, 22 April 2003: The global use of nuclear energy for power generation must be increased substantially in order to reach targets for reducing CO₂ emissions and to meet projected growth in electricity demand.

This is the main conclusion of a position statement issued by the High Scientific Council, a group of top scientists belonging to the European Nuclear Society (ENS). The society has a membership of more than 20,000 specialists working in the nuclear energy sector across Europe, both East and West. (See related 'Note to Editors' for more information about the council and its members).

The statement says: "In short, we do not think that nuclear power is *the* answer to the problem of supplying more energy while reducing carbon emissions, but we are convinced there is no solution without it."

Bertrand Barré, a nuclear R&D expert who is Chairman of the High Scientific Council, said: "As energy is so important for sustainable development, we carried out an in-depth and wide-ranging examination of the world's energy future. We also took great care to maintain a completely objective view. Some people may not like our main conclusion, but it is based on a realistic appraisal of the different options available. We hope the statement will be a thought-provoking contribution to the all-important energy debate."

The statement says that large quantities of additional energy will be needed to fuel economic growth, especially in developing countries with large populations, such as China, India and Brazil. If present trends continue, global energy demand is predicted to grow by 50% by 2020 and to double by 2050. However, the ENS statement, 'Climate Change & Nuclear Power', says the growth will be even greater for electricity, the demand for which is likely to treble by 2050.

In addition, the statement stresses the importance of limiting the growth in energy demand in developed economies and of shifting their energy mix to non-carbon emitting sources, such as renewables and nuclear. Hydro is the only renewable source of large-scale electricity, but the scientific group points out that its potential for expansion is limited and its increased use could raise environmental issues. Solar and wind power would play an increasing role, but are not expected to take on the burden of meeting the demand for reliable, continuous power, as they generate power intermittently.

The ENS scientists say nuclear is practically free from carbon dioxide emissions but is "the subject of strong controversy and poor public or political acceptance", which has led some European countries to announce plans for a phase-out. The statement says topics giving rise to most public concern – nuclear safety and radioactive waste disposal – must be addressed.

The ENS group characterises as "very good" the safety record of nuclear power plants based on Western technology, with no loss of life due to an accident during almost 10,000 reactor-years of operation. The statement says radioactive waste is safely managed and poses no short-term threat to human health. Although there is at present no final disposal facility for high-level waste, a number of countries are taking action to create geological repositories for this material. In addition, a "very significant" amount of research and development work is going on to reduce the quantity and toxicity of radioactive waste.

The full position statement is available on the ENS website: <http://www.euronuclear.org>.

Contact for further information: ENS President Andrej Stritar, tel: +386 1 472 11 00.



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Note to Editors

The position statement was drawn up by the High Scientific Council of ENS, the learned society for European nuclear scientists, engineers and other specialists in the atomic energy field.

ENS

High Scientific Council

Roberto ANDREANI	Deputy Director, Energy Department, ENEA	Fusion, Plasma Physics	Italy
Bertrand BARRÉ*	Vice President, Scientific Communications, AREVA	Reactor Physics and Technology, Fuel Cycle	France
Adolf BIRKHOFFER	Managing Director, ISAR Institute for Safety & Reliability	Reactor Physics & Safety	Germany
Leonid BOLSHOV	Director, Russian Academy of Sciences	Reactor Physics & Safety	Russian Federation
Roger CLARKE	Chairman ICRP	Radioprotection, Radiobiology	Canada
Frantisek JANOUC	Nuclear Physics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, and Institute of Technology, Stockholm	Nuclear Physics	Czech Republic
William E. LEE	Professor, University of Sheffield	Materials Sciences	United Kingdom
Gérard MÉGIE	Chairman, CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)	Earth Sciences, Climatology	France

* Chairman

ENS carries out various activities in pursuit of its main aim – the advancement of science and engineering related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.