

APPEAL

Appeal from citizens and consumer organizations of central Japan to the G8 Energy Ministers meeting.

Aomori City, Japan

June 7–8, 2008

To G8 Energy Ministers:

How can Japan provide leadership on energy issues when its national policy squanders trillions of yen on a nuclear fuel cycle plutonium-based program that produces no results?

Rokkasho, a massive commercial reprocessing plant for radioactive spent fuel, is about to start commercial operation this summer in Aomori Prefecture, northern Japan, in spite of recent front-page headlines in Japanese newspapers reporting the discovery of an active earthquake fault directly under the plant site.

Rokkasho is part of Japan’s national nuclear fuel cycle program, which has nuclear cooperation agreements with the USA and Euratom, and, through the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP), with Canada, Italy, and the U.K. as well.

On May 21st we delivered an appeal to the G8 environment ministers concerning the massive quantities of radioactive releases from Rokkasho into the Pacific Ocean. (These releases would be absolutely illegal under the London Convention if disposal took place from a ship at sea.)

We appeal to you, the G8 energy ministers, to reject Japanese endeavors to promote nuclear fuel cycle cooperation among G8 countries for the following reasons: it is very poor energy policy, it contaminates the environment, it will waste public resources of the countries involved, and it severely obstructs vital work at hand: the fight against global warming.

Japan’s nuclear fuel cycle (plutonium) program has been under development for over half a century. It is not producing a single kilowatt of electricity today. Commercialization of the fast breeder reactor has been delayed 8 times and is now planned “by 2050”.¹ Because of this the plutonium extracted at Rokkasho will be stockpiled on site. Shunsuke Kondo, head of Japan’s Atomic Energy Commission admits that “tens of tons of plutonium” will accumulate at Rokkasho over the next several years.²

The Japanese government may not be informing G8 energy ministers that there is a great deal of opposition in Japan to legalization of the wanton radioactive pollution from Rokkasho and to development of the fast breeder reactor.³

Cities, towns, and villages in northern Japan have petitioned the national government to pass a law making it illegal for radioactive materials to be released from Rokkasho into the marine environment. A petition organized by consumer organizations, food cooperatives and fishery unions demanding a ban on radioactive releases from Rokkasho, signed by more than 810,000 people, was submitted to the Japanese government in February. More than one-third of the adult population of Fukui prefecture, where Japan’s prototype fast breeder reactor, Monju, is located, has signed a petition asking that the reactor never be operated again. Monju has been shut down since December 1995 due to a sodium leak and fire accident.

On May 25th, in Osaka, citizens and consumer organizations from central Japan (Hyogo, Osaka, Kyoto, Shiga, Nara, and Wakayama prefectures) held a public meeting to demand that Rokkasho be prevented from operating. Japanese citizens want to protect northern Japan's agricultural and marine products of from radioactive contamination. We represent the network that emerged from this meeting.

APPEAL

We appeal to you, the G8 Energy Ministers, to condemn the radioactive contamination of the Pacific Ocean and the world's atmosphere from the Rokkasho reprocessing plant, a part of Japan's nuclear fuel cycle program.

We appeal to you to reject nuclear fuel cycle cooperation among G8 countries — reprocessing, breeder, and plutonium utilization technologies — on the grounds these programs are poor energy policy, pollute the environment, abet nuclear proliferation, and, have a detrimental effect in the fight against global warming by diverting massive amounts of funds from energy conservation, improving efficiency, and development of renewable energy sources.

June 4, 2008

Tabetainen Aomori, Irannen Saishori Network

(Network: "Yes" to Eating Aomori Agricultural and Marine Products, "No" to Reprocessing. The network is comprised of citizens and consumer organizations in central Japan (Osaka, Hyogo, Wakayama, Kyoto, Nara, and Shiga prefectures).

Contact Information:

Tabetainen Aomori, Irannen Saishori Network

c/o Green Action, Suite 103, 22-75, Tanaka Sekiden-cho, Sakyo-ku,

Kyoto 606-8203, Japan

Tel: +81-75-701-7223 | Fax: +81-75-702-1952 | email: amsmith@gol.com

Footnotes

- 1 Japan Atomic Energy Commission , "Framework for Nuclear Energy Policy"
- 2 If Rokkasho operates as planned, 7 tons of plutonium will be extracted annually.
- 3 To date about 1 trillion yen (more than \$9 billion U.S.) of taxpayer and ratepayer money has been spent on the fast breeder reactor development program.

Choosing the reprocessing option and operating the Rokkasho reprocessing plant will cost at least 19 trillion yen (about \$180 billion U.S.), far more than disposing without reprocessing.