

Nuclear Power Growth ‘Possible – Perhaps Necessary’

Brussels, 12 February 2001: Growth in the use of nuclear power in Europe over the next 20 years is “possible – perhaps necessary – and cannot be ruled out”.

This was one of the main points made in a speech in Brussels today (Monday) by one of Europe’s top power company chiefs.

Nils Andersson, Director (Generation) with Vattenfall AB of Sweden, addressed a meeting of the Brussels Energy Round Table, a business and industry forum, on the theme: “A vision for nuclear energy in Europe for the next two decades”.

He said he disagreed with a statement contained in the European Commission’s Green Paper on security of energy supply, published at the end of last November, that renewed growth in nuclear energy “seems unlikely”.

Dr. Andersson said: “If the economic need becomes strong enough, the next two decades may well see the construction of new nuclear power plants in Europe.” He suggested that the Californian power crisis might not have occurred if there had been more nuclear generating capacity available.

He also referred to the application by the Finnish power company TVO for a government decision favouring construction of a new reactor unit in Finland, the country’s fifth. It was possible that the conditions prompting that application could be replicated in others parts of Europe. These included increased electricity demand, the future closure of ageing fossil fuel-burning power plants and the need to develop clean energy sources in order to meet the Kyoto targets.

“It is in just such a scenario that nuclear becomes an obvious choice for new investment,” said Dr. Andersson.

Regarding the planned development of deep underground repositories for nuclear waste in Europe, Dr. Andersson said the obstacles involved were largely political. With the technology and finance already in place, the only thing needed was the political will to make further progress. He added that the European Commission could play an important role, in highlighting the need for national governments to press ahead with repository projects.

The Green Paper called for research into radioactive waste management technologies to be actively continued – a recommendation that the European nuclear industry has welcomed.

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