

■ Press Release

Nuclear safety remains our top priority

24/03/2011

In response to the on-going nuclear events in Japan and the potential implications for the European nuclear industry, FORATOM published today an open letter to EU Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the 24-25 March European Council.

« Dear European Heads of State and Government,

The European Atomic Forum (FORATOM), the Brussels-based trade association for the nuclear energy industry in Europe, feels deep sympathy for the people of Japan affected by the recent devastating earthquake and tsunami. We praise the efforts made by the operators of the Fukushima nuclear power plant and the Japanese authorities to limit the consequences of the resulting nuclear accident.

It is premature to draw conclusions from the tragedy in Japan with regard to the European nuclear energy programme. Until the current situation has been brought fully under control and the nuclear events in Japan have been fully understood, we need to refrain from making any premature policy decisions that could have significant implications for Europe's energy future.

Nuclear operators in Europe can confidently claim that all power plants in operation are safe and that the combination of events in Japan is extremely unlikely to occur in Europe. In light of the on-going situation in Japan, European utilities have already begun a process to re-assess the safety of their nuclear power plants, as part of a broader approach of continuous safety assessment and enhancement.

We support a common EU-level approach to analyse the consequences of the Japanese nuclear events, and to develop a common framework to re-assess the safety of nuclear power plants without delay.

In this respect, we welcome the European Commission's proposal to conduct a specific 'safety and risk evaluation' in order to re-assess the safety of nuclear power plants across Europe. The European nuclear industry is ready to take part in these tests by helping national safety authorities to jointly define safety criteria and by assisting in their implementation. In the meantime, it is imperative that we avoid drawing premature conclusions on the potential results of these tests.

Nuclear energy is and will continue to be a key element in meeting Europe's energy needs. The nuclear industry sets the highest standards for safety and, through our focus on continuous learning, we will incorporate lessons learned from the events in Japan.

Respectfully, »

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