
Links between Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power

This resolution was passed at the 23rd World Congress, in Mombasa, Kenya by the IPPNW International Council April 30th, 2023

IPPNW affirms that the links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons are such that in order to fully abolish nuclear weapons, we also must stop the parallel process of nuclear power.

This resolution is an updated version of a similar resolution “Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy - The Links” adopted at the 13th World Congress of IPPNW in Melbourne, Australia, Dec 1998.

IPPNW urges that there be:

1. No more uranium mining. Leave it in the ground.
2. No more plutonium extraction from existing nuclear materials.
3. No new nuclear power plants.
4. Expeditious transition from nuclear power to renewable energy sources.
5. Blending down of existing stores of highly enriched uranium thus rendering these stores less likely to be diverted for nuclear weapons proliferation. How to handle plutonium to make it safe is still being discussed.

Reasons for Above:

1. The acquisition of nuclear-weapons-useable materials is the first step to making nuclear weapons
2. The technical processes to create nuclear power or nuclear-weapons-usable materials are essentially the same. Many nuclear plants have produced both. For example Chernobyl was a “dual purpose” plant.
3. The 1953 “Atoms for Peace” speech was widely seen as a cover for the military to maintain access to nuclear-weapons material after the closure of the Manhattan Project.
4. Nuclear power makes the proliferation of nuclear weapons more likely and verification of nuclear weapons more difficult. For example India made and exploded its first nuclear weapons test from a reactor given to India from Canada. This example of proliferation happened despite promises to the contrary.
5. The problem of what to do with high level nuclear wastes remains an unsolved dilemma threatening the environment and human health. This issue is similar for wastes originating from commercial nuclear fuel cycles or wastes from military grade material. Health hazards and multi generational health effects are the same from either stream.

6. The 'weaponization' of a nuclear power plant can happen in areas of conflict with great risks of purposeful or accidental dispersal of radioactive material. (e.g. Zaporizhzhia plant in Ukraine).
7. Various renewable power methods exist today which use techniques that are cheaper, cleaner and safer than nuclear power and also faster to produce. The resulting waste from renewables does not last for multi generations.
8. In our climate crisis, it makes sense to fund the cheaper, faster, cleaner renewable power methods (e.g. solar, wind).

Concerns specific for Canada:

The government of Canada is enabling foreign-owned start-up companies to set up in Canada to extract plutonium from nuclear waste to make Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs). Consider:

1. Canadian environmental laws are considered 'lax', or 'easy to work around' compared to other countries, hence Canada attracts these companies.
2. Canadian government money for SMRs is flowing to these companies, rationalized by promising jobs for disadvantaged areas.
3. Canada has no official policy regarding plutonium extraction even though unofficial adherence to such a policy happened after India created a bomb from Canada's gift of a nuclear reactor.
4. Several of these start-up companies plan to extract plutonium. Their plan is to market the resulting SMRs world wide and include the technology to extract plutonium with it. This activity would create the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation.

Implementation of the Resolution includes:

1. Adding to existing IPPNW educational materials on the topic of the links between nuclear weapons and nuclear power.
2. Recognition that adoption of this resolution would give tremendous support for those who are working on various aspects of these issues spanning the nuclear power-weapons connection. Whether the issue is uranium mining, or trying to establish a policy on plutonium extraction, or trying to transition to renewable energy sources, this international resolution would help bolster activities of the affiliates to whom it is most relevant.

Estimate of staff time and resources required to implement this resolution:

Staff time and hence funding would be related to the time required to collate informational materials and post them digitally. Financial outlay should be minimal.