FORATOM
european atomic forum

Statement of participants at the International Conference on

CAN SLOVAKIA SECURE ENERGY SUPPLY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT NUCLEAR?

In Bratislava on May 5-6, 2004, 163 participants met at the Conference CAN SLOVAKIA SECURE ENERGY SUPPLY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT NUCLEAR?

The conference was sponsored by the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Pavol Hrušovský, by the Chairman of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Prof. Štefan Luby, and by Board Chairman and CEO of the Slovak Electric (SE) utility, Miroslav Rapšík.

In Session I – International Views – the participants listened to 6 presentations, among them one from Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Energy, Mme Loyola de Palacio, delivered by the EU Ambassador and Head of Delegation, Eric van der Linden.

In Session II – National Views - the participants listened to 11 presentations from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation, Finland and Bulgaria.

In Session III – Industry Views - the participants listened to 11 presentations from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation, Hungary and two international companies.

General Situation

The participants emphasized that energy demand has been increasing – and will continue to do so – even though conservation measures and improvements in energy efficiency are being implemented. Despite the commitments of countries with respect to the Kyoto Protocol to prevent climate change, greenhouse emissions have actually increased, and they will rise further after 2010, if nuclear power plants are closed at the end of their design lifetime and are not replaced by new nuclear capacity.

Nuclear power plants generate environment-friendly electricity safely and economically. Nuclear has resolved issues related to technologies for radioactive waste and spent fuel management, which have paved the way to demonstration phases. Public awareness continues to be an issue; its improvement requires greater transparency in informing the public.

New nuclear construction is in progress mainly in the Far East, also Russia has an extensive program. In the EU, a new fifth nuclear unit has been approved and is in progress in Finland. The French government is considering the construction of a new design nuclear unit to prepare for the future replacement of older reactors. Nuclear power plants worldwide are also extending operating licenses and increasing capacity by uprating. Nuclear phase-out programs in some countries result from coalition government concessions to the Greens.

Situation in Slovakia

The operation of six units with VVER-440 reactors in Slovakia produced electricity safely, reliably and economically.

At two V1 Bohunice units, reconstruction with significant safety upgrading was implemented so that all review missions stated that all the deficiencies have been eliminated and the units now meet European safety standards. In spite of this, the Slovak government had to accept a commitment to close them in 2006, or 2008 respectively, as a precondition for Slovak admission into the EU. At two V2 Bohunice units, modernization is under way.

Mochovce units 1, 2 were built with enhanced safety levels in cooperation with West European partners. The construction of Mochovce 3, 4 has been suspended. Their completion would be the most economic means to replace the missing output following the enforced closure of V1 Bohunice.

Slovakia has an independent regulatory body with international reputation and legislation corresponding to the standards of the IAEA and of developed nuclear countries. Slovakia's own nuclear infrastructure would enable it to complete Mochovce 3, 4 in cooperation with foreign partners. Slovakia has the Processing and Treatment Centre for radwaste in Bohunice and the National Repository in Mochovce, and is investigating the possibility of building an ultimate disposal facility.

Following the closure of V1 Bohunice units in 2006 and 2008, respectively, and of coal-burning units, the deficit in electricity production in Slovakia could rise gradually up to 13500 GWh yearly. The import of such a large amount of electricity would not be affordable. Besides that, lessons learned from the extensive losses of supply during last year summer heat wave in a number of countries underline the importance of energy self-sufficiency.

Conclusions

The participants at the Conference called on decision makers both in the EU and in Slovakia to provide fair treatment to nuclear power compared with other energy sources, especially with renewables, without prejudice to nuclear safety. This implies ensuring equality in terms of economics, tax, and accounting for externalities.

The participants called on the Slovak government to initiate studies that compare the full life-cycle costs, impacts and risks, across the spectrum of energy sources and uses. They should also internalize the external costs.

The participants called for a debate on the Slovak energy needs, taking into account the environmental impact of all potential sources of energy and the costs of providing electricity from those sources, and in addition a rational and objective analysis of the security of supply of those sources. It is necessary to have a range of sources for electricity generation that are cost effective and reliable, and respect the environment. The Slovak economy cannot withstand a sudden loss of its guaranteed energy supply.

The participants believe that the major government role is setting overall policy for the economy, energy and the environment, with an adequate base in legislation and institutional competence. The Slovak government should have clear strategies for achieving self-sufficient energy-policy goals with reserve power and for meeting climate-change and air-quality goals.

The Conference concluded that the nuclear option should remain open in Slovakia, as part of a balanced energy mix, in line with developments abroad and the EU Green Paper from 2000; the alternative is Slovakia's failure to secure an affordable energy supply for its citizens.

The participants supported the completion of Mochovce 3, 4, complying with enhanced safety requirements, as the most effective option. In SE privatization, the government should insist on as large an involvement of Slovak firms in the completion as possible.

The Slovak participants at the Conference stated with deep concern that the commitment of the Slovak government to close V1 Bohunice, accepted during EU pre-entry negotiations and reminding "energy imperialism", as warned by the former Finnish premier Paavo Lipponen, is not fair as it is based on a political appraisal from G7 summit in Munich in 1992 that VVER-440/V230 reactors cannot be upgraded with reasonable costs, which had been disproved by the Slovak evidence. The participants called on the Slovak government and the future Slovak members of the European Parliament to revive negotiations on a revision of this groundless commitment.

The participants called on the European nuclear community to support the Slovak demand to revise the commitment to close the two V1 Bohunice units and to complete the construction of the Mochovce units 3 and 4.

So the major message from the Conference is: GO NUKE SLOVAKIA!

Bratislava, Slovakia, May 6, 2004

Tibor Mikuš, Jiří Suchomel
Conference Co-Chairmen