



Resolution 1679 (2009)¹

Nuclear energy and sustainable development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Nuclear electricity generation has long been very controversial and different countries have adopted widely differing policies in their approach to the subject. In this context, the Parliamentary Assembly recalls its [Resolution 1435 \(2005\)](#) on energy systems and the environment and its [Resolution 1588 \(2007\)](#) on radioactive waste and protection of the environment.
2. Today, nuclear energy represents 17% of electricity generation worldwide. Countries like Finland, France, Russia, China, India, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and Japan have stated their intention to build or are already building new nuclear power plants. For example, by 2030, nuclear energy may become the major source of energy in Japan, supplying over 40% of the country's needs.
3. The Assembly notes that several Council of Europe member states (Poland, in co-operation with the Baltic states, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany), as well as countries in the Asia-Pacific region, are considering developing or continuing civil nuclear industries, possibly by extending the lifespan of the power plants already in existence without construction of new plants.
4. Some European countries hit by the energy crisis triggered in January 2009, when Russia's gas supply to the rest of Europe was stopped, have decided to review their energy policy, with the nuclear industry being given a fresh chance.
5. The Assembly is of the opinion that nuclear energy could help to attain the goals of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and especially the Kyoto Protocol because its use permits a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the burning of fossil fuels.
6. However, the Assembly stresses that nuclear energy cannot be considered "sustainable", since resources of uranium are finite and at best only available in the medium term. Paramount efforts are needed to fully develop all forms of renewable energy and energy saving, which will be needed when fuel sources for fossil and nuclear energy are depleted.
7. Moreover, in the long term, the nuclear industry still has to solve the problem of the safe, long-term disposal of radioactive waste.
8. The Assembly is therefore of the opinion that the international community has to find effective solutions to three inter-related tasks: energy security, economic growth and environmental protection.
9. It underlines, however, that nuclear industry has a high potential for developing research and development in the field of new technologies and can play an important role in reducing the effects of poverty and ensuring long-term energy sustainability in developing countries. It underlines, however, that the development and utilisation of the nuclear industry in those countries should also include the development of energy infrastructure and staff training.

1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2009 (25th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11914](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Etherington; and [Doc. 11961](#), opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mrs Lilliehöök). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2009 (25th Sitting).



10. The Assembly is of the opinion that nuclear energy should be underpinned by a sound system for ensuring the security and safety of nuclear materials and facilities.
11. The Assembly wishes to stress that no country in the world can act absolutely independently. It also notes that the energy market has become more global and more open and that existing practices will be obsolete.
12. The Assembly is of the opinion that these changes imply drawing up a set of new rules governing the energy market, in order to ensure the security and safety of the population.
13. The Assembly stresses that it is very important to create open, transparent and equal conditions for countries to access the market of goods and services offered by the world nuclear energy sector but to ensure at the same time the safety and the security of nuclear energy.
14. Public opinion is of the utmost importance regarding civil nuclear programmes. Citizens must have access to transparent information in order to fully understand the nuclear electricity generating process and especially the safety measures linked to this process.
15. Large-scale nuclear energy development throughout the world involves more and more countries having access to nuclear technologies, materials and equipment. The international community is facing issues related to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear and environmental safety. Therefore, countries with developed nuclear industries should pool their efforts in order to provide assistance to the countries interested in developing nuclear energy and any initiative in this direction should have the support of the international community.
16. A major step towards achieving such goals would be the development of an international infrastructure for nuclear energy, based on broader international co-operation and on the active participation of all the countries concerned, for example through the creation of international nuclear fuel recycling centres (uranium enrichment, managing of spent nuclear fuel and personnel training) under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
17. The Assembly therefore invites Council of Europe member states and non-member states to:
 - 17.1. in the framework of their policies for diversifying energy sources, take nuclear energy into account as an option for contributing towards the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming;
 - 17.2. increase international co-operation by adapting old habits based on secrecy to the new world realities, especially to globalisation, by promoting openness in the civil nuclear industry;
 - 17.3. strongly support research and development in the field of nuclear technologies, both in the branch of effective energy production and in the management of nuclear waste and effectively implementing the results of that research;
 - 17.4. promote policies of transparency in all the stages of electricity production by the nuclear industry;
 - 17.5. take measures in order to widely inform civil society on all aspects of nuclear energy;
 - 17.6. take speedy and concrete steps towards solving the problems of nuclear waste;
 - 17.7. take all necessary measures to lay the foundations for a global nuclear energy infrastructure, including the establishment of international nuclear fuel recycling centres under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency;
 - 17.8. review the rules governing the nuclear energy market.
18. The Assembly also recommends that the existing international organisations concerned, in particular the IAEA and the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):
 - 18.1. determine with clarity which technologies can be used for the construction of new power plants;
 - 18.2. ensure strict observance of the safety rules by the countries lacking experience with the nuclear industry;
 - 18.3. contribute to staff training and to monitoring of the entire process of nuclear energy production in these countries, especially in terms of compliance with nuclear safety rules.

19. Finally, the Assembly decides to organise parliamentary debates on the future of nuclear energy in order to bring together all the different points of view on the topic, which may vary considerably from one country to another.