Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 912 (1981)[1]

Nuclear energy and in reply to the 8th activity report of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Referring to its Recommendation 846 (1978) on energy and the environment, its Resolution 711 (1979) in reply to the activity reports of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) (1977 and 1978) and its Resolution 720 (1980) on the safety and economic aspects of the fast-breeder reactor ;

2. Noting that :

a. findings presented at various international meetings, including the 11th World Energy Conference (8-11 September 1980), have confirmed the analysis of the energy situation which provided a basis for the attitudes adopted by the Assembly in these various texts : the growing cost and foreseeable exhaustion of oil supplies in the long term, to which must be added the immediate effects of the war between Iran and Iraq which is reducing oil supplies by 2.5-3 million barrels a day ; large-scale investment in and very long-term prospects for the development of new or renewable energy sources ; the need to rely in the next twenty years on nuclear power and coal as substitutes for oil ;

b. according to the NEA report nearly all nuclear programmes have slowed down, mainly owing to the anxieties felt by large sections of the public on the long-term treatment of radioactive waste and the safety of reactors ;

c. this trend is delaying the experimental implementation of the solutions suggested in studies and research conducted by the NEA ;

d. a number of non-nuclear countries without energy resources would like to employ nuclear technology for civil purposes ;

e. the transfer of this technology, which is one of the factors likely to encourage the nuclear industries to pursue their programmes, faces certain difficulties since it carries the risk of misuse for military purposes ;

f. these difficulties are linked in particular with the nature of the guarantees required from purchasing countries ;

3. Considering that :

a. failure to make full use of nuclear power will open the way to an energy shortage which is rendered all the more inevitable by the fact that the world's population will probably increase from 4 000 to 6 000 million by the year 2000 ;

b. history shows that the dangers inherent in a shortage which affects a vital need are far more serious than those involved in mastering nuclear technology ;

1. Assembly debate on 27 January 1981 (21st and 22nd Sittings) (see Doc. 4662, report of the Committee on Science and Technology). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1981 (22nd Sitting).

c. the commissioning of nuclear power stations is a lengthy process : this makes temporisation as disastrous as suspension of programmes since it postpones production of energy from this source beyond the critical period- which must be avoided ;

d. the nuclear option plays a necessary part in satisfying energy requirements, but cannot do so on its own : there is thus a need for a joint European policy based on the complementary diversification of resources ;

e. a lasting peace can only be guaranteed if the disparities between rich and poor countries are resolved by technological transfer under conditions which neutralise the risk of proliferation ;

f. general agreement on revision of the conditions of transfer laid down in the Non-Proliferation Treaty is likelier if European countries share the same principles- which presupposes a concordance of views on the problems of energy supply (as indicated in sub-paragraph 3.d above) ;

g. the need for international agreement on conditions of transfer is rendered all the more pressing by the fact that existing or pending bilateral agreements indicate that an increase in the number of countries possessing nuclear technology can reasonably be expected ;

4. Accordingly considers that :

a. pending the development of other sources of energy, there can no longer be any question of abandoning or slowing down current nuclear programmes, which would carry the risk of choking the world economy for an indefinite period and of leading to general conflict : the action needed to develop these programmes and to master the dangers must be taken in parallel ;

b. a research effort should be promoted at European level to rationalise energy use, to gain maximum benefit from the main energy sources available and in particular to develop the production of energy from nuclear fusion ;

c. it is possible to overcome the risks since substantial progress has been made as a result of the international co-operation initiated inter alia within the NEA ;

d. in the matter of non-proliferation, all the parties concerned must realise that the survival of our peoples can only be assured by adopting a resolutely world-minded view of the problems and by giving the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adequate powers to control the use of nuclear technology ;

5. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on member governments :

5.1. to establish and organise a joint policy on energy, which includes nuclear energy, as well as alternative sources ;

5.2. to ensure that such an energy policy acknowledges the resources that are available within all the member countries of the Council of Europe ;

5.3. to take note of the importance of security of supply over the long term, as against short-term expediency ;

5.4. to provide the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency and other appropriate international agencies with adequate funds to pursue these aims and objects ;

5.5. to implement more effectively the Non-Proliferation Treaty and similar international treaties and agreements in this context, and to support the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in ensuring its observation.