

Resolution 847 (1985)¹

Radioactive waste management

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recognising that nuclear energy accounts today for more than one-fifth — and is expected to account, by 1990, for near to one-third — of electricity produced in the Council of Europe area, and that for many countries nuclear technology constitutes an essential element of their current, medium and long-term energy strategies ;
2. Aware that energy from nuclear sources involves the production of radioactive wastes, which require to be managed safely in respect of human health and the natural environment ;
3. Considering that public support is essential for the development of civil nuclear energy programmes, and that this support will depend on levels of confidence in how safely the environment and the health of nuclear industry workers and the public are protected ;
4. Noting that inadequate information and controversial opinions on particular waste management practices and procedures have added to public fears ;
5. Noting also a recent report by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), which indicates that radioactive wastes may be safely disposed of using current technology ;
6. Bearing in mind that human exposure to artificial radiation can be assessed in the context of exposure to radiation from cosmic sources and from naturally occurring radioactive materials ;
7. Believing that the release of radioactive effluents into the environment is acceptable only if :
 - a. levels of exposure are within the limits and general criteria recommended by the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) ;
 - b. treatment of the effluents does not result in a commensurate reduction in exposure ;
 - c. all discharges are regularly and strictly monitored ;
8. Having regard to the findings of its Public Parliamentary Hearing on Radioactive Waste (Stockholm, 10-11 September 1984) and to the 12th Activity Report of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) ([Doc. 5256](#)) ;
9. Recalling the decision taken at the 7th consultative meeting of the Contracting Parties to the London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Waste and Other Matters (London, February 1983) to set up an ad hoc working group to study the question of sea-dumping of radioactive materials, including waste ;
10. Believing that the transport by sea of all radioactive materials should be reduced to a minimum, but that stronger safety standards and operational procedures should be defined and enforced ;

1. Assembly debate on 26 and 27 September 1985 (11th and 12th Sittings) (see [Doc. 5413](#), report of the Committee on Science and Technology, and [Doc. 5448](#), opinion of the Committee on Agriculture). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 September 1985 (12th Sitting).



11. Recognising that the reprocessing of spent fuel is an essential adjunct to the introduction of fast breeder reactors, but that current appraisals of the economic argument for fast breeder technology should direct attention to alternative and/or complementary strategies, such as the conditioning of spent fuel for direct disposal ;
12. Noting the various strategies which are under consideration for the disposal of long-lived radioactive waste, and that the deep underground option is already at an advanced stage of development ;
13. Aware that the decommissioning of nuclear installations involves the management of substantial quantities of waste, but that these wastes can be handled in a similar way to those from the nuclear fuel cycle ;
14. Considering that the establishment of repositories for long-lived waste disposal which could eventually be used by more than one country could lead to safer and more efficient waste management :
 - a. by enabling the best choices to be made of disposal sites, and
 - b. by reducing the financial burden for countries with small nuclear energy programmes,
15. Calls on the governments of member states currently or prospectively engaged in nuclear energy programmes :
 - a. to continue to refrain from the sea-dumping of low and medium-level waste in the light of the conclusions drawn by the Contracting Parties to the London Convention ;
 - b. to develop alternative methods to sea-dumping for safe disposal of low and medium-level radioactive wastes ;
 - c. to reduce the sea transport of radioactive materials, including wastes, to a minimum, and to improve conditions of such transport :
 1. by giving advance warning of details of shipments to all parties concerned and using, wherever possible, specially-designed ships ;
 2. by ratifying the international transport conventions which incorporate the "Regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials" of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) ;
 3. by co-operating internationally to ensure compliance with these conventions and to organise emergency services in the event of accidents ;
 - d. to control rail and road transport of radioactive materials strictly, so as to ensure rigorous compliance with the IAEA "Regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials" ;
 - e. to ensure that people are not exposed, through any sources, to radiation doses from nuclear reprocessing plants which are above the limits established by ICRP ;
 - f. to bring the technology of conditioning spent fuel for direct disposal to a point where it is industrially applicable ;
 - g. to develop as a matter of priority, to an industrially applicable stage, the deep underground option for the disposal of long-lived waste :
 1. by accelerating programmes for the installation, in proposed host geological formations, of the facilities required for in situ studies on the long-term movement of radionuclides in the terrestrial environment ;
 2. by improving mining and construction methods for the emplacement of wastes in deep geological repositories ;
 3. by providing for the continued and stringent monitoring of such operations in accordance with technical and safety requirements ;
 - h. to intensify international co-operation :
 1. for the safe disposal of long-lived wastes, by studying the possibility of establishing repositories which — bearing in mind the need for public acceptance in the host country — could eventually be used by more than one country ;
 2. for the decommissioning and dismantling of nuclear installations, by giving wider dissemination to the results of national experiences in this field ;

- i.* to provide for effective public participation in decisions on the choice and development of sites for radioactive waste disposal ;
- j.* to apply the best possible criteria for radioactive waste management from the point of view of protecting human and animal health and the environment ;
- k.* to inform local authorities and the public of action to be taken in the event of an accident involving radioactive materials.