

HEARING IN LITHUANIAN NUCLEAR REACTOR CASE

Greenpeace challenges environmental impact assessment

Vilnius/Brussels, 30 September 2009 – Greenpeace, the Lithuanian environmental organisation Atgaja, the Latvian Green Movement and CEE Bankwatch were in court today challenging the environmental impact assessment for the proposed nuclear power station near the towns of Visaginas and Ignalina in Lithuania. The groups maintain that the assessment is fundamentally flawed because it does not evaluate the full impact of the proposed nuclear power plant, including the effects of radioactive waste, and does not compare the environmental impact of possible alternatives, such as renewable energy.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Environment argued that the assessment was complete and that future generations would be able to cope with nuclear waste thanks to technologies that are still to be developed. A final decision on the challenge to the environmental impact assessment will take place at a hearing of the Vilnius District Administrative Court on 12 October 2009.

Greenpeace EU nuclear expert Jan Haverkamp said: *“The environmental impact assessment is deeply flawed and fails to consider issues such as the impact of nuclear waste and the cost of decommissioning. It contains so many omissions that it is impossible to determine whether building a nuclear power station can be justified on environmental grounds.”*

Saulius Piksrys of the Lithuanian organisation Atgaja said: *“The environmental impact assessment tells us nothing about the costs that our grandchildren might have to bear to manage the storage of nuclear waste. The bill could be much higher than investors have predicted. Without an idea of what the full costs would amount to, Lithuanian authorities are taking a huge gamble at the taxpayer’s expense.”*

The proposed nuclear reactors would be built next to the town of Visaginas, in north-eastern Lithuania on the border with Latvia and Belarus, near the Chernobyl-era reactors of the Ignalina nuclear power station. The Ignalina nuclear power station was partly closed down in 2004. It will definitively come off-line later this year. If authorised, the new Visaginas plant would come on-line in 2018 and should have a capacity of around 3000 MW.

Alda Ozola from the Latvian Green Movement criticised the lack of data on the possible impact resulting from a substantial nuclear accident: *“How can the environmental impact assessment be complete if it doesn’t even consider the impact of a Chernobyl-style nuclear accident on nearby European countries?”*

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