

NO TO NUCLEAR POWER: NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES TO WORLD LEADERS – MEDIA RELEASE

April 20, 2011

- Ottawa (April 21st, 2011)

On the eve of the **25th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster** – and six weeks after the devastating nuclear disaster in **Japan** – **nine Nobel Peace Laureates** are **calling upon world leaders to invest in safer forms of renewable energy**. The six women Peace Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, and Jose Ramos Horta have sent an **open letter to 31 heads of state** whose countries are currently heavily invested in nuclear power production, or are considering investing in nuclear power.

"It is time to recognize that nuclear power is not a clean, safe or affordable source of energy," they say. "We firmly believe that if the world phases out its current use of nuclear power, future generations of people everywhere—and the Japanese people who have already suffered too much—will live in greater peace and security."

The letter goes on to highlight the serious long-term impacts of nuclear power production, including the challenges of finding safe and secure storage for nuclear waste. The Laureates point out that while countries continue to produce this expensive and dangerous energy, other cheaper and more sustainable sources are very accessible.

"There are presently over 400 nuclear power plants in the world—many, in places at high risk for natural disaster or political upheaval. These plants provide less than 7% of the world's total energy supply. As world leaders, you can work together to replace this small amount of energy from other readily available, very safe and affordable sources of energy to move us towards a carbon-free and nuclear-free future."

The open letter follows below.

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OPEN LETTER

April 26, 2011

To: World Leaders

From: Nobel Peace Laureates

Choose Renewable Energy Over Nuclear Power: Nobel Peace Laureates to World Leaders

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine—and more than two months after the massive earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan—we the undersigned Nobel Peace Laureates ask you to invest in a safer and more peaceful future by committing to renewable energy sources. It is time to recognize that nuclear power is not a clean, safe or affordable source of energy.

We are deeply disturbed that the lives of people in Japan are being endangered by nuclear radiation in the air, in the water and in the food as a result of the breakdown at the Fukushima nuclear plant. We firmly believe that if the world phases out its current use of nuclear power, future generations of people everywhere—and the Japanese people who have already suffered too much—will live in greater peace and security.

"Twenty-five years after Chernobyl, some people claim things are getting better. I disagree," says Mykola Isaiev, a Chernobyl liquidator (a person who helped clean up the site). "Our children are sick from eating contaminated food and our economy is destroyed." Isaiev says he can relate to the liquidators now working in Japan. Like him, they probably did not question much the safety of nuclear power.

Consider the words of a shopkeeper in Kesenuma, one of the towns that bore the full force of the tsunami along the northeast coast: "That radiation thing is extremely scary. It is beyond a tsunami. A tsunami you can see. But this you cannot see."

The sad reality is that the nuclear radiation crisis in Japan can happen again in other countries, as it already has in Chernobyl in the former Ukraine SSR (1986), Three Mile Island in the United States (1979) and Windscale/Sellafield in the United Kingdom (1957). Nuclear accidents can and do result from natural disasters—such as earthquakes and tsunamis—and also from human error and negligence. People around the globe also fear the possibility of terrorist attacks on nuclear power plants.

But radiation is not just a concern in a nuclear accident. Each link in the nuclear fuel chain releases radiation, starting with drilling for uranium; it then continues for generations because nuclear waste includes plutonium that will remain toxic for thousands of years. Despite years of research, countries with nuclear energy programs such as the United States have failed to solve the challenge of finding safe and secure storage for "spent" nuclear fuel. Meanwhile, every day more spent fuel is being generated.

Nuclear power advocates must confront the fact that nuclear power programs provide the ingredients to build nuclear weapons. Indeed, this is the underlying concern with regards to Iran's nuclear program. While the nuclear industry prefers to ignore this huge threat in pursuing nuclear energy, it does not go away simply because it is downplayed or ignored.

We must also face the harsh economic truth of nuclear energy. Nuclear power does not compete on the open market against other energy sources, because it cannot. Nuclear power is an exorbitantly expensive energy option that is generally paid for by the taxpayer. The nuclear industry has received extensive government subsidies—taxpayer money—for underwriting of construction, liability caps and insurance for clean up and health costs. We can more responsibly invest this public money in new sources of energy.

There are presently over 400 nuclear power plants in the world—many, in places at high risk for natural disaster or political upheaval. These plants provide less than 7% of the world’s total energy supply. As world leaders, you can work together to replace this small amount of energy from other readily available, very safe and affordable sources of energy to move us towards a carbon-free and nuclear-free future.

We can’t stop natural disasters such as those that just occurred in Japan, but together we can make better choices about our energy sources. We can phase out fossil fuels and nuclear power and invest in a clean energy revolution. It’s already underway. Globally in the last five years there has been more new energy coming from wind and solar power than from nuclear power plants. Global revenue from solar, wind and other renewable energy sources surged 35% in 2010. Investing in these renewable energy sources will also create jobs.

Renewable energy sources are one of the powerful keys to a peaceful future. That’s why so many people around the world—especially young people—are not waiting for governments to make the switch, but are already taking steps in that direction on their own.

Committing to a low-carbon, nuclear-free future will enable countries to partner with and expand the growing and increasingly influential global citizen’s movement that rejects nuclear proliferation and supports renewable sources of energy. We ask you to join them and create a powerful legacy that will protect and sustain not only future generations but also our planet itself.

Sincerely,

Betty Williams, Ireland (1976)

Mairead Maguire, Ireland (1976)

Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Guatemala (1992)

Jody Williams, USA (1997)

Shirin Ebadi, Iran (2003)

Wangari Maathai, Kenya (2004)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa (1984)

Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Argentina (1980)

President Jose Ramos Horta, East Timor (1996)



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