

**Joint Appeal issued by Citizens' Nuclear Information Center (Tokyo),
Green Action (Kyoto), and Greenpeace Japan**

***NGOs in Japan Call for Japanese Government and Utilities to Terminate Plutonium Fuel (MOX) Shipments from Europe to Japan,
Call for En Route Countries to Join in Ending Shipments***

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The appeal can be downloaded at: <http://www.greenaction-japan.org/modules/wordpress0/index.php?p=64>

For immediate release.

5 March 2009, Tokyo/Kyoto, Japan---- Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, Green Action, and Greenpeace Japan appealed to the Japanese Government to stop the world's largest ever shipment of weapons-useable plutonium due to leave France for Japan on 6 March 2009.

The shipment, due to depart from the port of Cherbourg on British-flagged vessels, contains approximately 1.7 metric tons of plutonium contained in 65 assemblies of MOX (mixed plutonium and uranium oxide) fuel. The fuel, made from plutonium separated from Japanese spent fuel, which was shipped to the French state-owned Areva NC1 for reprocessing, is destined for nuclear power plants of three Japanese electric utilities, Kyushu, Chubu, and Shikoku Electric Power Companies.

This shipment is part of Japan's failed attempt to utilize plutonium in its nuclear power program². The program, originally designed to commercialize plutonium-producing fast breeder reactors, has been in development for over 50 years costing trillions of yen and yet Japan's plutonium program today produces no electricity, lights not a single light bulb.

Japanese electric utilities hope the fuel to be shipped will start its troubled MOX fuel utilization program. If begun, many more shipments will follow as Japan holds about 38 tons of plutonium in Europe, continuing to put the en route countries at risk.

"This shipment is a threat to the security, safety, and environment of countries on the route of the shipment. There is no emergency contingency plan made in consultation with maritime authorities of en route states. The shipment lacks an adequate liability and compensation regime, and there is no commitment to salvage the material if it goes overboard," the NGO group stated in their appeal. "We appeal to countries potentially on the route of this and future MOX fuel shipments to join us in calling for the termination of these shipments, which put en route countries' safety and security at risk."

In 1992, 1999 and 2001, shipments between Europe and Japan containing plutonium were heavily protested by en route countries and ignored by the Japanese Government. Not one atom of the plutonium in those shipments has been used in Japan due to nuclear power plant accidents, data falsification scandals, and Japanese local opposition to MOX fuel use.

According to the Japanese Government and the Ministry of Land, Transport, Infrastructure and Tourism (MLIT), the utilities are responsible for safety of the MOX fuel transport; “We’ve told [the Japanese electric utilities] time and time again that they should put more effort into the safety of sea transports, just like they put into the safety of their nuclear power plants.” (*Section Chief Masato Mori, 13 February 2009 at Diet member briefing. Mr. Mori is the official responsible for the transport cask safety at MLIT.*) MLIT says the effort by Japanese electric utilities is not sufficient.

Security for the journey from Europe to Japan will be considerably less extensive than the security provided for the plutonium fuel over the two nights of 4 and 5 March for the 20-kilometer land trip between the Areva reprocessing site in La Hague and the Cherbourg port.

The MOX shipment’s transport casks are only required to withstand the following in sequence: a 9-meter drop, 800 degree Celsius fire for 30 minutes, immersion underwater at 15 meters for 8 hours, followed by immersion under water for 200 meters for 1 hour, without a nuclear chain reaction (“criticality”) occurring.

Twenty Japanese national Diet members, including prominent members of the leading opposition party signed a letter addressed to MLIT on 26 February 2009, stating that the shipment should not go forward without meeting Japanese Government regulations. At issue was insufficient testing to assure the MOX fuel will not “go critical” under accident conditions. Disregarding Diet members’ concerns and the Ministry’s own concerns, MLIT rushed through the approval just hours after the initial 15 Diet signatures were submitted.

Notes to Editors:

- 1.The state-owned French nuclear company Areva, which fabricated the MOX fuel to be transported has misrepresented the proliferation threat posed by commercial plutonium contained in this and other MOX fuel. On 2 March, the Platts trade newsletter reported our letter sent to IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei calling on ElBaradei to “remind Areva and the governments involved in the upcoming shipment of the security risks their nuclear programs pose to the world.” (Platts Nuclear News Flashes, Monday, March 2, 2009).
- 2.To date, commercialization of the fast breeder has been delayed 10 times (a total delay of 80 years) with the target date for commercialization set back to 2050. Commercial start up of the recently constructed 2.3 trillion yen Rokkasho reprocessing plant has been delayed 16 times and its future is uncertain due to serious technical problems with the plant. The MOX program planned to start in 1999 has been delayed due to nuclear accidents, data falsification scandals, and local citizen opposition.

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