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Should we scrap the NPT and dismantle the IAEA?

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On November 10 2006, ACDN put out a media release also published on its own site: "Iran's Nuclear Programme: Segolene Royal is right."

On December 6, the "Nuclear Phasing-out" Network (Sortir du nucléaire) put out a statement entitled "Iran's Nuclear Programme: Segolene Royal is right... but she must take her views to their logical conclusion. We must scrap the NPT, dismantle the IAEA and phase out nuclearism."

As a member of the Network, ACDN regrets that it must explain that, although the statements have similiarities in the titles and some elements, ACDN bears no responsibility for the network's statement and does not share some of its ideas.

ACDN agrees that we must "phase out" both military and non-military nuclear programmes, and that the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA deserve harsh criticism for their role in spreading so-called "civilian" nuclear technology, which promotes the proliferation of nuclear weapons which both the treaty and the UN agency are actually supposed to combat.

But the statement attributes to Mme Royal certain ideas that do not seem to be hers, for to prevent Iran from controlling the whole of its nuclear cycle, including enrichment, is not the same as "debarring it from so-called civilian nuclear technology." **SEE FOOTNOTES**

Besides, more importantly, we don't in the present circumstances agree with "scrapping the NPT" or "dismantling the IAEA": to do so, given the lack of better tools, would open the door even wider to the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

With the "Abolition 2000" network, ACDN calls for:

* the effective and immediate implementation by the nuclear powers, including France, of article VI of the NPT, which requires them to negotiate the abolition of their nuclear arsenals;

* the reform of the NPT, particularly its article IV, so as to replace the right "to nuclear energy" with a right to renewable energy and energy economies;

* the creation of a specialised UN agency for this purpose;

* a redefinition of the IAEA's mission, so that it uses its technical know-how solely to monitor non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

FOOTNOTES

To operate nuclear plants, one does not need to produce the fuel oneself. One can import it, just as one imports coal, oil, gas ... or uranium ore. Most countries with nuclear planes do not actually have uranium enrichment facilities.

France enriches her own uranium, but imports it, currently all of it; her "energy independence" thanks to nuclear

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technology is therefore pure fiction. Iran on the other hand, having considerable uranium resources, would really be independent if it did its own enrichment. It is therefore understandable that Iran is claiming this right -in conformity with the NPT - especially because the "Eurodif" co-production contract, signed with France at the time of the Shah, was broken unilaterally by France. Long before the current crisis, but rather tardily, France realised that mastery of uranium enrichment could lead Iran to build nuclear weapons.

Nevertheless it is not correct to say that "civilian nuclear technology always leads to atomic bombs". While more than forty countries have nuclear power plants, nine "only" have acquired atomic arms. Whether one moves on from power plants to weapons is chiefly a matter of political will. However much the Islamic Republic of Iran repeats that it has no intention of getting nuclear arms, it convinces few people, given its president's other statements and the nature of the current regime. This seems to explain why Iran's plans are being blocked while similar plans from India are accepted: undeniably, the mastery of the enrichment process is a decisive step towards the possible building of nuclear explosives.

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