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The so-called "Energy transition law" at the mixed Assembly-Senate Commission

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Saintes, 9 March 2015

Monsieur Philippe Plisson
MP for the Gironde

Monsieur le député,

As elected representative of the 11e constituency of the Gironde, you are aware that two of the four production units of the Braud-Saint Louis facility, known as Le Blayais, were flooded by over 100 000 cubic metres of water from the Gironde during the storm of 27 December 1999, which knocked out the emergency pumps and could have led to a major accident similar to the one at Fukushima, Japan, on 11 March 2011. The raising by one meter of the dyke intended to protect the facility from a flood is not enough to guarantee that this will not happen again, for example if the tide factor was considerably higher than on 27 December 1999.

So the Blaye region is threatened with catastrophe by the four reactors at the Le Blayais facility. All four are over 30 years old, and so are past their lifespan originally planned. What makes this worse is that all four are now Moxed, i.e. contain plutonium, as did the no. 1 reactor in Fukushima. One of them is currently stopped for an indefinite time because of breaches of the Nuclear Safety Authority's prescriptions. Despite this, as you will have noticed, neither the locals nor the French people in general need candles to light their homes.

That is why we are asking you to act for the definitive closure of this reactor and its three neighbours. As MP for the region, you have a duty to watch over the safety of its natives, and will be held responsible for a nuclear catastrophe if you let it come without taking steps to prevent it.

In the next days we are asking you also to speak about the Energy transition law to be considered on 10 March in the mixed Assembly-Senate Commission. As pointed out by the 41 000 signatories of the petition "No energy transition without nuclear phase-out!", this law is unsatisfactory in that it proposes no possibility for the executive to close a power-plant, no timeline for closures, and no cut-off date for the operation of old reactors.

But it has been made even worse by several amendments adopted by the Senate.
One of them cancels the end-date of 2025 for reducing from 75% to 50% the nuclear share in electricity production, which destroys any notion of urgency for stopping the reactors. At a time when the age of the nuclear technology calls for numerous urgent closures in the next few years, necessitating real forward planning, this decision is incomprehensible.

While the Energy transition law is meant to provide for a reduction of the nuclear component to 50%, another amendment adopted by the Senate proposes to increase the installed nuclear power to 64.85 GW instead of 63.1 GW, so as to not have to close the Fessenheim plant when the EPR reactor at Flamanville enters service. It is incomprehensible that MPs who are meant to represent the interests of citizens wish to impose on us the risks and costs of an EPR reactor whose construction is bogged down, and of an ancient and dangerous plant situated in a seismic zone in a low-lying area where the Rhine could potentially flood it.

These amendments from the Senate, if retained by the mixed Commission, would result in indefinite postponement of the closures of old reactors, and would block the real development of renewable energy.

France cannot let herself face the costs of prolongation of her nuclear reactors - estimated at hundreds of billions of

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euros. Even less can she face the exorbitant costs - economic, but also human, social and cultural - of a nuclear accident !

You, Monsieur le député, have joined several of your colleagues in signing a letter to President Hollande asking him to organize a referendum on the question: *"Are you in favour of France participating with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons under mutual international control that is strict and effective?"* We thank you for that.

In that way you have proved your concern for elaborating and deciding democratically an intelligent security policy, liberated from the nuclear peril. That peril is firstly military in nature, but there is also a civil threat, as was proved by the accidents at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima. If humanity is to meet the immense challenges it faces, we must banish the sword of Damocles, we must be able to live in a world without nuclear weapons or power-plants.

To protect your fellow-citizens (including ourselves) we beg you immediately to convince your colleagues of the mixed Commission and the Commission for sustainable development and territory planning, not to sign a blank cheque for the prolongation of the old reactors and the perpetuation of nuclear technology, both civil and military, in France.

Yours faithfully,

For ACDN,
Jean-Marie Matagne, Président

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