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Letter from ACDN to the Administrative Council of the
"Nuclear Phase-Out" Network (the Réseau "Sortir du
nucléaire").

The gagging of the French anti-nuclear movement has to stop!

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Publication date: Tuesday 8 April 2014

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Placed online in French : 4 April 2014

To the administrators of the "Sortir du nucléaire" Network.

Dear Comrades,

We wish to raise with you several points about the internal democracy of the Network, points that we think show a serious governance problem. We do so in order to contribute to the emergence of a different kind of coordination of the anti-nuclear movement in France - different from the Network's current model, which we are less than happy with (and we are not alone).

We would like to participate in helping a new model to emerge. Whether it happens with the Network, without it, or against it depends on you.

We invite you to consider these two texts:

- I. The Nuclear Problem: not just civilian, not just military!

- II. Denial of Democracy at the Network's 2014 General Meeting.

In our conclusion to these analyses, we ask you to organise **an internal referendum in the Network** concerning the national referendum that we are calling for. We consider that that will be an important step in restoring a voice to the "anti-nuclear population", who need to be able to take control of their own actions and their own destiny.

While we are waiting for a reply soon from your Administrative Council as such, we would be glad to hear the individual views of each of you.

Cordially,

For the administrative council of ACDN,

Alain Dalibard, Aude Labat, Jean-Marie Matagne, Daniel Robert, Julie Thomas

- I. The Nuclear Problem: not just civilian, not just military!

Before joining in the debate about the "Nuclear Phase-Out" Network and the future of France's anti-nuclear movement, we think it is useful to recall why we are involved in it, and in particular the reasons why ACDN, founded in 1996 a year before the Network, chose to join it after 2000 and then leave it in June 2008 and then rejoin at the end of 2012.

A constant concern of ACDN within the Network has been the need to combat the military side of the problem (nuclear weapons) and not only the civilian side (nuclear power generation). ACDN has done this in the international Abolition 2000 network (which shares this view) and especially in the coordinating group (where we were for years

the only group articulating this view).

In working towards our double objective, ACDN has been practising **a method**: to promote unity among all the anti-nuclear actors, and to encourage and support all actions that help to popularise the plan of phasing out civilian and military nuclearism. ACDN contributed to this unity around nuclear arms by organising in May 2001 the 1st Nuclear Disarmament Days, and on the nuclear power question by joining in the Network's activities and taking our own initiatives (such as the first national colloquium "Exit from civilian and military nuclearism: Why and How?" held in Saintes in 2003.)

But in addition ACDN has proposed, ever since its foundation - this is written into its statutes and indeed represents its chief originality - **a political strategy** : to first call for **a referendum on France's participation in the abolition of nuclear arms**. These weapons, being by their very nature intended to commit massacres, make the French people potential victims of crimes against humanity but also possible accomplices in their execution, as well as accomplices right now in preparing for such crimes. Therefore the people have a right and duty to express themselves on this matter. Besides, that's the only means we have to overcome at the political level the resistance of France's pro-nuclear oligarchy, a resistance so deeply rooted in their skulls that even the Fukushima catastrophe, a sequel to Chernobyl, didn't succeed in fracturing it.

No referendum is ever won in advance. But suppose France's "abolitionists" were to lose a referendum on nuclear arms, they would not lose much: a setback would merely extend by two years or more the existing policies which have been pursued without break, consultation or debate by all the successive French governments since 1945. And could we win? We would have good chances of success, given the strength of our arguments and the state of public opinion, which is over 80% favourable to the abolition of nuclear weapons, according to various polls.

The mere fact of demanding a referendum, even if we don't get one, creates an opportunity to break the wall of silence surrounding nuclear weapons and put pressure on all the politicians who believe in so-called nuclear deterrence and yet say they believe also in democracy, President Hollande for example.

Such a referendum would permit the French people for the first time to grasp the nuclear question - giving priority to its military aspect but inevitably going into its civilian aspect: once you open the nuclear Pandora's Box, radioactivity will leak out and dissent will spread too. Thus it would permit us to counter both aspects of nuclear propaganda, and would open the path, as it must, to a second referendum, concerning the closure of all nuclear power plants - the question put needs to involve a phase-out plan (or possibly two plans giving a choice between two speeds and timelines).

A referendum thus opens the possibility for France to act for a world without nukes, and perhaps also without nuclear power plants. A nuclear-free France in a world that would be nuclear-free too, that is what we desire. So let's demand to be consulted!

One of the major grievances against civilian and military nuclearism, apart from the huge dangers they bring and their permanent poisonousness, is their intrinsically totalitarian character: they concentrate power in the hands of a handful (in the case of nuclear power, it's the "nucleocrats") or in the hands on one man (in the case of the bomb, it's the President). France's bombs and power plants were imposed on the French people without the least national debate, and this illustrates their deeply undemocratic nature - they are oligarchic and even monarchical, and the bomb can be called dictatorial and criminal. The only way to end this dictatorship is by democratic means. And referenda, under certain conditions, are part of democratic process.

That is the body of convictions that ACDN has been defending constantly for 18 years. Its president proposed them

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in 2002 when he put forward his candidacy for the presidency of France, and he proclaimed them more recently by going on a 42-day hunger-strike (15 May to 26 June 2012), a hunger-strike which other activists joined for varying durations (one was for 25 days). Its objective was to get an audience with President Hollande - after he had failed to reply to any one of many letters - and to ask him to organise a referendum on the question: *"Do you agree that France should participate with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, under a system of mutual and international monitoring that is strict and effective?"*

That referendum pathway was the objective of the motion that ACDN and others groups presented last year (Jan 2013) at the Network's General Meeting in Rheims, and again this year in Lyon (Jan 2014).

In June 2008 ACDN withdrew from the Network, regretfully and discreetly. Why? Largely because of the procedures - antidemocratic and morally unacceptable ones - that we were subjected to before, during and after the Dijon General Assembly (Jan 2008). Among other shameless manoeuvres, the leading group that headed the General Assembly caused this motion to be re-put with specious arguments, in order to "freeze" any modification to the Network's Charter that might introduce the elimination of nuclear and radioactive weapons into the Network's objectives, as would have followed from a motion which ACDN presented the previous day and which had been passed with a very large majority.

Despite this, so as not to tarnish the "image" of the Network, we did not publicise our withdrawal from it. This was perhaps a mistake, for doing so might have made the authors of this abuse (and some other people) more prudent subsequently. If we now have to leave the Network for similar reasons, we would certainly take a different line and would not miss the chance this time to make our indignation known.

The same concern for uniting in the anti-nuclear cause led us to rejoin the Network at the end of 2012, thinking that things had settled down.

So we were not members of the Network in 2010, and we did not have close knowledge of the events that shook it that year. According to the echoes that reached us, the events did not surprise us, since they were sequels to those that had done damage to us earlier. But we didn't want to meddle in the Network's internal affairs and divisions, thinking we had better things to do for the advancement of the anti-nuclear cause.

Today, unfortunately, we see that nothing has really changed in the way it operates, and this forces us to question it and to add our voice to criticisms that others have already made.

We will hold back from defining our position on the judicial matters into which the Network has been drawn in the wake of the events of 2010.

- II. Denial of Democracy at the Network's 2014 Annual General Meeting.

In Lyon on 18-19 Jan 2014, ACDN presented to the Network's Administrative Council an "orientation motion" entitled: "To Demand a Referendum for abolishing Nuclear Weapons". This motion was supported by several other groups (Collectif STOP-EPR ni à Penly ni ailleurs, SDN Lot, A.V.E.N.I.R, CSDN79).

The title specified that it was an **orientation** motion, as the original text proves - it was submitted in mid-October 2013.

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This motion was briefly presented to the Administrative Council on the evening of Jan 18, and on the 19th it was put to the AGM, which approved it by majority vote. Nevertheless, it was rejected under circumstances that lead us to speak of denial of democracy.

[There follow here, before the conclusion (below) several pages of details, with only the headings translated so far]

1. Before the Annual General Meeting

2. During the AGM

- ▶ A. A confused process,
- ▶ B. Absence of debate,
- ▶ C. "Moderating" of opportunities to speak,
- ▶ D. An uncorrected error,
- ▶ E. Deception as to the meaning of abstentions,
- ▶ F. Inconsistent weightings, and sleight of hand
- ▶ G. A preposterous rule
- ▶ H. Pretense

â€" -

Conclusion

1° The deliberations of the AGM of the Network held in Lyon on 18-19 January 2014 were marred by irregularities, and even frauds.

2° All the hours that the AGM spent discussing the "regionalisation" of the network were a waste of time.

The discussion of regionalisation had no other effect than to

- ▶ plunge the AGM into a sterile battle about procedure
- ▶ exclude any perspective on regionalisation
- ▶ perpetuate an antidemocratic mode of governance
- ▶ exclude any perspective on reforming the Network
- ▶ exclude any debate on fundamental strategy
- ▶ and rule out ACDN's motion, the only one proposing a strategy for nuclear phase-out that could have worried the nuclear lobby, and might at last give the French people a say on basic questions of society and survival - the questions of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

3° The presentation and vote on the motion d'orientation entitled "To Demand a Referendum for abolishing Nuclear Weapons", presented by ACDN and supported by other groups (Collectif STOP-EPR ni à Penly ni ailleurs, SDN Lot, A.V.E.N.I.R, CSDN79), were marred by grave irregularities which place in doubt the sincerity of the vote and the rejection of the motion which was done via a very debatable rule calling for "absolute majority reinforced" - a rule that was not respected consistently.

Consequently, we request the Administrative Council of the Network to send this motion to all the groups affiliated and claimed by the Network, and to put to them the following question:

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"Do you want France to commit actively to the process of banning and abolishing nuclear arms, and do you want the Network to support by all its means the current campaign (RAHAN) aimed at requiring and obtaining a referendum on the following question:

"Do you agree that France should participate with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, under a system of mutual and international monitoring that is strict and effective?"

In other words, we ask you to make up for the failings and irregularities in the preparation and operation of the last AGM **by organising an internal referendum**, using protocols to be agreed between the Network's Administrative Council and ACDN (and supporting groups).

We think that the Administrative Council would do itself great credit if it permitted the "anti-nuclear population" to have their say.

Signed at Saintes 4 April 2014

For the administrative council of ACDN,

Alain Dalibard, Aude Labat, Jean-Marie Matagne, Daniel Robert, Julie Thomas
