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### **Energy Policy after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Disaster**

Plans to construct new nuclear power plants or increase rates of operation by 2030 are impractical: Concrete policy options allowing for the elimination of nuclear power urgently needed

Friends of the Earth Japan

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, amid the ringing of tens of thousands of voices in protest of the restart of the Ohi power plant, the Japanese government hosted the Energy and Environment Council and presented "Options for Energy and the Environment" in which nuclear power will account for 0%, 15%, or 20-25% of Japan's energy by 2030. These options are to be open to public debate before the policy decision is made in August. However, these choices do not appear to have been structured based on lessons learned from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, and do not adequately reflect the voices of countless citizens who call for nuclear power generation in Japan to cease completely.

The post-Fukushima Japanese government has proposed to pursue policy that decreases reliance on nuclear power. Given this, we believe it is of utmost importance that the government presents plans and policies for permanently eliminating nuclear power, and to open the floor to public debate as to the concrete steps that should be taken to achieve this goal.

This discussion should largely draw from the reality that Japanese society successfully managed without almost any nuclear power generation for the past half year.

The process by which the three energy policy options were formulated and presented was not acceptable to the public. Each governmental committee's input was essentially shaped by the traditional pro-nuclear interests of the government, and Japan Atomic Energy Commission is known to have held meetings in secret. Moreover, this discussion took place far from the site of the Fukushima disaster and without regard for the actual conditions there, and victims of the disaster were not given proper means to express their concerns. Though the policy options are open to "public debate", the time frame is very short, and such debate will not occur in the Diet.

Among the three proposed policy options, the "20-25% nuclear power" scenario would require the new construction of nuclear power plant facilities, making it a nearly impossible option. The "15% nuclear power" scenario would also be unrealistic in that if we assume that facilities must be shut down after a 40 year lifespan, existing facilities would have to operate at greater than 80% capacity (increased from the rate of operation of 70% prior to the Fukushima disaster, and including reactors damaged by the disaster) in order to provide the proposed amount of energy. Again, this option is extremely unrealistic.

We at Friends of the Earth Japan strongly object to the proposed energy policy options, particularly the 20-25% and 15% scenarios; we reiterate that these options would require either the construction of new nuclear power facilities or the increased rate of operation of existing facilities. Given the consequences of the Fukushima Daiichi disaster, it is the Japanese government's responsibility to pursue policy that decreases reliance on nuclear power, and to thus design policy options that pave a road towards eventual elimination of nuclear power generation in Japan.

### *Nuclear Fuel Recycling Policy*

Under a zero-nuclear power scheme, direct disposal of remaining spent nuclear fuel would be possible. However, any other scheme involves a combination of direct disposal and reprocessing. In other words, if an option other than that of 0% nuclear power is temporarily chosen, nuclear fuel reprocessing automatically might continue. However, current technology for recycling nuclear fuel has many limitations and safety issues, and is extremely expensive. Therefore it is imperative that nuclear fuel reprocessing be discontinued immediately, and that all relevant information is released so that public debate and discourse on the matter can be pursued.

### *In relation to climate change*

The Energy and Environment Council has positioned nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuel use and thus a contribution to mitigating the impacts of global warming. According to this conference, all of the currently proposed policy options will necessitate retreat from the original goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020. The potential for renewable energy and reduced energy use overall to contribute to the 25% reduction goal has been greatly underestimated, and emphasis is instead being placed on the difficulty of pursuing a nuclear power-free scheme given this goal.

Various environmental agencies have proven that nuclear power discontinuation would not necessarily hurt global warming countermeasures, as long as overall energy use is reduced and energy systems are reformed to accommodate more renewable energy generation. The world is watching to see the extent to which post-Fukushima Japan can drastically reform its energy policy. We believe that Japan should decide against the continuation of nuclear power and take the lead in exploring the potential of new, more sustainable systems of localized energy production.