

AUSTRALIA SHOULD BLOCK US-INDIA NUCLEAR DEAL

Joint Statement from Australian civil society groups to the Australian Government

Before the end of the year the Australian Government will have the opportunity to oppose the US-India nuclear deal at both the IAEA Board of Governors meeting and block the deal at the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group. We urge the Government to oppose the deal for the following reasons:

1. Supporting the US-India deal is inconsistent with the Rudd Labor Government's principled policy of prohibiting uranium exports to India and other countries which have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

2. Nuclear trade with India undermines the fundamental principle of the global non-proliferation regime - the principle that NPT signatories can engage in international nuclear trade for their civil nuclear programs while countries which remain outside the NPT are excluded from civil nuclear trade. The precedent set by nuclear trade with India would increase the risk of other countries pulling out of the NPT, building nuclear weapons, and doing so with the expectation that civil nuclear trade would continue given the Indian precedent.

3. The US-India deal would allow nuclear trade with India with no requirement for India to dismantle its nuclear arsenal or to join the NPT. This would legitimise India's nuclear weapons program and make it less likely that it will disarm. The US-India deal contains no commitment from India to curb its weapons program, no commitment to refrain from testing nuclear weapons, and no commitment to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. India would not even be bound by the NPT disarmament commitments which apply to the five 'declared' nuclear weapons states (USA, Russia, China, France, UK).

4. Nuclear trade with India would make it less likely that other non-NPT weapons states such as Israel and Pakistan will disarm and accede to the NPT. Pakistan resents the selective support for India's nuclear program and is well aware of the potential for the US-India deal to facilitate an expansion of India's arsenal of nuclear weapons. In April 2006, Pakistan's National Command Authority (NCA), chaired by President Pervez Musharraf, declared that: "In view of the fact the [US-India] agreement would enable India to produce a significant quantity of fissile material and nuclear weapons from unsafeguarded nuclear reactors, the NCA expressed firm resolve that our credible minimum deterrence requirements will be met."

5. Nuclear trade with India would not only legitimise India's nuclear weapons program but also facilitate it by freeing up domestic uranium for weapons production. K. Subrahmanyam, former head of the India's National Security Advisory Board, noted in 2005 that: "Given India's uranium ore crunch and the need to build up our minimum credible nuclear deterrent arsenal as fast as possible, it is to India's advantage to categorize as many power reactors as possible as civilian ones to be refuelled by imported uranium and conserve our native uranium fuel for weapons grade plutonium production."

6. The alleged greenhouse 'benefits' of nuclear trade with India are minuscule and rest on the arbitrary assumption that nuclear power displaces more greenhouse-intensive energy sources. There are much safer ways to help India curb greenhouse emissions than encouraging an expansion of nuclear power. For example, Leonard Weiss, a former staff director of the US Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Nuclear Proliferation, notes that an aggressive program of improved energy efficiency could substitute for all the future power output from nuclear reactors currently being planned in India between now and 2020 (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May/June 2006).

Signed:

UnitingJustice Australia - Rev. Elenie Poulos, National Director

The Wilderness Society - Alec Marr, Executive Director

Public Health Association of Australia - Michael Moore, Chief Executive Officer

Edmund Rice Centre - Phil Glendenning, Director

Medical Association for Prevention of War - Dr Sue Wareham OAM - President

Australian Peace Committee (SA) Inc - Don Jarrett, President

Climate Landcare Environment Action Network (CLEAN) - Peter Florance, President

Friends of the Earth, Australia - Dr Jim Green, national nuclear campaigner

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons - Assoc. Prof Tilman Ruff, Aust Chair

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre - Father Claude Mostowik MSC, Director

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - Ruth Russell & Cathy Picone, Coordinators

Search Foundation - Peter Murphy, Coordinator

Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament - Pauline Mitchell, secretary

Quaker Peace & Legislation Committee, Australia - Dr Brian Turner, co-convenor

Arid Lands Environment Centre - Beyond Nuclear Initiative - Natalie Wasley, Coordinator

Sydney Peace and Justice Coalition - Bruce Childs,, Co-convenor

People for Nuclear Disarmament (NSW) - Cameron Schraner, Convenor

Social Justice Board of the Uniting Church in Australia - WA Synod - John Masarei (Chairperson)

Nuclear Disarmament Party of Australia - Michael Denborough, Convenor

Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition - Denis Doherty, National Co-ordinator

Japanese for Peace - Kazuyo Preston, member

Top End Aboriginal Conservation Alliance (TEACA) - Donna Jackson, Coordinator

Helen Caldicott - President People for a Nuclear Free Australia

Rail Operations Division, Rail Train and Bus Union (Vic Branch) - Vic Moore, RTBU Rail Operations Divisional Secretary

United Nations of Australia - Prof John Langmore, President

Sustainable Energy Now - Steve Gates, Chairperson

Pax Christi (Australia) - Father Claude Mostowik MSC, National President

Peace Organisation of Australia - Tim Wright, President

Rev Jason Kioa, Moderator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia