

CANDU SALE TO CHINA VIOLATES CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKINGS

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December 1996

The sale of CANDU reactors to China violates principles that Canada, along with the other member States of the United Nations, has undertaken to fulfill through various Conventions and Conference Agendas or Action plans.

At the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992) Canada agreed to the precautionary principle which states:

Where there is a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat. (Convention on Biological Diversity, UNCED 1992)

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, the lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation (Rio Declaration, UNCED, 1992)

There is sufficient evidence that the continuation of civil nuclear power results in threats of serious or irreversible damage because of serious and far-reaching environmental and health consequences of civil nuclear reactor accidents: because of the inability to safely dispose of nuclear wastes, because of the inability to ensure that there will not be sabotage, and because of the uncontrollable linking between civil nuclear reactors and nuclear arms.

In 1992, in a Declaration submitted by 37 Nobel Laureate scientists to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, there was a call to phase out nuclear energy.

Also, at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, the members states of the United Nations undertook to prevent the transfer of substances and activities that cause environmental degradation or are harmful to human health to other states (Principle 14, Rio Declaration)

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At the recent Habitat II conference (1996), Canada along with other member States of the United Nations undertook to prevent disasters, promote a culture of safety, and promote environmentally sound energy such as solar, wind, etc.: All these undertakings have been ignored in the sale of CANDU reactors to China.

Concern has also been expressed internationally about the linking of civil nuclear reactors with the proliferation of nuclear arms. In a World Conservation Union (IUCN) resolution at the recent World Conservation meeting in Montreal, it was affirmed that no satisfactory method has been found to halt nuclear proliferation or to prevent diversion of nuclear material by subversive or terrorist elements. In fact, the US bans the export of reactors to China because of China's record in providing nuclear military technology to countries which are known to have dedicated programs to build nuclear weapons. China's record is thus a total violation of the principle of nuclear non-proliferation.

Through industry-driven commitments, Canada has pursued an historical role of placing the commercial aspects of nuclear reactor sales of CANDU above its oft-avowed support for the non-proliferation of nuclear arms. More recently Canada failed to protest further nuclear tests by China in order to protect a multi-billion-dollar sale of CANDU reactors. It is inevitable that China will extract plutonium from waste fuel to manufacture weapons. Given that the five nuclear weapons states are immune from inspection under the non-proliferation Treaty.

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