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Friends of the Earth Sweden and The Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement's Position on the Nuclear Waste Issue

The nuclear waste problem is a reason to convert to renewable energy.

Nuclear power continues to produce waste that poses a threat to life for more than 100,000 years! Friends of the Earth Sweden and The Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement believe that society is not dealing with the waste issue responsibly.

Take the nuclear waste issue seriously! Stop producing waste!

It is unreasonable to assert that there is a safe storage method, that can operate for 100,000 years, for waste that is so hazardous. It is not possible to guarantee safety over such long time periods. This is true regardless of the choice of method! We simply cannot foresee geological and social development so far into the future.

We therefore believe that the first priority must be to stop producing nuclear waste. Stop nuclear power and replace it with energy efficiency, energy conservation and renewable energy! The quantity of waste that has to be dealt with should be minimized. The costs of nuclear power are currently grossly under-estimated considering that the waste issue will require huge resources in both the foreseeable and unforeseeable future.

Forsmark - no safe solution to the waste issue!

The Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Company's (SKB's) position that a geological repository at Forsmark is safe is questionable for several reasons. The proposed geological repository at Forsmark is located on the coast of the Baltic Sea. If a leak occurred the Baltic Sea could be polluted, which would impact on entire ecosystem and the millions of people living in the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. Further, locating a geological repository right next to an active nuclear power plant presents the risk that work dealing with the waste would have to be stopped abruptly if an accident occurred at the nuclear plant.

A requirement of the Environmental Code is that SKB examine several reasonable options for a repository. We are not alone with our criticism that alternative storage methods have not been studied adequately. We also argue, as do many other stakeholders, that there is insufficient knowledge about several aspects of the proposed method, such as the inadequate research on the risk of earthquakes as well as how the proposed copper canisters and bentonite clay will act as protective barriers over time. For these reasons, we believe that it is not possible at this time for the Environment Court, The Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, and in turn the government to determine whether or not SKB's proposal is the best method.

We demand transparency and research independent from the industry!

The nuclear industry has a vested interest in presenting the nuclear waste issue as solved since they want to continue to operate nuclear power plants. It is unreasonable for the nuclear industry's own company, SKB - a private company with the right to keep information confidential as trade secrets - to have responsibility for most of the research on the waste issue. We believe that the money to finance research on the repository has been used irresponsibly. To a large extent, it has gone to support one-sided advocacy of the method SKB now proposes at Forsmark.

We demand full democratic accountability of SKB's work and a change in the law so that responsibility for research on development of alternative methods is given to actors independent from industry. We also call for protection of the legal right of all staff of companies involved to publish dissenting views. It is disastrous if those who discover errors or questionable data cannot publish their views without losing their jobs for being disloyal towards their company.

Public participation before application!

The requirement of the Environmental Code for public consultation before an application is submitted has not been met. Amongst others, Östhammar's municipality, where Forsmark is located, has repeatedly noted the importance of consultation on the repository safety analysis. It is in this safety analysis where SKB describes the model used for risk assessment. Despite this, consultation on the safety assessment has not been carried out.

A more democratic process!

Last but not least we demand that the general public be given greater opportunities to take a position on the nuclear waste issue in a truly democratic process. It is unreasonable to expect elected officials to take a well thought out position on this kind of issue unless it is more comprehensively analyzed and discussed in society in general. Central in this context is a discussion of the waste issue in the context of the future of nuclear power.

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The Swedish Environmental Movement's Nuclear Waste Secretariat - a non-profit organisation founded in 2004 by The Swedish Anti-nuclear Movement and Friends of the Earth Sweden.

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