

# NUCLEAR MONITOR

*A Publication of World Information Service on Energy (WISE) and the Nuclear Information & Resource Service (NIRS), incorporating the former WISE News Communiqué*

#634

September 16, 2005

## CHERNOBYL REINVENTED

The joint press release from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has sent shockwaves throughout the world and brought strong condemnation from physicians, environmental organizations, religious groups and even some political parties. Here are two such examples by Dr. Rosalie Bertell of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart and Dr. Angelika Claußen of IPPNW Germany.

**Comments on the Press Release:  
“Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident”**

The press release of September 5, 2005, which purports to be a consensus of more than a hundred scientists, represents some very poor scientific conclusions. For example under “Major study findings”, one finds the following quote:

· “Approximately 1000 on-site reactor staff and emergency workers were heavily exposed to high-level radiation on the first day of the accident; among the more than 200,000 emergency and recovery operation workers exposed during the period from 1986-1987, an estimated 2200 radiation-caused deaths can be expected during their lifetime”.

Radiation-caused deaths is a loaded statement. It assumes that only death is considered to be detrimental, and eliminates the consideration of all severe and debilitating morbidity. Moreover, these scientists, trained by the documents released by ICRP (International Commission on Radiological Protection) over the last fifty years, have accepted without question that the only health effects “of concern” attributable to radiation are deaths from cancer. Non-fatal cancers are basically of no concern. These are administrative decisions and not science. Radiation causes random damage to cellular DNA, yet only damage manifested as cancer death is considered to be of detriment. There is no mention of the mitochondrial DNA (mDNA), which is sixteen times more

vulnerable to radiation than the cellular DNA is, and the damage to which is expressed in different but equally devastating illnesses as cancer.

· “An estimated five million people currently live in areas of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine that are contaminated with radionuclides due to the accident; about 100 000 of them live in areas classified in the past by government authorities as areas of “strict control”. The existing “zoning” definitions need to be revisited and relaxed in light of the new findings”.

This second “major” and “important finding” proposes relaxing the existing zoning regulations in the light the clearly unscientific findings. There appears to be consciously vested interests behind this press release and report. Such an economic goal is unbecoming of the purportedly scientific assessment of human health damage. One would expect that a political response to a serious scientific study would be made by government officials who would assume political responsibility for reliance on the science. Scientists do not normally make political decisions, nor should government officials blindly rely on decisions claiming to be scientific.

· “About 4000 cases of thyroid cancer, mainly in children and adolescents at the time of the accident, have resulted from the accident’s contamination and

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

Chernobyl reinvented	1
IAEA looks for consensus on the effects of Chernobyl	4
Namibia: Langer Heinrich obtains financing and mining license	6
India: villagers organise to save homes from u-mining	7
South Africa: Earthlife gagged for Eskom blunder	8
U.S.: more federal racism as dump approved for Native American land	9
Salt deposit 'not safe' as nuclear dump	10
Perverted deal; Borssele NPP stay open	11

at least nine children died of thyroid cancer; however the survival rate among such cancer victims, judging from experience in Belarus, has been almost 99%".

Again we find the strong and unreasonable reliance on the ICRP decision to ignore all health effects of radiation that did not result in fatal cancers. Clearly those who have had surgery or are on thyroid hormones for the rest of their life would have serious arguments with this callousness.

· "Most emergency workers and people living in contaminated areas received relatively low whole body radiation doses, comparable to natural background levels. As a consequence, no evidence or likelihood of decreased fertility among the affected population has been found, nor has there been any evidence of increases in congenital malformations that can be attributed to radiation exposure".

Nuclear debris from an operating reactor is not natural background radiation. Its physical and biochemical properties are different, as is the proportion of internal vs. external exposure it causes. A uranium fire, such as occurred at Chernobyl, burns at 3000 to 6000 degrees Centigrade, heat sufficient to aerosolize all metals exposed to it - including all radioactive heavy metals, iron, steel, nickel, copper etc. In an internal aerosolized ceramic form, the maximum possible dose from the radioactive chemicals is delivered to the victim, and the maximum toxic metal effect can be caused. This is because in a pulverized

ceramic form, of nanometer size, the surface area is maximized, the self-shielding is minimized, and the solubility in body fluid is minimized, resulting in a maximum contact dose.

Nano particles can pass through the cell wall, the blood-lung and blood-brain barriers, and can penetrate to the seminal fluid or cross the placenta. They are too small to be removed by the kidney filters. This artificial debris is not life compatible. Moreover, although natural radiation is more life compatible it also takes a toll on the cellular communication system of the body causing what we consider to be the natural aging process and natural cancers of old age.

· "Poverty, "lifestyle" diseases now rampant in the former Soviet Union and mental health problems pose a far greater threat to local communities than does radiation exposure".

Poverty is frequently the result of debilitating chronic diseases. How many people lose their jobs because of non-fatal cancer, chronic fatigue, and other illnesses?

Lifestyle is a judgment, not a scientific finding that it would be possible for a person to avoid an environmental hazard. For example, smoking is listed as a lifestyle choice to avoid the carcinogens in tobacco, avoiding fatty foods is a lifestyle choice to avoid those carcinogens which are fat soluble, or using a sun screen is a lifestyle choice to protect oneself from the harmful rays of the sun. Again designating diseases as lifestyle rather than radiation related is a judgment, made to avoid the questions of polluted environment, cf. tobacco leaves, animal fat or the sun, or for nuclear debris, mushrooms, root vegetables, and milk.

Mental illness may itself be radiation related, especially when the radioactive particles are small enough to penetrate the blood brain barrier. There have been studies of suicides and violent behavior after exposure to radiation that makes this hypothesis worthy of further investigation.

· "Relocation proved a 'deeply traumatic experience' for some 350,000 people moved out of the affected areas. Although 116 000 were moved from the most heavily impacted area immediately after the accident, later relocations did little to reduce radiation exposure".

This is a very interesting observation. It could be interpreted that most of the contamination was caused immediately after the explosion, or that because of distribution of food practices the whole population was exposed. I would note that evacuation might not have been timely because of the secrecy surrounding the disaster. How one decides that trauma is due to evacuation (which may well be a relief) rather than radiation is not clear.

· "Persistent myths and misperceptions about the threat of radiation have resulted in 'paralyzing fatalism' among residents of affected areas.

The truth may well lie between the fatalistic predictions and the over optimistic ideas of the physicists, who have little sympathy with chronic illness! Many people knew nothing about radiation except the public relations promotional advertising surrounding the nuclear plants prior to the accident.

In fact so many were uninformed that they stood and watched the Chernobyl fire without protecting themselves. These people feel rightly that they were deceived. Press releases such as this work against a sensible admission and response to the problems experienced by the people.

· "Ambitious rehabilitation and social benefit programs started by the former Soviet Union, and continued by Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, need reformulation due to changes in radiation conditions, poor targeting and funding shortages".

This is too vague to be of informational value. The emphasis on "funding shortages" again introduces an economic priority that does not belong in a scientific article pretending

**WISE Amsterdam/NIRS**  
**ISSN: 1570-4629**

**Reproduction** of this material is encouraged. Please give credit when reprinting.

**Editorial team:** Tinu Otoki (WISE Amsterdam), Michael Mariotte (NIRS). With **contributions** from Diet Simon, Dr. Angelika Claußen, Dr. Rosalie Bertell, Jhrakahndi Organization Against Radiation, NIRS.

**The next issue** (635) will be mailed out on 30 September 2005.

## 25 YEARS AGO

*What happened 25 years ago? We go back to news from our 1980 WISE Bulletin, comparing anti-nuclear news then and now.*

### Then

In *WISE Bulletin* vol. 2 nr. 4 we wrote about enrichment of uranium in Australia: "Urenco is emerging as the frontrunner in the race between foreign companies to build Australia's first enrichment plant"

### Now

Our fears didn't come true, at least not in the twentieth century. The Bannon government, which made before the elections a big anti-nuclear stand, reached in 1983 a big compromise. They prohibited the building of nuclear power plants and other facilities, but left the uranium mines open and started the new Olympic Dam mine.

But even now there are still plans to build an enrichment plant in Australia. This time based on a new laser technology, which is mainly developed in Australia, partly with money from the government. The main argument for enrichment in Australia is that the enrichment of the mined uranium should earn almost just as much, as the mining itself.

But there are also big disadvantages. The biggest of them is the proliferation risk. A new and cheap technology to enrich uranium could lead to more nuclear weapon states. More than 20 countries, including Iran and South Korea, have experimented with laser enrichment of uranium. This could lead to the use of this uranium in nuclear weapons, specially, because this technology can easily be hidden for the international community. Even in a building like a small warehouse is it possible to produce in one year enough enriched uranium for several bombs. The first plans for an enrichment plant in Australia in 1969 were even developed for the use of the enriched uranium in weapons. This was in 1999 disclosed by the former Prime Minister Gordon.

[http://www.history.sa.gov.au/history/conference/R\\_Keith\\_Johns.pdf](http://www.history.sa.gov.au/history/conference/R_Keith_Johns.pdf)

<http://cns.mii.edu/pubs/npr/vol07/71/hym71.pdf>

[http://www.greenpeace.org.au/media/press\\_details.php?site\\_id=8&news\\_id=1173](http://www.greenpeace.org.au/media/press_details.php?site_id=8&news_id=1173)

hyperlink [http://www.thebulletin.org/article.php?art\\_ofn=ma05boureston](http://www.thebulletin.org/article.php?art_ofn=ma05boureston)

to be on the public health results of the disaster.

· "Structural elements of the sarcophagus built to contain the damaged reactor have degraded, posing a risk of collapse and the release of radioactive dust".

While this appears to be a preventive health recommendation, it seems obvious that the sarcophagus has never been completely sealed because of the on-going fissioning of the fuel. The damaged Chernobyl reactor has been leaking radioactive gases, liquids and particulates for the last 20 years.

· "A comprehensive plan to dispose of tons of high-level radioactive waste at and around the Chernobyl NPP site, in accordance with current safety standards, has yet to be defined".

This Chernobyl reactor sits near to the bank of the Dneiper River, which provides the drinking water supply of the city of Kiev and irrigates farm and orchard land in what was, before the disaster, the breadbasket of the former

Soviet Union. These tons of high-level radioactive waste have been leaking into the biosphere for some 20 years. It is about time a waste management (not a disposal) plan was designed. Imaging that a "disposal" plan could ever be designed is to be ignorant of the natural recycling of materials in our planet! The earth has an efficient way to clean the soil and air, washing all chemical compounds out to the ocean sink for recycling into the food web of future generations.

The spokesperson for this report is Dr. Michael Repacholi, who was introduced as "Manager of WHO's Radiation Program". According to Dr. Repacholi's speech on the WHO's International EMF Project, he deals with health and environmental effects of "exposure to static and time varying electric and magnetic fields in the frequency range 0 - 300 GHz". This includes radio frequencies between extra-low radio frequency and high frequency microwaves. It excludes soft X-Ray, hard X-ray and gamma rays, which are the ionizing radiation

portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. This range also excludes nuclear particulates released in a nuclear disaster.

Dr. Repacholi has a Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Western Australia, a Master of Science in Radiation biology from London University, and a Ph.D. in biology from Ottawa University in Canada. He is a Fellow and past Chair of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection. He is perhaps not the best spokesperson for a nuclear disaster, ionizing radiation exposure assessment.

One of the recommendations made in the report is the following:

"In the environmental realm, the Report calls for long term monitoring of caesium and strontium radionuclides to assess human exposure and food contamination and to analyze the impacts of remedial actions and radiation-reduction countermeasures. Better information

needs to be provided to the public about the persistence of radioactive contamination in certain food products and about food preparation methods that reduce radionuclide intake. Restrictions on harvesting of some wild food products are still needed in some areas.”

Failure to avoid wild products, utilize proper preparation methods and follow cooking suggestions could, of

course be designate “lifestyle choices” and therefore any illness would be the fault of the victim not the disaster!

The assurances in this unscientific press release, purporting to give the most important findings of the full report, yet it gives little comfort to the suffering people exposed to this disaster. More blame is higher levels of exposure to chronic doses of radiation are proposed, and no adequate

responses to address the real health problems of the survivors are being undertaken!

**Sources:** “Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident”, joint press release from IAEA/WHO/UNDP, September 5, 2005

**Contact:** Dr. Rosalie Bertell, Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart, [rosalieberzell@greynun.org](mailto:rosalieberzell@greynun.org)

# IAEA LOOKS FOR CONSENSUS ON THE EFFECTS OF CHERNOBYL

**From September 6 to 7 2005, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) invited UN organisations to Vienna in order to form a consensus on the health effects of the Chernobyl reactor catastrophe.**

**(634.5712) Dr. Angelika Claußen, IPPNW Germany** - Alongside the IAEA, UN sub-organisations such as FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UN-OCHA and UNSCEAR, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank took part, as well as government representatives from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, the countries that founded the Chernobyl Forum in 2003. Their goal was to formulate “authoritative consensual statements” on the environmental and health consequences in the run-up to the anniversary of the Chernobyl accident.

**Why a consensus?**  
A look back at the statements of the IAEA International Chernobyl Project leaves us with few expectations. The IAEA statements are marked by incorrect conclusions and pretence, those of the WHO by extreme restraint.

Studies conducted for the International Chernobyl Project of the IAEA took place from January 1990 to the end of February 1991. In 1990 alone the rate of new cases of thyroid cancer in children in Belarus was 30 times higher than the 10 year average.

The IAEA report states however: „The official data that were examined did not indicate a marked increase in the incidence of leukaemia or cancers. (...) Reported adverse health effects attributed to radiation were not substantiated either by those local

studies that were adequately performed or by the studies under the Project... (...) The children who were examined were found to be generally healthy. (...) „ (1)

Later independent research by the BBC has proved that the IAEA and its international commission of experts were already in possession of all of the relevant facts at the time of the conference and the presentation of the report, including the histopathological evidence for a marked increase in the rate of thyroid cancers. It is alarming to ascertain that this deliberate deception of the general public was practiced by such experts as Professor Mettler (Director of the medical expert group of the International Chernobyl Project) and other experts from the EU and Japan. (2)

In a press release of June 13 2000, 14 years after the Chernobyl catastrophe, the IAEA quoted new claims by UNSCEAR - the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation - about the medical effects of radiation from the Chernobyl accident: „Apart from the substantial increase in thyroid cancer after childhood exposure ....there is no evidence of a major public health impact related to ionizing radiation 14 years after the Chernobyl accident. No increases in overall cancer incidence or mortality that could be associated with radiation exposure have been observed.“ (3)

This claim of the UN Scientific Committee is incorrect. It denies the massive increase in thyroid cancer in adults and increases in other cancers. In 1999 the incidence of thyroid cancer in adults in Belarus was already more than five times higher than the mean average over ten years before the Chernobyl accident. The evidence of several thousand additional thyroid cancers in adults had already been established. An increase in the rate of other types of cancer had also been registered, including an increase in cancers in Belarus and in particular a 50% increase in childhood leukaemia, as well as an increase in breast cancer. Moreover, the rate of malignant disease such as youth diabetes had increased.

WHO has kept a low profile when it comes to statements about Chernobyl's medical consequences: „The Chernobyl accident led to fatality of 30 workers at the reactor site, caused the hospitalization of two hundreds of others and exposed 6.7 million people to ionizing radiation caused by fallout of radioactive aerosols. This has led to a ten-fold increase in thyroid cancer among children in affected areas.“ (4)

In the current press release on the present „Consensus conference“, IAEA claims there will be 4000 deaths as a consequence of the Chernobyl accident: 50 emergency workers who died of acute radiation sickness, nine children

who died of thyroid cancer and an estimated 3940 deaths from radiation-induced cancer and leukaemia. (5)

A quick look at the Low Level Radiation Campaign web site (6) in the UK that is run by independent scientists, as is the web site „Strahlentelex“ (an independent information service in Berlin on radiation and health) (7), show in contrast a wealth of scientific publications from the affected countries and West Europe on the effects of Chernobyl. In November 2004, the Swiss Medical Weekly published study results of the Clinical Institute of Radiation, Medicine and Endocrinology Research, Minsk, Belarus showing that cancer rates between 1990 and 2000 had risen by 40% in comparison with before the Chernobyl catastrophe. (8)

A rise in congenital malformations and stillbirths has also been observed, both in Belarus, particularly in the badly affected area of Gomel, as well as in Ukraine, West Europe and in Turkey (9).

However, IAEA's current press release claims that: „A modest but steady increase in reported congenital malformations in both contaminated and uncontaminated area of Belarus appears related to better reporting, not radiation.“ (5)

Why is IAEA trying to reach a consensus on the medical and environmental effects of Chernobyl, when it is obvious that the numbers of deaths and disease go up from year to year and the scientific discussion on radiation induced disease - that increases understanding of the mechanisms of constant external and internal (incorporated) low-level radiation - is fully underway? Do we not rather need more intensive research efforts at this point, in order to understand the problem better?

If we take a look at the IAEA statute then it becomes clear. The main objective set by the statute for IAEA is: „to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.“ It also says in the Statute that IAEA is responsible for health questions relating to nuclear energy. (10)

By this time the attentive reader will wonder: IAEA responsible for health questions? Should that not be the responsibility of WHO, the UN World Health Organisation? The WHO constitution defines 22 functions for the organisation, including „to provide information, counsel and assistance in the field of health“ and „to assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health“. (11)

As early as the fifties, when many scientists, as well as the German philosopher Ernst Bloch, still believed in the promise of „the peaceful uses of nuclear energy“, 20 well-known geneticists gave a warning at a WHO conference in 1956 about radiation exposure because they had discovered that even the smallest doses could cause disproportionately large amounts of damage to cells.

In 1959 critical voices within the WHO on the damaging consequences to the human gene pool and human health were silenced. Article III.1 of the agreement between IAEA and WHO states: „The International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organisation recognize that they may find it necessary to apply certain limitations for the safeguarding of confidential information furnished to them.“ In other words: the general public will not be protected from the dangers and risks of nuclear energy, but rather from the truth about them. WHO is bound by an adhesion contract. Science at WHO is only allowed within narrow limits defined by the IAEA.

We are approaching the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe. Many scientific studies on the medical effects of Chernobyl from the affected countries Belarus, Ukraine and Russia are not yet known to us because they have not been translated from Russian.

What we need now is independent research and dissemination of research results on the effects of Chernobyl. 20 years on, IAEA is still largely being steered by its own interests. The agreement between IAEA and WHO

should be revoked immediately.

#### **Sources:**

- (1) The International Chernobyl Project. Assessment of Radiological Consequences and Evaluation of Protective Measures, IAEA, Wien, Mai 1991
- (2) E. Lengfelder u. C. Frenzel: 15 Jahre nach Tschernobyl: Folgen und Lehren der Reaktorkatastrophe, Otto-Hug-Strahleninstitut -MhM, September 2001
- (3) E Lengfelder u. C.Frenzel : s.o. 2001
- (4) www.who.org Health consequences of the Chernobyl accident
- (5) www.iaea.org Chernobyl : The True Scale of the Accident
- (6) www.llrc.org
- (7) www.strahlentelex.de
- (8) Okeanov AE, Sosnovskaya EY, Priatkina OP. A national cancer registry to assess trends after the Chernobyl accident. Swiss Med Wkly 2004;134:645-649.
- (9) I. Schmitz-Feuerhake wie verlässlich sind Grenzwerte? Strahlentelex vom 2.6.2005
- (10) IAEA Statute: [http://www.iaea.org/About/statute\\_text.html](http://www.iaea.org/About/statute_text.html)
- (11) WHO Constitution:

<http://www.who.int/governance/en/>

**Contact:** Dr. Angelika Claußen, IPPNW Germany, Körtestrasse 10, 10967 Berlin, Germany, Tel + 49 30 6980740, Fax + 49 30 6938166, Email: [ippnw@ippnw.de](mailto:ippnw@ippnw.de) or [angelika-claussen@web.de](mailto:angelika-claussen@web.de), Web: [www.ippnw.de](http://www.ippnw.de) or [www.ippnw-europe.org](http://www.ippnw-europe.org)

# NAMIBIA: LANGER HEINRICH OBTAINS FINANCING AND MINING LICENSE

**Australian mining company Paladin Resources Ltd has secured bank-financing - from Société Générale Australian Branch, Nedbank Ltd and Standard Bank of South Africa Ltd - amounting to US\$71 million to start work on a new uranium mine in Namibia. Having secured the bank funds, Paladin must still raise equity for the balance of funds required to complete the mine.**

**(634.5713) WISE-Amsterdam** - The construction phase of the Langer Heinrich Uranium Project has already commenced and the groundbreaking ceremony was due to be held on September 15 under the shadow of protests from local environmental and human rights groups.

Langer Heinrich Uranium (Pty) Ltd., owned by Paladin Resources, first proposed developing a uranium mine in the Namib Desert, 80km east of the city of Swakopmund inside the boundaries of the Namib-Naukluft National Park, in 2004. Since that time, opposition to the scheme has been growing culminating in various appeals to the government from several organizations (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 627.5682 "Namibia: opposition to Langer Heinrich mounting").

The Park is home to the indigenous minority Topnaar peoples as well as various rare biological species – it is estimated that at least 42 plant species found in and around the Park are on the CITES Convention red list of threatened species. The Namibian Prime Minister, Nahas Angula, in a speech on May 9 even warned that human activity was threatening the unique life forms of the arid Namib ecoregion and yet the Ministry of Mines and Energy still granted Paladin Resources a 25-year mining license less than 2 months later, ignoring overwhelming public opposition.

On August 29, the German Öko-Institut (Institute for Applied Ecology) released a report, "Evaluation of selected aspects of the environmental assessment report for the Langer Heinrich Uranium Mining Project in Namibia" on behalf of environmental organization Earthlife Africa Namibia

Branch. Due to limited resources, the evaluation focused on just five aspects of the final Environmental Assessment (EA) report issued in April 2005 (Softchem 2005); the radiological consequences of the project on the general public, the radiological consequences for employees, the use of water resources by the mining and milling facilities, the consequences of uranium mining and milling and of the disposal of associated wastes for the groundwater, and the management and disposal of waste from the leaching of ores and their long-term enclosure.

Within the permit process, the responsible ministry would normally evaluate the environmental consequences and would issue additional conditions on the permit to limit these consequences. In this instant it is not known if this procedure was followed as neither the Ministry of Mines and Energy nor Paladin Resources made the permit available and Earthlife Africa were not able to obtain a copy.

The report concluded that due to the inappropriate selection of input data relating to the radium content in ore and tailings, which usually determines the radiation doses from dust inhalation, the calculations given in the EA actually underestimates (by a factor of at least four) the doses for the public. Also the breathing rate assumed was at least two times lower than internationally accepted rates – higher breathing rates means higher doses so if you pretend that people take less breaths, you can then assume that they receive lower doses.

The EA was also found to be wanting on the concept of dose limitation with no information given on the areal extend, where the doses are exceeded

and where the doses are below limits. On the point of radiological consequences for workers, there was no assessment of this found in the EA, which only refers to appropriate rules that should be applied. No estimates were given on the collective dose for workers, which usually provide the basis for the permit process and the planning of operations.

Where water use is concerned, Langer Heinrich will become the largest single consumer of water using over 1.3 million tons per year and no measures to allow for significant reductions or to optimize its use are considered in any detail. As with most dry countries, water is a valuable natural resource in Namibia.

On tailings management and disposal, the Öko-Institut report found a large number of serious flaws and unresolved issues. The main problems with the most serious consequences were that the tailings disposal plan was full of contradictions that do not allow any understanding of exactly what the planned process would be; basic and major design characteristics were omitted, which would result in the inadequate protection of the environment for future generations; and that the basic data used, like the concentration of radioactive by-products or the amount of tailings was also unclear and would not allow for the proper evaluation of the impacts of tailings disposal.

There were also serious flaws with the assessment of the impacts on groundwater, in fact no discussion of the impacts of the highly alkaline (pH 10) tailings features in the EA. This was diverted by claims that such problems would be avoided because of the alkaline leaching scheme.

That the Namibian government should have approved the license for mining at Langer Heinrich is confusing given the numerous inconsistencies and failings of the EA report but it has and as this article is being written, Paladin Resources is celebrating with a groundbreaking ceremony. Meanwhile the mine opponents are peacefully staging a protest at the entrance of the Park.

**Sources:** National Society for Human Rights press release, September 14, 2005; Nuclear Fuel, September 12, 2005; The Namibia Economist, September 13, 2005; Paladin Resources releases, August 29 & July 27, 2005; "Evaluation of selected aspects of the environmental assessment report for the Langer Heinrich Uranium Mining Project in Namibia" by Gerhard Schmidt, Öko-Institut and Peter Diehl,

August 29, 2005

**Contact:** Phil ya Nangoloh, National Society for Human Rights, 116 John Meinert Street, P.O. Box 23592, Windhoek, Namibia  
Tel + 264 61 236183/253447  
Mobile + 264 811 299886  
Email: nshr@nshr.org.na or nshr@iafrica.com.na  
Web: www.nshr.org.na

## INDIA: VILLAGERS ORGANISE TO SAVE HOMES FROM U-MINING

**The Jharkhandi Organisation Against Radiation's (JOAR) struggle against radioactivity reached a new dimension at the public hearing for the proposed Mohuldih mines.**

**(634.5714) JOAR** - Spurred on by the recent strikes held by UCIL uranium mine workers that exposed the false assurances given to villages of jobs and increased living standards and armed with information on uranium mining and its hazards, more than 700 villagers from Mohuldih and over 10 other affected villages unanimously declared opposition to a proposed uranium mine that would destroy their lands and livelihoods.

The villagers refused officials from the Jharkhand Pollution Control Board (PCB) and Uranium Corporation Of India Limited (UCIL) entry into a public hearing at Mohuldih saying, "We will give our lives but not our land".

The local people had already forced the public hearing, initially scheduled for August 5 to be postponed to August 29. However, when the PCB and UCIL officials arrived for the hearing, the protesting villagers refused them entry to the site. Men and women from villages around Mohuldih that would be affected by the proposed mines vehemently opposed the hearing, stating that they needed neither the hearing nor the uranium mine.

The villagers declared that they would not relinquish their lands under any circumstances. "The mine will last for 30 years; what will happen to us after that? Our land has supported us for generations and will continue to do so", they insisted. "We have seen what has

happened to the villagers who have been displaced by other uranium mines. They have none of the facilities promised to them and none of the promises of rehabilitation have been fulfilled. We cannot rely on their false promises and lose our livelihood".

JOAR and other organizations present for the public hearing spoke of yet another faulty EIA report prepared by Mecon Consultants on behalf of UCIL. The villagers has already expressed their opinion to the Pollution Control Board and a spokesperson from the Movement Against Uranium Project suggested that "Mecon should be blacklisted for continuously producing these low quality, misleading reports for each of the uranium mines of UCIL".

The EIA report in itself is riddled with faults. It was produced in just four months, instead of the comprehensive report that is imperative considering the fact that there are four other mines in the nearby area. "Nowhere in the entire report has any mention been made of the radioactive health hazards, not even to state that there will be no hazard, completely denying the health aspects of uranium radiation. The whole project affects six villages, and yet, ludicrously, the report finds that there will be only 16 displaced families. There has been no consultation by the consultants with the villagers to look into the cultural and traditional customs of the area and completely

neglects to say how the culture of the area will be protected from degeneration," said an activist from the Human Rights Law Network.

A comparison of the Mohuldih mine EIA report and the executive summary for the Baghjanta mine suggests that Mecon had assumed that the people from the villages around Mohuldih were ill informed and easily fooled by the spurious claims made in the EIA. Activists say that the report should have been rejected by the PCB for supplying false and incorrect data according to the EIA Notification, 1994.

"At least this opposition should help to bring UCIL to its senses and revert its decision to start uranium mines irrespective of people's opinions, as it has done before" said Prakash Meghe, a lawyer from Nagpur.

**Source and contact:** Jharkhandi Organisation Against Radiation (JOAR) Vill- TilaiTand, P.O.- Jadugoda, dist- east Singhbhum, Jharkhand, India  
Tel + 91 0757 2730009 or + 91 0651-2317461  
Email jharkhandconcern@gmail.com

# SOUTH AFRICA: EARTHLIFE GAGGED FOR ESKOM BLUNDER

**The Johannesburg High Court has, in a somewhat confounding judgement on September 2, granted state-owned power utility Eskom an interim order banning Earthlife Africa (ELA) - and “all persons” including the media - from publishing or broadcasting information the utility itself sent to the environmental organization.**

**(634.5715) WISE-Amsterdam** – In issue #632, the *Nuclear Monitor* reported, in brief, on Earthlife Africa’s court case against Eskom. The organization was seeking to force the utility to release information under the Access to Information Act. Eskom released some information to ELA in the form of power point presentations but failed to include the minutes of its board meetings and other information requested. Arguing that the information supplied was wholly insufficient, Earthlife continued with the lawsuit against the utility. The case was heard on August 30; however, the judgement is yet to be given.

The documents provided by Eskom’s lawyers included Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR) business plans and a financial risk assessment for the proposed project. The 120 pages are now subject to a gagging order because Eskom has since revealed that it sent ELA the wrong documents “by mistake” and has asked that the documents be returned. The papers it gave the NGO were apparently destined to be used in preparation for the case brought by Earthlife and supposedly contained “trade secrets”.

The documents apparently reveal that a business-risk assessment, commissioned by Eskom, found that PBMR would be uncompetitive in the South African market and warned of the excessive costs of the project should Eskom fail to attract any other investors to the scheme. So far, no other investors have been joined the project and those initially interested - like U.S. Exelon and French Areva - have withdrawn from the project. The issue of excessive costs is of course one of the arguments ELA and other groups have been making for years so it is refreshing to hear that the utility also recognises this fact – finally.

ELA is seeking to gain access to the information (especially on health impacts and economics) used to justify investment in the PBMR project in order to assess whether or not such an investment of huge amounts of public funds – 14.5 billion Rand (approx. US\$2.3 billion) – really is in the public interest. The organization believed that safety concerns were not being addressed and that no economic benefits had been demonstrated. It also suspected that these issues would have been discussed at Eskom Board level and given that Eskom is a public entity, the organization felt that the public had a right to more details. After following all the relevant administrative channels to access the board minutes, ELA was forced to seek legal redress after Eskom refused its numerous requests.

At the time ELA spokesperson Olivia Andrews said, “Earthlife Africa is hoping that some of the information in the Eskom board minutes will shed some light on the reasons that Eskom opted for expensive untested nuclear technology when investing in energy efficiency and conservation measures would, in our view, have been a far more effective solution”.

Now Eskom claims that the papers it released to ELA in fact contained “trade secrets” but whose fault is that? The papers were not stolen nor were they leaked in the traditional sense. The utility’s lawyers handed them over and ELA subsequently circulated some of the information believing it to be in the public interest but now Eskom is attempting to turn back time. Can this company really be entrusted with precious public funds when it apparently cannot even keep track of its own paperwork?

ELA has other outstanding suits against

Eskom and is challenging the planned construction of the reactor on various grounds, including the Environmental Impact Assessment process. In January, the Cape Town High Court ruled in the organization’s favour by setting aside existing authorisation given for the PBMR project in 2003 (see also *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 623.5663 “Earthlife victory in court on PBMR EIA”).

The hearing to review the order and determine whether or not the documents should remain confidential will be held on October 18.

**Sources:** Nuclear Engineering International, September 7, 2005; The Cape Times, September 6, 2005; Earthlife Africa press release, September 5 & June 20 2005; Business Day, September 2 & 5, 2005

**Contact:** Olivia Andrews at Earthlife Africa in Cape Town  
Tel + 27 72 5098402 or + 27 21 4474912  
Email: [Olivia@earthlife-ct.org.za](mailto:Olivia@earthlife-ct.org.za)  
[www.earthlife-ct.org.za](http://www.earthlife-ct.org.za)

# U.S.: MORE FEDERAL RACISM AS DUMP APPROVED FOR NATIVE AMERICAN LAND

On September 9, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) gave the go-ahead to a temporary high-level radioactive waste storage site, Private Fuel Storage (PFS), on Native American land in Utah.

**(634.5716) NIRS** – In response to the announcement of the NRC's endorsement of PFS, Michael Marriotte, Executive Director of NIRS said, "The decision today by the NRC commissioners to approve a private nuclear waste site on the Goshute Indian reservation in Utah is the latest example of environmental racism on the part of the federal government. The commissioners, who voted 3-1, have now condemned a tiny impoverished tribe in Skull Valley to generations of environmental and health risks by approving a plan to ship 44,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste and park it in plain site on Indian land."

## Background

Nearly 450 organizations – from grassroots Native American environmental justice groups to national public interest and environmental groups – petitioned the NRC Commissioners to reject the dangerous and racist proposal put forward by the utility consortium, Private Fuel Storage. NRC Commissioner Gregory Jaczko is to be thanked for his clear-headed rejection of this outrageous proposal.

PFS presents transportation dangers, security risks, and environmental justice violations and could result in the shipment of 44,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste beginning as early as 2007. These 4,000 rail shipments are unprecedented, far surpassing the total number of high-level radioactive waste shipments carried out in the U.S. since the beginning of the Atomic Age in 1942. Shipments would travel through highly populated regions in dozens of states with little to no preparation for emergency response teams. Each container would hold over 200 times the long-lasting radiation released by the Hiroshima atomic bomb. These containers are vulnerable to accidents and terrorist attacks that could result

in the release catastrophic amounts of deadly radioactivity. Thus, they represent mobile Chernobyls and potential dirty bombs on wheels rolling through our communities. This plan is a fatally flawed shell game, unnecessarily risking transport of dangerous high-level radioactive waste all across the country to a *temporary* dump, only to have it moved again someday to someplace else, doubling the transportation risks.

Once parked at Skull Valley, the 4,000 containers of waste would be a radioactive bull's eye for terrorists as it is directly upwind of Salt Lake City. The facility would also be at risk from the 7,000 annual fly-overs by F-16 fighter jets, fully loaded with munitions and ordnance, traveling between Hill Air Force Base and the Utah Test and Training Range, one of the biggest and busiest bombing ranges in the country. One accidental fiery crash could unleash deadly amounts of radioactivity that would blow with the wind and rain onto one of the country's biggest and best cities. NRC Chairman Nils Diaz, who voted in favor of licensing the dump, stated at the National Press Club earlier this year that such crashes did not need to be of concern because the radioactivity would not extend beyond two miles. Not only could the radiation travel much further than two miles, he failed to note that the Skull Valley Goshute Indian Reservation community is within two miles of the proposed dump.

Nuclear industry whistleblower Oscar Shirani and NRC whistleblower Dr. Ross Landsman have revealed major quality assurance violations in the design and manufacture of the Holtec waste storage and transportation casks planned for use by PFS. These violations call into question the structural integrity of the containers themselves and their ability to

withstand transport and storage accidents and terrorist attacks. NRC Atomic Safety and Licensing Board Judge Peter Lam, the only engineer on the panel, cited such defects in design and manufacture of the casks as one reason for his voting against the PFS license in a rare 2-1 split decision earlier this year.

PFS is merely the illusion of a solution to the problem of what to do with deadly radioactive waste. In its mad rush to build the first new nuclear reactors in 30 years, the nuclear industry has shown its desperation and disregard for safety and justice by this outrageous PFS proposal. The NRC has shown its complicity by approving the license.

Grace Thorpe, daughter of "the Athlete of the Twentieth Century" Jim Thorpe and an emeritus member of our board of directors, was instrumental in stopping the high-level radioactive waste dump targeted at her Sauk and Fox Indian Reservation in Oklahoma. Rufina Marie Laws was instrumental in stopping the dump targeted at her Mescalero Indian Reservation in New Mexico. In fact, the nuclear establishment has targeted scores of tribes, but until now all such proposals have been stopped.

Margene Bullcreek and other Skull Valley Goshute tribal members opposed to the PFS dump will continue to struggle against this threat to their community and sacred homeland, and they will not be alone. Our organization, along with hundreds of others, will fight this dump at every turn, until it is defeated.

**Source:** NIRS statement, September 9, 2005

**Contact:** Kevin Kamps, Nuclear Waste Specialist at NIRS, kevin@nirs.org

# SALT DEPOSIT 'NOT SAFE' AS NUCLEAR DUMP

The German nuclear safety ministry has admitted that there is not enough cover over a salt dome for it to be considered safe for use as a waste dump.

**(634.5717) Diet Simon** - An exploratory mine has been driven into the salt deposit at Gorleben, a village in northern Germany, to test whether it could safely hold highly radioactive waste in the long term. The trials were suspended years ago because of scientists' safety concerns, but the Conservative Party – expected to win power in the September 18 German general election – have brushed those concerns aside and insist on Gorleben being made the national dump.

The environment and reactor safety ministry in Berlin, controlled by The Greens, has written to the local county's committee for nuclear installations, civil and disaster protection stating that there is no "dense overburden" (overburden refers to the material - earth/rocks - covering the salt) on the salt deposit that could act as a second geological barrier for long-term protection against the possible release into the environment of highly radioactive atomic waste from a "final repository".

During a routine measurement of incoming waste containers at the Gorleben interim storage facility on September 14, five out of eight containers from the Krümmel nuclear power plant showed contamination above the allowed level by up to a factor of five. The permissible level for transportation is 4 Bq p/cm<sup>2</sup>. These so-called Mosaik-waste containers are used for the storage of radioactive building material from the Krümmel reactor-core. According to the regulatory authorities, the safety of personnel and the public was not in danger because the Mosaik container was inside a transport container. Nevertheless, all such transports from Krümmel to Gorleben have been indefinitely cancelled.

**Environmental Ministry Lower Saxony press release, September 15, 2005**

According to the communication from the ministry, which came to public notice in an open session of the committee of the county of Lüchow-Dannenberg on July 7, "The seal rock does indeed have a small barrier effect".

The local opponents of the dump argue in a media release that the ministry thereby confirms the findings of sample drillings done in 1983 that were already then undisputed among scientists – that the structure of the overburden cannot fulfil a barrier function.

Only the Gorleben salt dome itself has "large, undisturbed salt sections that could fulfil the barrier function demanded", said the ministry citing the drill findings.

The opponents also point out that there has been no examination of whether salt could be at all a suitable repository for nuclear waste. The ministry said such tests, though requested, were not carried out because of cost considerations.

The present government has launched a search for alternative waste sites, but has not ruled Gorleben out. Activists allege that the Red-Green coalition has not been serious about the search and that the Gorleben mine and other underground dumps should have been filled in long ago.

Francis Althoff, spokesperson for the Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz Lüchow-Dannenberg (citizens initiative for environmental protection) said, "the senseless waste of money for the 'exploration' of the Gorleben salt dome, which has already devoured 1.5 billion Euros (US\$1.8 billion), has to be stopped immediately and permanently."

Scientific evidence has for decades proven that Gorleben is not suitable to keep people and the environment safe

from the highly radioactive waste. The working group set up to examine possible sites concluded that 50,000 generations would be in danger from irradiation should the plan proceed.

"We won't put up with the radiating waste simply being scratched into the salt and forgotten about," says Althoff. He criticises opposition leader Angela Merkel (Conservative) for recruiting Siemens CEO, Heinrich von Pierer – whom he lambastes as "a nuclear fanatic who wants to keep flawed nuclear power stations running for another 60 years" – to her team of top advisers.

"The population, a majority of whom reject the use of atomic energy, should wake up fast and think hard about how to vote.

"Worldwide there is no safe 'final repository', no real 'disposal' of atomic waste is possible.

"The Gorleben soap bubble has burst at last. The only consequence can be to stop the further production of waste by shutting down nuclear plants."

Two Hanover-based geologists and former members of the working party for investigating possible sites, Jürgen Kreusch and Detlef Appel, addressed a public meeting in Dannenberg, near Gorleben, on September 6.

Kreusch, a specialist in hydrogeology, has written: "Since the overburden is practically useless as an effective barrier against the diffusion of long-life radio nuclides, the salt dome alone would have to carry the entire long-term 'safety burden'. That is not acceptable for a final repository. The lacking insulation capability of the overburden cannot be compensated for by the salt dome."

A 2003 paper by the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, "The Distribution of Fresh Water and

Saline Water in the Cover Rock above the Gorleben Salt Dome”, states: “Nuclide transport in the salt water can be predicted on the basis of the present fresh water/salt water distribution.”

**Sources:**

<http://www.bi-luechow-dannenberg.de/2presse.html> (in German only)  
<http://www.bgr.de/b1hydro/index.html?/b1hydro/fachbeitraege/c200301/suesssalz.htm>

**Contact:** Francis Althoff at Bürgerinitiative Umweltschutz, Lüchow-Dannenberg e.V., Drawehner Str. 3, 29439 Lüchow, Germany  
Tel + 49 5843 986789  
Email: hyperlink “mailto:BI-Press@t-online.de” BI-Press@t-online.de  
Web: hyperlink “http://www.bi-luechow-dannenberg.de/” <http://www.bi-luechow-dannenberg.de/>

## **Perverted deal; Borssele NPP to stay open**

In what has been strongly condemned by major Dutch environmental organisations as a “perverted deal”, the Dutch government on September 5 agreed, with the owners of the last Dutch nuclear power plant, to keep the reactor open until 2033.

In early spring of this year the State Secretary for the Environment hired two consultants to initiate talks, behind closed doors, with the main stakeholders to identify possibilities for making a dirty deal; if the environmental movement would accept the postponement of closure to 2033 then the ‘saved’ money (from not compensating the utility) would then be spent on renewable energy projects and investments.

Since the environmental community refused to participate, the consultants played the divide-and-rule game by trying to expose some groups as supporters of a deal and were rather successful with this ploy. In the current three-party government coalition, the smallest party

(D66, progressive liberals) has always expressed opposition to nuclear power but have now bowed to strong pressure from the other two coalition partners. Although the State Secretary in early spring claimed that closure in 2013 (agreed upon when this government took office) would cost approximately 1 billion Euros (US\$1.2 billion), the basis on which this agreement has now been reached is that the two owners of the plant will invest 250 million Euro (US\$307 million) into seeking extra measures to cut CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions.

The exact wording of the deal remains a secret but it is widely expected that the two owners (Essent and Delta) will invest this money in increasing efficiency efforts in their coal-burning power stations - an action that they would have been forced to do anyway under the Dutch Kyoto targets and policies.

**See also** *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* 628, May 27, 2005

**Contact:** **WISE Amsterdam**

## **NIRS/WISE offices and relays**

**WISE Amsterdam**

P.O. Box 59636  
1040 LC Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Tel: +31 20 612 6368  
Fax: +31 20 689 2179  
Email: wiseamster@antenna.nl  
Web: www.antenna.nl/wise

**NIRS**

1424 16th Street NW, #404  
Washington, DC 20036  
USA  
Tel: +1 202 328 0002  
Fax: +1 202 462 2183  
Email: nirsnet@nirs.org  
Web: www.nirs.org

**NIRS Southeast**

P.O. Box 7586  
Asheville, NC 28802  
USA  
Tel: +1 828 675 1792  
Email: nirs@main.nc.us

**WISE Argentina**

c/o Taller Ecologista  
CC 441  
2000 Rosario  
Argentina  
Email: wiseros@ciudad.com.ar  
Web: www.taller.org.ar

**WISE Austria**

c/o Plattform gegen Atomgefahr  
Mathilde Halla  
Landstrasse 31  
4020 Linz  
Austria  
Tel: +43 732 774275; +43 664 2416806  
Fax: +43 732 785602

Email: post@atomstopp.at  
Web: www.atomstopp.com

**WISE Czech Republic**

c/o Jan Beranek  
Chytalky 24  
594 55 Dolni Loucky  
Czech Republic  
Tel: +420 604 207305  
Email: wisebrno@ecn.cz

**WISE India**

c/o SACCER  
42/27 Esankai Mani Veethy  
Prakkai Road Jn.  
Nagercoil 629 002, Tamil Nadu  
India  
Tel: +91 4652 240657 / 253295  
Email: drspudayakumar@yahoo.com;  
spuk@vsnl.net

**WISE Japan**

P.O. Box 1, Konan Post Office  
Hiroshima City 739-1491  
Japan

**WISE Russia**

P.O. Box 1477  
236000 Kaliningrad  
Russia  
Tel/fax: +7 95 2784642  
Email: ecodefense@online.ru  
Web: www.antiatom.ru

**WISE Slovakia**

c/o SZOPK Sirius  
Katarina Bartovicova  
Godrova 3/b  
811 06 Bratislava  
Slovak Republic  
Tel: +421 905 935353

Email: wise@wise.sk  
Web: www.wise.sk

**WISE South Africa**

c/o Earthlife Africa Cape Town  
Liz Mc Daid  
P.O. Box 176  
Observatory, 7935  
Cape Town  
Tel: +27-21-683-5182  
Email: liziwe@mweb.co.za  
Web: www.earthlife-ct.org.za

**WISE Sweden**

c/o FMKK  
Barnängsgatan 23  
116 41 Stockholm  
Sweden  
Tel: +46 8 84 1490  
Fax: +46 8 84 5181  
Email: info@folkampanjen.se  
Web: www.folkampanjen.se  
c/o FMKK

**WISE Ukraine**

P.O. Box 73  
Rivne-33023  
Ukraine  
Tel/fax: +380 362 237024  
Email: ecoclub@ukrwest.net  
Web: www.atominfo.org.ua

**WISE Uranium**

Peter Diehl  
Am Schwedenteich 4  
01477 Arnsdorf  
Germany  
Tel: +49 35200 20737  
Email: uranium@t-online.de  
Web: www.antenna.nl/wise/uranium

## WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR MONITOR

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service was founded in 1978 and is based in Washington, US. The World Information Service on Energy was set up in the same year and houses in Amsterdam, Netherlands. NIRS and WISE Amsterdam joined forces in 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, radiation, and sustainable energy issues.

The *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* publishes international information in English 20 times a year. A Spanish translation of this newsletter is available on the WISE Amsterdam website ([www.antenna.nl/wise/esp](http://www.antenna.nl/wise/esp)). A Russian version is published by WISE Russia and a Ukrainian version is published by WISE Ukraine. The *WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor* can be obtained both on paper and in an email version (pdf format). Old issues are (after two months) available through the WISE Amsterdam homepage: [www.antenna.nl/wise](http://www.antenna.nl/wise).

### Receiving the WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor

US and Canada based readers should contact NIRS for details of how to receive the *Nuclear Monitor* (address see page 11). Others receive the *Nuclear Monitor* through WISE Amsterdam. For individuals and NGOs we ask a minimum annual donation of 50 Euros (20 Euros for the email version). Institutions and industry should contact us for details of subscription prices.

**WISE/NIRS NUCLEAR MONITOR**

c/o WISE Amsterdam  
PO Box 59636  
1040 LC Amsterdam  
Netherlands

PRINTED IN MATTER  
MATTERE IMPRIMERIE

