



12 June 2012

To the officials of the Republic of Lithuania:
The President Dalia Grybauskaitė
The Minister of Parliament Irena Degutienė
The Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius
The Minister of Energy Arvydas Sekmokas
The Minister of Finances Ingrida Šimonytė

Say no to the Visaginas plant.

Lithuania's energy future must be based on renewables and energy savings

Nuclear power remains more than ever a threat to people and planet, a fact driven home by the Fukushima disaster in Japan last year. Resistance to nuclear power continues to grow across Europe, while genuine solutions, such as renewables and energy efficiency, gain ever more prominence.

Friends of the Earth Europe, alongside the Lithuanian Green movement (Friends of the Earth Lithuania) urge you to reject plans to construct a new nuclear power plant in Visaginas, Lithuania. Nuclear power is not a solution to Lithuania's energy security concerns. It is not sustainable or 'clean', and has hidden social, economic, and environmental costs. Additionally, Lithuania does not have an appropriate answer to the question of nuclear waste storage and disposal – and the high demands this would bring on Lithuanian tax payers.

Governments across Europe are rejecting nuclear power. Germany and Switzerland are phasing-out nuclear power this year, and Denmark, Austria and Greece strongly oppose nuclear power. Safer solutions exist: Lithuania's energy future must be based on renewables and energy savings.

Nuclear power is not clean, nor is it the answer to energy security: Arguments for nuclear power based on energy independence and clean energy are highly misleading. Uranium is not a local resource, and uranium mining requires vast quantities of energy, transportation and produces radioactive waste, as well as destroying local ecosystems. Lithuania will remain dependant on uranium imports for decades, at unpredictable prices. Additionally, scientists predict that uranium resources will run out in 40 years. If the full cycle of nuclear energy production is considered, including the processes that deal with highly radioactive material, and waste, nuclear power generates 30-120 grams of CO₂ per kWh of generated nuclear electricity.

The costs of nuclear power: A new nuclear power plant costs an estimated €5 billion. But that is not all: hidden costs for waste disposal, decommissioning, opportunity costs, and accident viability should be taken into consideration. Investments in nuclear power are increasing costs for renewable energies and energy efficiency now and in the future.

The dangers and costs of radioactive nuclear waste: Nuclear waste remains radioactive for over 240,000 years. Above ground and underground storage of radioactive waste does not solve the

problem. Recent scientific studies show that zircon, used for radioactive waste isolation, is susceptible to degradation faster than expected and may not be able to contain the waste until it becomes safe. It is impossible to guarantee that waste will be isolated and protected against war, terrorism and potential dangers for hundreds of thousands of years. Lithuania does not have an appropriate place to safely store nuclear waste, which imposes high demands on tax payers to store the waste or send it to other countries.

Transparency and democracy are crucial: Political decisions that favour nuclear power, including the rush to sign a contract with “Hitachi GE Nuclear Energy Ltd” are being made without in-depth research of future energy needs, funding and interest rates, and pricing of produced energy. The process ignores renewable energy potential in the country. No public hearing has taken place yet which undermines UN Aarhus convention and neglects democracy in Lithuania. A public referendum must be organised in order to decide about such long term project which imposes high long term risks on Lithuanian and European society.

One year after Fukushima and more than 26 years after the Chernobyl disaster, one thing is clear – nuclear power will never be safe. Europe, and Lithuania, can secure its energy supplies, reduce its dependency on fossil fuels and cut emissions, without relying upon unsafe and costly nuclear power. Friends of the Earth Europe support the Lithuanian Green movement and civil society’s **initiative to organize compulsory and legally binding referendum**, and demand energy safety and independence for Lithuania using alternative energy sources.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Magda Stoczkiewicz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Magda Stoczkiewicz
Director, Friends of the Earth Europe