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## **Position of the public concerning the course of public discussion on plans to build NPP in Belarus**

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We, non-governmental organizations and citizens, express our deep anxiety for the procedure for public discussion of the project of constructing a nuclear power plant (NPP) in Belarus, for making decisions on the issue and the legislation. We appeal to the general public, mass media, executive departments, and responsible authorities of Belarus, as well as international organizations and citizens to examine our assessment of the following situation, together with the facts indicated here. We demand taking effective measures in stopping the project of constructing NPP in Belarus, which is dangerous not only for inhabitants of Belarus.

The following facts cause our special anxiety:

1. Both national and international legislations are systematically violated while making decisions and taking actions about NPP. The most conspicuous facts are nonfulfilment of the procedures of agreement with the public, specified by legislation and the following illegal actions done by the project developer at the stated period of public discussions:

1.1. Instead of national public hearings a NPP supporters' meeting was held on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Astraviec. This meeting was announced by the State Enterprise «Directorate for the Nuclear Power Plant Construction» to be “the meeting for public discussion of preview account of environmental impact assessment (EIA) of NPP in Belarus”. Its course and result convinced us that it cannot be qualified as hearings or other public discussion activity on NPP in Belarus. We would like to state that this meeting is an insult to citizens feelings, it shakes Belarusian community's faith in justice and law, and purposes to mislead officials and citizens

of other countries concerning the supposedly observed regulations of Belarusian legislation, which provides for Aarhus convention and other International Conventions. More detailed information on the meeting is in Annex “About the meeting in Astraviec”.

1.2. Manipulating by legal texts at different levels the meeting organizers actually misled the public. The document “Substantiation of investments in construction of the nuclear power plant in the Republic of Belarus. Environmental Impact Assessment. Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP (Preview report on EIA of Belarusian NPP)” on 131 pages that was offered for public discussion and placed at the Internet sites of the State Enterprise «Directorate for the Nuclear Power Plant Construction» and Ministry of Nature Resources and Environment Protection of Belarus turned out to be not the only document and not the most complete one for discussion. At the meeting in Astraviec another document in several volumes on 3000 pages under the title “EIA of NPP in Belarus” was put forward. The fact of the document's existence had been sunk. Consequently the public was disabled to look through the entire document before October 9<sup>th</sup>.

1.3. Building works of NPP infrastructure (dwelling houses for NPP staff, local automobile roads, etc.) have already begun this year long before State Environmental Expertiza, public discussions of NPP project and other obligatory arrangements took place.

2. Groundlessness of the published “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP” on 131 pages, which was done with violation of Belarusian legislative requirements, had blunders and intentionally misled the public and decision-makers. We have already appealed to Council of Ministers, to different ministries of the Republic of Belarus and to the State Enterprise «Directorate for the Nuclear Power Plant Construction», demanding to withdraw the “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP”.

We would like to draw attention to these facts and we call for:

1. The developer withdrawal of the “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP”.
2. The admission of the fact that the national hearings on EIA have not taken place and the meeting in Astraviec cannot be considered public hearings or discussing neither at the national nor at local level.
3. Following all the stages of discussing the issues concerning NPP with the public properly in concordance with Belarusian legislation and International Conventions. We also inform that we intend to send our representatives to State Expertiza of the project in Belarus. We will arrange Public Expertiza of the project for the purpose of providing the public and those making decision with objective information on the project and in accordance with Article 3 of Act on State Environmental Expertiza, to:
  - assess sufficiency and validity of environmental protection measures specified by the design of planned economical and other activities;

- assess the level of environmental threat that can appear in course of realization of the planned economical and other activities and impact environment directly or indirectly;
- prevent possible unfavorable effects of the planned economical and other activities on environment and fallouts connected with them.

We also claim that on the grounds of the existing information we came to the conclusion that the project of building NPP in Belarus is invalid.

19 November, 2009

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Chair person of the Council of Public Association “Ecohome”



Aleh Novikau  
Chair person of the Belarussian Party of “Greens”



Vladimir Sliviak  
Co-chairman of the “Ecodefence!” Group



**Annex**  
**“ About the meeting in Astraviec”**

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We, non-governmental organizations and parties' representatives, and citizens, who attended the meeting in Astraviec on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 testify to the following actions accomplished by the organizers of the event. We ask the corresponding instances, as well as the international ones, to examine these activities, set a just value upon them and assume adequate measures.

1. The information on the documents was hidden and the public was misled intentionally. In the Internet at the sites *www.minenergo.gov.by*, *www.region.grodno.by*, *www.ostrovets.grodno-region.by*, *www.dsae.by* the document “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP (Preview report on EIA of Belarusian NPP)” on 131 pages was published. The public had been discussing the document, had prepared remarks and suggestions on it for the developer. Nevertheless at the meeting in Astraviec another a much more full document on 3000 pages under the title “EIA of Belarusian NPP” was put forward. It was lying on the tables near the stage of the cinema-concert hall “Astraviec” and it was suggested to be discussed, though no time for the public to learn it was given.

Such conduct does not agree with Article 21 of Regulations on the procedure of Environmental Impact Assessment of planned economical and other activity in the Republic of Belarus.

2. Many public representatives, willing to take part in the hearings, could not do that because of the law-enforcement officers' and the hearings secretariat's volunteers' counteraction. Some public representatives were not allowed to approach the building of the cinema-concert hall “Astraviec” by riot police squad and then by people in civilian clothes, who did not introduce themselves (later they turned out to be police officers). Many persons, who had registered themselves, were not allowed to come into the house.

3. The procedure of participants' registration of the hearings, declared by the organizers, was violated. According to the official statement made by the State Enterprise «Directorate for the Nuclear Power Plant Construction» registration had to start at 10 am. It was not possible to come into the house without a “Participant of the hearings card”. Nevertheless, at 10 am scores of people had been sitting in the house. They pretended to be registered participants of the hearings. It became clear from the conversation with them that some state organizations' employees had been “registered” in buses on their way to Astraviec or even on their workplaces the day before the meeting.

4. The order of statements at the meeting was violated. The speakers were allowed to make their reports not according to application order but according to the panel members' preferences. More than a half of those who had applied for making a statement could not do that - they were not allowed to. For some time (approximately from 11:30 to 13:30) applications for making a statement were

rejected referring to the fact that there were too many people willing to make reports. This was a violation of the meeting procedure (which had been put on <http://www.dsae.by/>). According to the information on the site applications for making a statement had to be in progress until 15.00. At the participants' insistent request applications acceptance was prolonged until 13:30.

5. Statements of the main speakers were mere advertisement of NPP construction project. Representatives of labour collectives, who spoke as supplementary speakers, also were not discussing and not commenting the text of Environmental Impact Assessment, but merely expressed their support for the project. The panel ignored information about arresting of an expert from Russia and about print run of «Censorious remarks to “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP (preview report on EIA of Belarusian NPP)”» having been blocked from circulation at the hall of the meeting.

6. Expert from Russia Andrey Ozharovski, who registered as a participant of hearings, was unlawfully detained by undercover policemen, who refused to introduce themselves in spite of the fact that the national legislation demands to do so. He was kept for more than three hours at Astraviec police station without drawing up a report on perpetration of administrative misdeed (which is required by the national legislation during the first three hours after detention). Later a report was drawn up and the court hearings took place, during which A. Ozharovski was sentenced to 7 days of administrative arrest according to framed-up charges with hooliganism. Secretariat of hearings knew about detention, and according to Andrey Ozharovski's words it was secretariat's representative (Sviryd) who gave the police instructions to detain him. The court unlawfully claimed witnesses for the defence of Andrey Ozharovski to be interested.

7. Employees of Astraviec police department seized from the above mentioned A. Ozharovski approximately 90 copies of «Censorious remarks to “Statement on possible environmental impact of Belarusian NPP (preview report on EIA of Belarusian NPP)”» prepared by the group of experts. Seizure was made on ground of oral statement of public gathering's organising committee representative Sviryd. The latter stated that «Censorious remarks...» «are banned by organizing committee for circulation at the hall of meeting». Report on seizure was not drawn up.

8. Meeting in Astraviec was claimed to be public discussion at national level. But “Statement on EIA of NPP in Belarus” was not published in national mass media, as required by paragraph 18 of *Regulation on the procedures for discussion of the issues in the area of the use of nuclear energy with participation of citizens associations, other organizations and citizens*: «In case there is a need to carry out public discussions at national level Statement on EIA of planned activities around nuclear energy use and information about public discussions should be placed (published) in national mass media upon agreement with national state governance body in sphere of nuclear energy use».