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Mr Petras Auštrevičius MEP
European Parliament Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brussels

Dear Mr Auštrevičius,

Thank you for your letter of 14 December, which details your concerns about the nuclear power plant under construction in Ostrovets, Belarus.

Nuclear safety is a key priority for the European Union, and even more so when new facilities are being constructed so close to the borders of an EU Member State – Lithuania.

Following the Fukushima accident, the March 2011 European Council called not only for comprehensive and transparent risk and safety assessments ("stress tests") of all EU nuclear power plants (NPPs) but also for carrying out similar stress tests in the neighbouring countries and worldwide. The EU Stress Tests have been carried out in a transparent manner and the results have been actively shared, in the interests of our citizens and a stronger global safety culture.

At the time of the EU Stress Tests in 2012 some countries expressed their interest to follow the same peer review process but were not ready to join and to submit immediately a report. The European Commission has always indicated its willingness to support the peer review process in collaboration with the European Nuclear Safety Regulator Group (ENSREG) when countries are ready to do so. This is the case for Belarus.

In autumn 2015, an exchange of letters has taken place between the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus and the Directorate-General for Energy of the European Commission about the Stress Test of the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant.

In this letter, the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus informed the European Commission about the latest developments regarding the Stress Test of the Belarussian NPP (initiation of the process through a legal act). The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus indicated that upon conclusion of the Belarussian NPP Stress tests the relevant documents will be presented to the European Commission.

The European Commission outlined in its reply that following the completion of the national report, it would be pleased to organise a peer review of the report. The European Commission also mentioned that it would be grateful to receive an indication of when the national report could be submitted, in order to plan the resources for this peer review exercise.

Once sufficient information regarding the date of completion for the Belarus national report will be available, the European Commission will contact the EU nuclear safety regulators in the framework of ENSREG to seek nominations to form an EU peer review team of experts who, together with the European Commission, would develop a draft set of Terms of Reference for the peer review based on the EU stress tests model, defining the scope of the work as well as organisational issues.

It is also worthwhile to note that, since 2013, the EU has been supporting the Belarussian nuclear regulatory authority through the Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation. The on-going programme includes permanent presence of experts of European Technical Safety Organisations (TSOs). The programme enables expert advice to the nuclear regulator on the licencing process, *at all stage of the nuclear power plant construction, from site selection to commission and operation*. The series of projects aim at transferring the EU's expertise and build national capacity that complies with the best international practices and standards. The prime responsibility for the decision with regard to the licencing process rests with the Belarussian regulatory authority. Since the inception of the programme, the Regulatory Authority of Belarus has improved its human and technical capacity. The European Commission will continue to support the Regulatory Authority to enhance the nuclear safety level in the country.

At political level meetings, the need for compliance with international standards has also been repeatedly reiterated with Belarusian authorities and you can be assured that the matter will remain a priority issue for the EU.

Yours sincerely,



Federica Mogherini