



European Parliament

Member of the European Parliament

PETRAS AUŠTREVČIUS

Strasbourg, 14 December 2015

Dear High Representative,

Dear Moolam,

I am writing to you on the issue which is increasingly alarming for my home country, Lithuania, and which, I am convinced, must attract an appropriate attention of the respective institutions of the European Union, including by the European External Action Service and the European Commission. This is the issue of the Belarusian nuclear power plant being built near Ostrovets, Grodno Oblast, just 30 km away from the Lithuanian state and the EU external border and 50 km away from Vilnius.

The nuclear power plant currently under construction in Belarus is going have two power generating units with VVER-1200 reactors of total output capacity of up to 2x1,200 MW. The first unit of this power plant is scheduled to be launched in 2018 and the second - in 2020. The initial operating time is planned for 60 years. The power plant is designed and financed by Rosatom, the Russian state corporation, and the contractor general is Atomstroyeksport, Rosatom's subsidiary company.

Since 2009, the Lithuanian Government has been involved in the environmental impact assessment procedure with Belarus, as foreseen by the Espoo Convention. Lithuania has been continuously raising its concerns bilaterally and through many other multilateral instruments. Belarus not only failed to answer Lithuania's legitimate questions regarding the nuclear and environmental safety aspects of the nuclear power plant, but also violated the main principle of the Espoo Convention, namely that the construction works can only be started when the concerns of the affected party (here - Lithuania) are duly considered and the transboundary environmental impact assessment is completed.

The numerous violations of international conventions by Belarus have been registered internationally; the official Minsk, however, is rapidly progressing with the construction of its first nuclear power plant. It is estimated that by the end of 2015, around 40% of the first unit will be built. Many in Lithuania are increasingly concerned by the official declarations of the Belarusian president A. Lukashenko that "the nuclear power plant in Ostrovets must be the cheapest nuclear power plant in

Federica Mogherini,

High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

the world" and that it must be built in the shortest period of time. Specifically, Lithuania is extremely worried by the reports of witnesses of the low culture of construction, numerous cases of corruption and thefts at the construction site, which only add to our legitimate concerns over the safety of this "cheapest in the world" nuclear power plant.

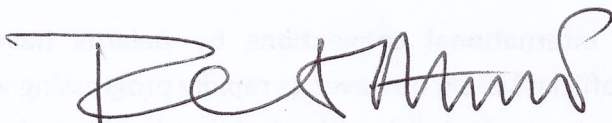
Based on all arguments mentioned above and considering the on-going re-engagement and advancement of the EU's relations with Belarus, I would like to request your personal and the Commission's urgent and constant attention to the issue of construction of the Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets. I am afraid that Lithuania has no more bilateral tools or means to achieve a constructive and civilised dialogue with the Belarusian authorities and therefore needs the EU's stepping in.

As a first step, in my view, Belarus should be urgently reminded that back in 2011, after the accident in Fukushima, Belarus signed a declaration with the European Commission and hereby committed to proceed with the stress test exercise for Ostrovets nuclear power plant, which has not been done up until now. Belarus should be asked to accelerate the preparation for the stress tests and ensure that they are performed strictly according to the European Stress Tests Specification, which was applied to all nuclear power plants of the EU.

Finally, allow me to recall that in July 2015, the EU Foreign Affairs Council reaffirmed that "on nuclear safety, the EU remains committed to the promotion and continuous improvement of the highest levels of standards in third countries". This serves as a mandate to request Belarus to strictly comply with international nuclear and environmental safety standards in developing its nuclear power plant project.

I kindly ask you and your offices to deal with the issue of safety of the Ostrovets nuclear power plant in a most urgent and efficient way and to continue keeping this item on a current agenda of the EU-Belarus relations. It is in all EU's interest to ensure that the safety of nuclear power plants does not stop at the EU borders.

Yours sincerely,



Petras Auštrevičius