

A Resolution to Strongly Oppose the New “Basic Energy Plan” that makes Nuclear Power an “important base-load power source that serves as a foundation”

On December 13 2013, the Strategic Policy Committee, Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry proposed the “Basic Energy Plan” outlining the new medium to long term course of Japan's energy policy.

In reference to nuclear power the proposed plan states that, with its safety as a major premise, Japan will “continue to use Nuclear Power as an important base-load power source that serves as a foundation for the stability of Japan's energy supply”, because “the energy output for nuclear power is much greater than the fuel input and it is an energy source that can be supplied by a domestic fuel source for many years to come, with running costs that are low and that do not vary greatly, and as an energy source that does not emit green house gases”. “Base-load power source” is a power source that permanently and steadily supplies a fixed amount of energy.

What we must first keep in mind is the fact that the formulation of this “basic energy plan” ignored national debate, thus taking an abnormal process.

During the debate to re-examine the “basic energy plan”, that took place after the March 11th devastation and nuclear disaster, there was an extensive national debate. Furthermore, of the 90,000 public comments collected, 87% called for the abolition of all nuclear plants. Many different opinions were gathered and reflected in the target of “zero nuclear power plants operating in the 2030s” in the “Innovative Strategy for Energy and the Environment” of September 2012.

However in this new “Basic Energy Plan” there was no mention of the national debate. Moreover, there was no effort to actively inform citizens about the process of deciding the plan, and it was only the Energy Agency website that asked for public opinion.

The plan proposal, in reaction to the mistrust of the nuclear power plant policy and the call for the abolition of nuclear power plants, wrote that the government must fully take on these debates. However one can only say that these were empty words that have not been put into action.

Secondly, concerning “base-load power source”, the claim of running costs being minimal must be questioned. In the “Cost Verification Committee” held after the Fukushima disaster, it was reported that the cost of generating 1 KiloWatt of energy was 9 yen. However the Japan Renewable Energy Foundation reported that this price does not put into consideration the cost of risk counter measures or decommissioning. When putting these necessary costs into consideration, to generate 1 Kilo Watt of energy will cost 17 yen; a price that is far from “minimal”. When correctly calculating the costs of nuclear power generation, a key argument loses its strength.

Thirdly, one cannot ignore that there is no prospect of finding a way to finally dispose of highly radioactive waste. As the plan proposal notes, “10 years after establishing the radioactive waste disposal plan, studies to select a disposal site have not yet even started.” It is completely irresponsible to continue using nuclear power plants as a “base-load power source”, and to continue producing even more nuclear waste despite the fact that we do not have a way to dispose of the waste that has already been accumulated.

In order to protect the life and property of the citizens, which is our responsibilities as mayors, we oppose Nuclear Power as a “Base-load power source” as in the new “Basic Energy Plan” because of the reasons given above. At the same time, we demand the government present a plan that sets the path for the abolition of nuclear power plants.

December 15, 2013
Mayors for Nuclear Power Free Japan

Note: Japan Renewable Energy Foundation Report: “Recommendation for the 'Basic Energy Plan': Towards New Growth without Nuclear Power”(December 2013)