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Chairman of the Nuclear Regulation Authority Mr. TANAKA Shunichi

Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan

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A request to the government not to prolong the lives of aging No.1 and No. 2 reactors of the Takahama Nuclear Power Plant

The Japanese Nuclear Regulation Authority issued a de-facto “approval” for the No.1 and No. 2 reactors of Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture after they passed the compliance screening based on the new regulatory requirements. If approved by additional screening before July, it will be possible to extend the operations of those reactors for up to 20 years maximum.

No. 1 and No. 2 reactors of Takahama Nuclear Power Plant, which commenced their operations in November 1974 and November 1975 respectively, are both aging reactors that have been in operations for more than 40 years. The 40-year decommission rule was incorporated in the revised regulatory law on reactors that came into effect in July 2013. Pressure vessels in reactors tend to wear thin due to exposure to neutrons generated by nuclear fission. This is because high temperature in the pipes and flows of high pressure cooling water degrade the pipes over time.

On 9 March, the Otsu District Court issued an injunction prohibiting the restarting of No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of Takahama Nuclear Power Plant based on the grounds that broad-ranging regulatory requirements taking account of the evacuation plans as well as safety measures and evacuation plans had not been put in place. This was the first time in the history for such an injunction to be issued to prohibit the operation of active reactors.

We believe that more severe measures for No. 1 and 2 reactors in comparison to reactors No. 3 and No. 4, should be taken. However, for example, while new regulatory requirements stipulate the use of flame-resistant cables, Kansai Electric Power Co. Inc. (KEPCO) only intends to change 60% of the reactors' cables to flame-resistant cables, leaving the rest to be covered only by fireproof sheets. Based on this it is rather questionable as to whether reactors are kept fire-resistant to a sufficient level.

As current mayors or former mayors who are/were responsible for assuring residents' safety and livelihood, we cannot accept the prolonging of the lives of old nuclear reactors that will inevitably pose serious threats to the lives of our residents.