

October 1, 2000

Honorable William J. Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Clinton,

Nuclear Energy Information Service, with nearly 700 individual and organizational supporters in Illinois and over 30 states, has for 19 years served as a nuclear power watchdog organization for the people of Illinois and the region. We wish to register our concern with the Administration about positions its negotiators have raised concerning global warming abatement.

We are concerned that, subsequent to the climate talks in Lyon, the Clinton/Gore administration is poised to support allowing nuclear power to receive clean air credits through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol. As a further blow to sustainable technology investment, your administration would not only allow nuclear power credits, but would also put it on par with truly sustainable energy sources such as wind and solar. Such a position is not only ill-conceived, but goes against the wishes of many individuals and organizations in both "developing" and developed countries who publicly have stated nuclear power should not be considered sustainable. It also is a position not held by many of the US environmental organizations this and future administrations will have to rely on for support if it is really serious about getting the treaty through Congress as some point.

A 1999 Department of State document claims that "(t)he CDM should assist developing countries in achieving sustainable development " further, it states "(t)he CDM should be a flexible, market-based mechanism that ensures cost-effective reductions " Nuclear power is unsustainable and has been an economic boondoggle, meeting neither of these DOS criteria. This position would allow countries like the United States, Russia and Japan to receive credits for building reactors in other countries. All three of these countries have suffered serious nuclear accidents. The Clinton/Gore administration must abandon this position at once and adopt a position that explicitly excludes nuclear power from the CDM and Joint Implementation (JI) of the Kyoto agreement.

The U.S. claim that it does not want to limit "developing" nations to certain technologies; that developing nations should decide for themselves which technologies are sustainable and which are not is disingenuous, self-serving rationalization, given that implementation of the Kyoto agreement allows for very little equitable public participation, a situation many NGOs are currently working to remedy.

In fact, western nuclear companies, unable to get contracts at home due to safety, environmental and cost concerns, would be attempting to dump their unwanted and failing technology on developing countries. The U.S. has recognized that countries would be dealing directly with the energy company, not the U.S.

government. Considering the track records of these companies in the U.S., Japan and Europe, there is every reason to suspect they will not be fair players in "developing" nations either, often sacrificing democratic principles such as public participation, not to mention environmental concerns, for profit. Additionally, many smaller developing nations fear nuclear power CDM credits would favor high-growth nuclear projects in developing countries over smaller, sustainable projects in non-nuclear developing nations.

Allowing nuclear power to receive CDM credits amounts to blatant nuclear neo-colonialism. As an Indonesia delegate commented: "I think it is simple colonialism to push nuclear power onto developing countries, leaving them with all the burdens that come with it". Citizens of many nations, including African, Indian, and Canadian NGOs, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries (GRULAC), have publicly stated their opposition to CDM credits for nuclear power.

Nuclear power pollutes the environment with long-lived radionuclides from routine releases through normal operations and creates large quantities of radioactive waste. No country has yet been able to isolate these wastes from the environment by either human-made or natural barriers for even a fraction of their hazardous life. As this Administration well knows, in the U.S. we have failed to find a way to safely store the first cup full of radioactive waste produced on April 24, 1942.

All nuclear power plants are vulnerable to serious accidents that could contaminate the environment and cause serious health impacts. Last year's accident at Tokai-mura in Japan was just the latest to underline the dangers of nuclear technology. Previous accidents, including those at Chernobyl in Ukraine and Three Mile Island in the United States are still negatively impacting the health of countless individuals and their environment.

Nuclear power is a world security risk adding to the threat of nuclear proliferation. A 1000-megawatt reactor produces 40 bombs worth of plutonium per year. Handing a country a nuclear reactor is like handing it a nuclear bomb. The threat to global security posed by nuclear proliferation is equal to that of climate change. For the Kyoto Protocol to exacerbate this threat through its mechanisms would be a truly perverse and dangerous outcome to the Climate Convention negotiations, one which undercuts your administration's own stated efforts to reduce nuclear proliferation.

The nuclear fuel chain does emit significant greenhouse gases. Should our use of nuclear energy increase, so will the amount of CO₂ released at the front end of this energy source. As we mine more of the ore richest in uranium, we are left with uranium-poor ore. The extraction process then becomes more fossil-energy intensive to collect and concentrate the increased amount of uranium required.

Nuclear power is the most expensive of all conventional energy sources and more expensive than almost all renewable energy. As proof of nuclear power's economic failure, no successful nuclear power reactor order has been placed in

the U.S. since 1973. Ratepayers in the United States are bailing out nuclear reactors to the tune of \$300 billion dollars. Nuclear energy costs an average of 12 cents/kWh compared with 7.6-9.1 cents/kWh for solar thermal and 4-6 cents/kWh for wind. Further, because energy efficiency removes seven times more greenhouse gas, dollar for dollar spent, than nuclear power, and does so far more rapidly, investing in nuclear power will severely impede our attempts to address climate change. Sadly, there is no officially recognized mechanism to credit for energy efficiency investment. If this administration is truly serious about greenhouse gas reductions, it should shift its emphasis and place paramount emphasis on energy efficiency credits, not nuclear power credits.

Including nuclear power in the CDM could seriously jeopardize climate talks and ultimately derail Kyoto. At the very least, the U.S. position would support exporting nuclear power and its dangers (including nuclear waste, huge economic costs, nuclear weapons proliferation, chronic radioactive releases, and creation of neo-colonial, anti-democratic principles) all over the world. This is a legacy the Clinton/Gore administration would not wish to leave, and the environmental community refuses to support.

Instead of giving credit to nuclear power, we must invest in energy efficiency and sustainable energy, which give more greenhouse gas reduction per dollar. We should learn from our mistakes, not export them to others. In order to make the CDM what the Department of State claims it should be, the U.S. must support excluding nuclear power from the CDM.

Sincerely,

David A. Kraft
Executive Director
Nuclear Energy Information Service
Evanston, Illinois

cc: Hon. Albert Gore, Vice-President of the United States
Carol Browner, Administrator, EPA
David Gardiner, Executive Director, White House Climate Change Task Force
Frank Loy, Under Secretary for Global Affairs, U.S. State Department
Roger Ballentine, Deputy Assistant to the President on Environmental Issues