

Reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 253 on a European policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy (London, 27 November 1974)

Caption: On 27 November 1974, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates the final reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 253 on a European policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Council welcomes the efforts made to promote some convergence of national policies on the peaceful use of nuclear energy through regular meetings in European cooperation forums. But it also emphasises the fact that the main guarantee of European independence in the nuclear field lies not in reactors but in supplies of uranium and in the means of enriching it.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Assembly Recommendation 253. London: 27.11.1974. C (74) 195. 4 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1973, 01/05/1973-30/12/1974. File 202.415.30. Volume 1/1.

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http://www.cvce.eu/obj/reply_by_the_weu_council_to_assembly_recommendation_253_on_a_european_policy_on_the_peaceful_uses_of_nuclear_energy_london_27_november_1974-en-8ba2f32d-e8ce-4562-86e7-c74e9a22fe3a.html



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WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

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SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Assembly Recommendation 253

The Secretary-General circulates herewith the Council's reply to Assembly Recommendation 253.

The reply, adopted by the Council at their meeting on 27th November, 1974, has been forwarded to the Assembly (CR (74) 17, III, 1).

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London, S.W.1.

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C (74) 195

Reply to Recommendation 253
on a European policy on the peaceful
uses of nuclear energy

The need to find a solution for the energy problem, which has been a matter of constant concern to Europe, particularly since the Second World War, has now developed into an outright challenge on which the economic future of our continent largely depends.

Europe is not, however, without assets and hopes in this field. At the moment, these include the recent discoveries of oil and natural gas under the North Sea and the prospect of significantly augmented nuclear energy programmes in the fairly near future.

While co-operation between European countries is still to be established in the case of oil and gas, achievements in the nuclear field, and particularly in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, are already substantial even if imperfect and open to improvement.

Over the last few years, for example, many attempts have been made to promote if not a common industrial nuclear policy, at least some concertation of national policies.

Reference to the part played by EURATOM is made in the Council's reply to Recommendation 235. Efforts in this direction are made in particular through the regular contacts which are now taking place between political and industrial leaders in Europe, between national nuclear energy agencies and in European co-operative fora such as the European Nuclear Energy Society and the Nuclear Energy Agency of the O.E.C.D.

This concertation of policies has already produced practical results in the shape of a number of joint actions which are limited in scope no doubt, but are by no means unimportant and are encouraging for the future.

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C (74) 195

These include, for example, shared nuclear power stations (Franco-Belgian), UNIREP, EURODIF, URENCO, the Laue/Langevin Institute at Grenoble for the construction and operation of a high-flux reactor, the EDF-RWE-EWEL Agreement on the Super Phénix reactor, the Franco-Italian Agreements on fast neutron reactors, UNIPEDE, the European fusion programme at Culham, the Benclux/German programme for the development of a fast reactor at Kalkar, the "DRAGON HTR" programme at Winfrith, the participation of French, German, Italian and Spanish interests in mining uranium in Niger, and so on.

It may seem that such measures should be even more actively encouraged. It should not be overlooked, however, that in present circumstances, this line of action, which some may consider to be too limited and over-cautious, represents a pragmatic, realistic approach to the situation which has offered the only means of achieving the successes enumerated above. It seems likely that the setting of over-ambitious targets involving authoritarian procedures paying less attention to the interests of individual countries or industries, might have blocked attempts to co-operate in this field, or even led to their failure.

In this respect, the experience of the last few years shows that economic, environmental and industrial considerations have largely decided each country's choice of a type of reactor and that the advice which national nuclear agencies can give should not be over-estimated.

It would appear that while the conclusion of political agreements is an essential condition, it is by no means sufficient if industrialists are not already willing to act in concert. Their willingness to do so would of course be encouraged by such political agreements.

Lastly, while the vital role of reactors in the nuclear energy process cannot be disputed, the main guarantee of a measure of European independence in the nuclear field lies not in reactors but in supplies

/of uranium and ...

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C (74) 195

of uranium and in the means of enriching it. The importance of the problem of uranium supplies was appreciated by the founders of EURATOM. But the supply Agency set up under Chapter VI of the Treaty is not suited to its aims, and changes have now been proposed. Reactors are no more than a product of technical "know-how". Once access to this technology is obtained, either by developments in Europe or through licences, it remains a permanent acquisition. If, however, no reliable supplies of uranium are available, Europe is still and will remain dependent in the nuclear energy field, even if it possesses original reactor techniques.

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