

## Press Release

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### **NGOs Criticize Restart of Japan's Monju Fast Breeder Reactor Call on NPT Review Conference Delegates to Support an End to Civil Use of Plutonium**

*New York, May 21, 2010:* A letter criticizing the restart of Japan's Monju Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, endorsed by leading peace, non-proliferation and disarmament, and environmental NGOs from around the world, was delivered today to government officials at the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. The letter was endorsed by 29 NGOs from Japan, Korea, Europe and the USA, and international NGOs including International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The letter highlighted the dangerous implications of the May 6 restart of Monju for nuclear proliferation, nuclear safety and energy supply, saying, "It is a great irony that a plutonium-fueled fast breeder reactor was restarted at a time when unprecedented international attention is being given to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and security."

Implications for nuclear proliferation and nuclear security of Monju and Japan's nuclear fuel cycle program include the following:

- The bulk-handling facilities needed to support the operation of fast reactors like Monju (reprocessing plants and plutonium fuel fabrication plants) cannot be effectively safeguarded against diversion.
- Japan has over 47 tons of separated plutonium. If the Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant operates to plan, 8 tons will be added to this each year. There is little prospect that this stockpile of weapons-usable plutonium will be eliminated any time soon.
- The example set by Japan encourages other countries to pursue plutonium-based nuclear power programs, but the use of plutonium in the civil nuclear fuel cycle increases nuclear terrorism and proliferation risks.
- Any country that possesses separated "civil" plutonium could be only a short time away from producing nuclear weapons should it choose to break out of its

NPT obligations.

In regard to nuclear safety and energy supply, the letter noted that fast reactors have been highly unreliable in providing energy and that continuing to pour money into research and development will only prevent other safe, secure, and economically viable alternatives from being developed.

The letter urged delegates to the 2010 NPT Review Conference to:

- 1) Call upon the Government of Japan to abandon its fast-breeder and reprocessing program.
- 2) Support a Comprehensive Fissile Material Ban that includes civil plutonium programs.

The full letter, along with a list of endorsing groups can be found on the following web site.

<http://cnic.jp/english/topics/cycle/fbr/restartnpt21may10.html>

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