



**RESOLUTION ON DISCHARGES FROM NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANTS:
APPEAL TO CLOSE DOWN THE SELLAFIELD NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT**

The North Sea Commission (NSC) adopted on 5 June 1998 its first resolution against discharges to sea of radioactive substances from nuclear reprocessing plants. This was at the time when increased levels of the long lived radionuclide Technetium-99, discharged from the reprocessing plant in Sellafield, were detected in the North Sea. Since then, NSC has repeatedly expressed concern about discharges of radioactive waste to sea - particularly from the reprocessing plants in Sellafield.

There are two similar reprocessing plants in the North Sea-English Channel area; Sellafield in the UK and La Hague in France. Their way of treating the “end products” – the waste that can not be separated from the water, by releasing it into the sea in low and medium active concentrations is highly controversial. This is a method used only in these two countries and Russia. Of the two reprocessing plants, Sellafield is by far considered to be the biggest threat. Not only are they storing three times as much radioactive waste as Le Hague at any time, but the security measures in place are also considered to be weaker. Wind and sea currents also make the Sellafield plants the most immediate threats to marine life in the North Sea and the coastal areas around it.

There is a fear among the regions bordering the North Sea of the consequences of accidents that may occur, particularly with respect to the risk of explosion and fire at the B215 facility in Sellafield. Smaller previous incidents show that there is reason to be deeply concerned. Such an explosion and fire incident could lead to an increase of the total High Active Liquor (HAL) inventory, which would be discharged and transported and deposited around the North Sea. Concentrations of the different radioisotopes can already be found in fish, shellfish, seaweed and other plants and animals in the Irish Sea. Radioactive materials that can be traced to Sellafield has also been indentified in the North Sea and Barents Sea.

During a press conference in London on the 11th of December 2002 it was announced that the British Government was considering whether it would be possible to impose a moratorium on the discharges of technetium-99 from Sellafield. However, no new information about such a moratorium has been released. There are also plans to reduce the storage of highly radioactive waste materials down to less than half of what is currently stored, but due to capacity problems the date of this action keeps being pushed forward. As late as in August 2011 the deadline for when Sellafield would reach their goal of 200m³ was moved from 2015 to 2020. Meanwhile, the waste from new reprocessing is accumulating, making it increasingly difficult to reach the target date.

Adding to these environmental and safety concerns, it is today cheaper and safer to utilize new uranium, processed at plants that do not discharge radioactive material to the sea.

The North Sea Commission acknowledges the need for the use and role of nuclear power in the energy supply of many countries. However, due to the discharges and risks concerning the reprocessing plants, **The North Sea Commission urges the responsible governments to take immediate action:**

- **To close or put forward a time limit for closure of all nuclear plants around North Sea and associated waters, with discharges of radioactive technetium-99 or other similar radioactive substances.**
- **To impose a moratorium on discharges of technetium-99 from the Sellafield plant as promised and no later than 2015.**
- **To cease all further reprocessing activities at Sellafield until the backlog has been cleared and the amount of stored waste is reduced to the envisioned levels of 200m³.**