Nuclear energy: safety of spent fuel and radioactive waste management, International Joint Convention 1997

2001/0225(CNS) - 15/10/2001 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: To approve on behalf of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Communities the "International Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management" CONTENT: On 18 June 2001 the International Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management (Joint Convention) entered into force. It was signed in Vienna in 1997 at the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). All EU Member States bar Portugal have either ratified the Treaty or are awaiting ratification before the end of the year. The objectives of the Joint Convention are to achieve and maintain a high level of global safety procedures in the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste. This is to be enacted through enhancing national measures, improving international co-operation and maintaining at all stages effective defences against potential hazards with the ultimate objective being the protection of individuals, society and the environment from the harmful effects of ionising radiation. Most European States produce some form of spent nuclear fuel from power and/or research reactors. Other nuclear waste stems from a variety of human activities including nuclear electricity generation, agriculture, medicine, industry, research and defence programmes. Whilst safety measures within the EU are well implemented and monitored the same can not be said of many candidate countries especially those from Central and Eastern Europe. In light of the safety and environmental measures which the Joint Convention imposes on EU activities the two Communities are now seeking membership of the International Convention along side Member States. Article 101 of the EAEC (EURATOM) Treaty and Article 174 of the EC Treaty permits both Communities to seek membership of international organisation, where appropriate. The advantages of EU membership are many. Being a full party of the Joint Convention would allow Commission involvement in the reporting meetings. As such the Commission would be afforded direct and full access to all information available at these meetings as well as enabling the Commission to participate actively in the "peer review process". In view of the above, the Commission urges the Council to adopt the proposed Decisions as soon as possible thereby allowing Euratom and EU participation on the Joint Convention.