Nuclear sector, safety: actions for the CEECs and the New independent States NIS

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PURPOSE: to give an overview of actions undertaken by the Community in the nuclear sector for the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States and to present ways forward with respect to programming and programme implementation. CONTENT: the communication reviews the achievements already made by Community actions in this area but also outlines what remains to be done in terms of further improving the level of aid currently allocated and making the reactors in the countries concerned safe and viable. Beyond the problems of administrative slowness and adapting the administrations of the CEECs to Community procedures for tendering, the communication also refers to cultural problems in getting those reponsible in the countries concerned to accept the concept of responsibility in relation to nuclear reactors. For the future, the Commission plans to reorient its current actions within the context of pre-accession aid and the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements between the EU and the New Independent States: 1) for the CEEC countries, the Commission's overall strategy is to reduce the risk which is actually associated with the civil use of nuclear energy in these countries and to bring the general standard of nuclear safety (including the management of radioactive waste) up to a level comparable with that of the EU. More specifically, this will entail: - ensuring that reactors of Western design remain at a high safety level over the long run; - ensuring the rapid and effective upgrading of those reactors of Soviet design which can be upgraded to acceptable safety levels; - securing definitive closure on the basis of a realistic and agreed timetable of those reactors of Soviet design which cannot be upgraded at a reasonable cost. Aid will essentially take the form of technical assistance to nuclear power plant operators with a view to improving the viability and safety of reactors or securing their safe closure. Over the two years 1998-1999, the Commission envisages a PHARE allocation of 50 MECU for multi-country nuclear projects. Beyond 2000, PHARE will continue to finance nuclear safety projects in cooperation with the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-accession (ISPA); 2) In the TACIS countries, the main objective will be to place nuclear safety as a priority high on the agenda of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements. The priorities of the TACIS programme will be to undertake more concentrated actions to improve power reactor safety, management of radioactive waste, assistance to reactor operators, emergency preparedness and reform of the power sector. Measures will also be taken to support adhesion to and implementation of international conventions on nuclear third party liability, nuclear safety, waste and spent fuel. TACIS will further continue to assist Ukraine in the closure of Chernobyl by the year 2000. The Commission also foresees other priorities, notably in RTD and within the framework of Community assistance to the ISTC (International Science and Technology Centre).