



NFLA / KIMO Joint Media release - for immediate release, 28th February 2011

- **NFLA / KIMO ask why are Sellafield's Irish Sea radioactive discharges rising?**
- **Concern raised at OSPAR over the development of floating and submerged nuclear power plants**

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA), in its continuing co-operation with the marine pollution local authority group KIMO International (1), recently attended (on behalf of KIMO) the OSPAR Commission's Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) and heard that, whilst radioactive discharges into the North East Atlantic area are decreasing, they are actually increasing from Sellafield in to the Irish Sea.

The OSPAR RSC (2) received a report from its Expert Assessment Panel that noted that radioactive discharges in the region had seen an upwards trend in 2009, compared to declining levels in previous years. All of the increased levels of discharge originate from the Sellafield reprocessing facilities in Cumbria. These figures would look worse if they had not been offset by reductions from the Cap de la Hague facility in France.

Headline figures for 2009 discharges (compared with 2008) reported at OSPAR include:

- A 22% increase in alpha emitting radioactive discharges from Sellafield.
- A 94% increase in tritium discharges from Sellafield (110% of the OSPAR total).
- A 9.5% increase in beta discharges from Sellafield.
- A 30% increase in technetium 99 discharges from Sellafield.

Though the level of discharge is considerably lower than in the 1980s and 1990s, it was confirmed at the meeting that Sellafield discharge rates are likely to continue to increase till at least 2015/6. At the meeting, the UK delegation challenged a CORE press release suggesting a doubling of discharge levels from Sellafield (3), but still admitted a possible 20% increase in discharge levels from Sellafield over the next 5 years.

NFLA Chair, Bailie George Regan, commented:

"The clear indication from our useful presence at the recent OSPAR Radioactive Substances Committee is the confirmation of our and KIMO's belief that radioactive discharges from Sellafield into the Irish Sea will rise over the next 5 years. I remain highly concerned therefore that the UK may not be able to meet its formal commitment to 'close to zero' radioactive marine discharges by 2020. With the UK Government recently signalling a new Sellafield reprocessing facility and the reprocessing of its weapons-grade plutonium store at Sellafield, I want to know why it is considering both options, whilst still saying it will fulfil its OSPAR commitments."

At the meeting, a paper developed by KIMO International (4) was also presented, which highlighted the real risks to safety and security by the development in Russia of floating nuclear power plants and in France of submerged nuclear power plants. Both plants could be in operation in the next few years and give clear concern as to their sale on the open market and the catastrophic risks that could occur in the event of an incident or attacks by terrorists or from international piracy. The OSPAR RSC meeting agreed that this issue would be monitored and further information should be collated from both the Russian and French governments.

John Mouat, KIMO Secretary, stated:

"The development of floating nuclear power plants and underwater nuclear reactors beggars belief. But they are not a fantasy; they could in a very short time be a reality. KIMO completely opposes these developments as they increase the risk of a significant nuclear accident, emissions to the

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marine environment and increase the potential for nuclear proliferation. These facilities should be banned from the North East Atlantic and we urge the Russian and French authorities to stop developing them.”

Ends.

Further information

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Notes to Editors:

- (1) KIMO International is an international local authority group concerned with issues around marine pollution. Its Secretariat is based in Lerwick, Shetland Islands. In 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to co-operate on issue of mutual interest, particularly in developing joint reports and representation at OSPAR meetings. For further detail on its work consult www.kimointernational.org.
- (2) The OSPAR Radioactive Substances Committee is a component part of the OSPAR Commission, an intergovernmental body working to treaties in protecting the North East Atlantic, including the Irish Sea, the North Sea and the English Channel. The RSC specifically monitors progress with the Treaty aim to reduce radiation discharges into the marine environment by ‘close to zero’ by 2020. For further detail on its work consult www.ospar.org.
- (3) See the press release from Cumbrians Opposed to a Radioactive Environment (CORE) – www.corecumbria.co.uk.
- (4) A copy of the KIMO / Greenpeace International / NFLA paper on floating and submerged nuclear power plants is attached with this media release.