

Draft reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 253 on a European policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy (London, 29 October 1974)

Caption: On 29 October 1974, the Secretary-General of Western European Union (WEU) circulates a draft reply by the WEU Council to Assembly Recommendation 253 on a European policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The text includes the original French proposal and a series of British amendments, all of which are subsequently adopted in the final version of the reply to the Recommendation (C (74) 195). The two delegations emphasise the fact that the main guarantee of European independence in the nuclear field lies not in reactors but in supplies of uranium and, as the British emphasise, in the means of enriching it.

Source: Council of the Western European Union. Secretary-General's note. Recommendation 253 on a European policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. London: 29.10.1974. WPM (74) 27/1. Copy No 54. 5 p. Archives nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux). <http://www.anlux.lu>. Western European Union Archives. Secretariat-General/Council's Archives. 1954-1987. Organs of the Western European Union. Year: 1973, 01/05/1973-30/12/1974. File 202.415.30. Volume 1/1.

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/draft_reply_by_the_weu_council_to_assembly_recommendation_253_on_a_european_policy_on_the_peaceful_uses_of_nuclear_energy_london_29_october_1974-en-f6851a97-01d4-43a0-8e1f-5fe56b50a43f.html



Last updated: 13/10/2016

WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION

W.E.U. CONFIDENTIAL

Original: English/French

WEM (74) 27/1

Copy No. ...*54*

29th October, 1974

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S NOTE

Recommendation 253
on a European policy on the peaceful
uses of nuclear energy
(C (74) 101)

The Secretary-General circulates herewith a draft reply to Recommendation 253 which includes, in square brackets, the amendments to the original French version, proposed by the British delegation.

This draft will be considered at the next meeting of the working group on 8th November, 1974.

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WPM (74) 27/1

Draft reply to Recommendation 253

The need to find a solution for the energy problem, which has been a matter of constant concern to Europe, particularly since the Second World War, has now developed into an outright challenge on which the economic future of our continent largely depends.

Europe is not, however, without assets and hopes in this field. At the moment, these include the recent discoveries of oil and natural gas under the North Sea and the prospect of supplies of nuclear energy⁽¹⁾ OR significantly augmented nuclear energy programmes⁽²⁾ in the fairly near future.

While co-operation between European countries is still to be established in the case of oil and gas, achievements in the nuclear field, and particularly in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, are already substantial even if imperfect and open to improvement.

/Over the last ...

(1) Original French version.

(2) Version proposed by the United Kingdom delegation.

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WPM (74) 27/1

Over the last few years, for example, many attempts have been made to promote if not a common industrial nuclear policy, at least some concertation of national policies. Efforts in this direction are made in particular through the regular contacts which have now taken place between political and industrial chiefs in Europe, between national nuclear energy agencies and in European co-operative fora such as the European Nuclear Energy Society and the Nuclear Energy Agency of the O.E.C.D.⁽¹⁾

This concertation of policies has already produced practical results in the shape of a number of joint actions which are limited in scope no doubt, but are by no means unimportant and are encouraging for the future. These include, for example, shared nuclear power stations (Franco-Belgian), UNIREP, EURODIF, the introduction of the centrifuge technique by the three members of URENCO⁽²⁾, the Laue/Langevin Institute at Grenoble for the construction and operation of a high-flux reactor, the EDF-RWE-EWEL Agreement on the Super Phénix reactor, the Franco-Italian Agreement on fast neutron reactors, UNIPEDE, the European

/fusion programme ...

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- (1) The Italian and United Kingdom delegations would also like reference to be made to EURATOM (see the Council's reply to Recommendation 235).
- (2) The United Kingdom delegation requests the deletion of these words.

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WPM (74) 27/1

fusion programme at Culham, the Benelux fast reactor development programme, the "DRAGON HTR" programme at Winfrith,⁽¹⁾ the participation of French, German, Italian and Spanish interests in mining uranium in Niger and so on.

It may seem that such measures should be even more actively encouraged. It should not be overlooked, however, that in present circumstances, this line of action, which some may consider to be too limited and over-cautious, represents a pragmatic, realistic approach to the situation which has offered the only means of achieving the successes enumerated above. It seems likely that the setting of over-ambitious targets involving authoritarian procedures paying less attention to the interests of individual countries [or industries]⁽²⁾ might have blocked attempts to co-operate in this field, or even led to their failure.

In this respect, the experience of the last few years shows that economic [environmental]⁽²⁾ and industrial considerations have largely decided each country's choice of a type of reactor and that the advice which national nuclear agencies can give [one another]⁽²⁾ should not be over-estimated.

/Without denying ...

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- (1) The United Kingdom delegation requests the addition of these examples.
 - (2) The United Kingdom delegation requests the addition of these words.

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Without denying the value of political decisions on the subject, it would appear that while the conclusion of political agreements is an essential condition, it is by no means sufficient if industrialists are not already willing to act in concert.

Lastly, while the vital role of reactors in the nuclear energy process cannot be disputed, the main guarantee of a measure of European independence in the nuclear field lies not in reactors but in supplies of uranium [and in the means of enriching it].⁽¹⁾ Reactors are no more than a product of technical "know-how". Once access to this technology is obtained, either by developments in Europe or through licences, it remains a permanent acquisition. If, however, no reliable supplies of uranium are available, Europe is still and will remain dependent in the nuclear energy field, even if it possesses original reactor techniques.

(1) The United Kingdom delegation requests the addition of these words.