

FORATOM's analysis of the European Council Conclusions

FORATOM welcomes the Council Conclusions that were published on 9 March and in particular the clear and unequivocal link that is made between energy and climate change. The two main elements of the strategic approach that defines the post-2012 climate change framework are the strengthening and extension of global carbon markets and the development, deployment and transfer of the technology needed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The European nuclear industry believes that the non CO₂-emitting credentials of nuclear energy fully support these aims.

The major strategic components highlighted in the Conclusions are the adoption of two binding targets for EU Member States to reach by 2020:

- A 20% reduction of GHG emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, which is consistent with the underlying policy objective of *"transforming Europe into a highly energy-efficient and low GHG-emitting economy."*
- A 20% share of the EU's total power share from renewable sources by 2020.

The implementation of these targets will be based on agreed internal burden sharing, through the fixing of National Action Plans that will take into account the Member States' varying domestic energy mixes.

FORATOM welcomes the fact that the Council "*notes the European Commission's assessment of the contribution of nuclear energy in meeting the growing concerns about safety of energy supply and CO₂ emission reductions.*" This is significant because it is the first time that nuclear energy's role in ensuring security of supply and combating climate change is clearly stated in an official Council document. Furthermore, in the Council press release clearly stated that: *"In this context nuclear energy could count as a low CO₂-emitting energy source."*

Restating the objective of making Europe a low GHG-emitting economy helps to bring nuclear energy's major contribution as a non CO₂-emitting energy source sharply into focus. The European nuclear industry also notes the Council's favourable reference to the *"great importance of the energy intensive sector."* The goal is to reduce CO₂ emissions while maintaining supplies to energy intensive industries and, of all energy sources, nuclear contributes most to achieving this goal.

On the target of 20% power share for renewables by 2020, the Council notes that *"a fair and adequate allocation, taking into account different national starting points and potentials, including the existing levels of renewable energies and the energy mix,"* must be fixed. While nuclear is not part of the renewables equation, it is part of the overall energy mix. Since national action plans will take domestic energy mix factors into account we can logically deduce that nuclear energy should be included in the discussions over fixing national action plans. The nuclear industry has always recognised the role played by renewables in the overall energy mix and believes that all low CO₂-emitting technologies should be considered together with nuclear energy in the energy debate.

By adding that the energy choice of one Member State may have an effect upon the energy situation in another, and may influence the EU's ability to achieve the objectives of its Energy Policy for Europe (EPE), the Council is implicitly suggesting that phasing out nuclear energy should be carefully considered alongside overriding policy objectives.

It is significant to note that for the first time the European institutions have made the connection – albeit implicitly – between nuclear energy and the two key issues of the post-2012 climate change framework and the energy mix. This is an encouraging development and all the more noteworthy since it has occurred during the German Presidency.

It is also important to note that the nuclear component played a role in the discussions that led to the finalising of the Conclusions. They contain a paragraph dedicated to nuclear energy that covers three points:

- the promotion of broad-ranging discussions with stakeholder representatives on the opportunities and risks of nuclear energy
- Its contribution to meeting growing concerns about security of energy supply and CO₂ emissions
- the need for continued improvements in the field of nuclear safety and radioactive waste management (support for R & D on waste management under the FP7 and the potential creation of a High-level Group on nuclear safety and waste management)

Within this context, the European Commission, with the support of MEPs, Member States and the European nuclear industry, recently proposed the creation of a European Nuclear Energy Forum (ENEF) to promote discussions with stakeholders. This forum will promote a constructive and transparent dialogue and encourage a forward-looking analysis of key issues relating to the future of nuclear energy, including lifetime extensions of existing plants and nuclear new build. ENEF will also identify how nuclear energy can continue to contribute to achieving the goals of the Lisbon Agenda in general and EU energy and environmental policy in particular.

Finally, the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET) that should be approved at the Spring European Council of 2008 is another research-oriented tool aimed at achieving EU energy policy goals. FORATOM supports the aims of the SET and believes that the existing fission platform in the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) should contribute to the drawing up of the Plan. The industry also acknowledges the possible creation of a High-level Group on nuclear safety and waste and looks forward to playing a leading role in it.