

Urgent Statement: “Decision to start releasing ALPS-treated radioactive water into the ocean ignoring the agreement with the interested parties is the worst means”

Citizens’ Commission on Nuclear Energy (CCNE)

1. There is no understanding among the parties involved.

Today, the Japanese government decided at a Council of Ministers that the release of ALPS-treated radioactive water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station into the ocean would begin as early as August 24th, 2023. The decision clearly breaks the promise made by the government on August 24, 2015 in writing to the Fukushima Prefecture Fisheries Federation that "We [the State] will take the necessary measures, including careful explanations to all parties concerned, including those in the fishing industry. No action will be taken without such processes and the understanding of those concerned." Starting to release the wastewater into the ocean, which is a blatant derogation of the promise, adds to the suffering of those who have been harmed by the Fukushima nuclear disaster for more than 12 years.

2. The oceanic release increases the environmental pollution but brings no solution to the decommissioning and radwaste problem.

The “ALPS treated water” to be released is supposed to be tritiated water with all other radionuclides removed to below the regulatory concentration limits. At present, however, the majority of the tanks of ALPS-treated water contain residual radionuclides other than tritium significantly exceeding regulatory limits that should have been filtered by ALPS (as the government calls it, "Treated water to be re-purified"). The full measurement and analysis of its radioactivity are appallingly lacking. It is unclear whether secondary treatment, or “re-purification”, can reliably remove those radionuclides as the government expects.

In addition, large amounts of highly concentrated radioactive sludge and highly contaminated adsorbents are derived from ALPS treatment and secondary treatment processes. There is no immediate prospect of these disposals. Even if the ALPS treated water started to be released into the ocean with these problems left unaddressed, it would not solve the huge amount of pollutants generated by the Fukushima nuclear accident.

3. The oceanic release provides no good solution at all to the problem of contaminated water in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident.

The oceanic releases will take decades. According to Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), it takes more than 30 years. It can take further decades, as long as the generation of contaminated water in the damaged reactor buildings continues. As a result, storage of contaminated water in the temporary tanks as they are will have to be prolonged.

In addition, ocean releases involve enormous costs. The cost of processing the ocean release was originally estimated at 3.4 billion yen by the Tritiated Water Task Force of the Ministry of Economy, Trade

and Industry in 2016. In reality, however, about 43 billion yen has already been appropriated for undersea tunnel construction, about 30 billion yen for dealing with reputational damage, and 50 billion yen for commercial fishery support funds, totaling more than 120 billion yen already. The full charge of the combined expenses over the next 30 years is yet to be billed.

4. The Citizens Commission on Nuclear Energy (CCNE) opposes the oceanic release of ALPS-treated radioactive water and calls for implementation of alternative measures.

Japanese government and TEPCO have continued to play a pro-discharge stance and have not taken serious steps to stop the generation of contaminated water. The oceanic release is a crude breach of promises to the parties involved. It will cost a long time and a huge amount of public money. It will do more harm than good.

CCNE has proposed viable options on land to deal with the contaminated water: it should either be stored in large robust tanks for long-term storage, or it should be solidified into mortar and disposed in concrete pits. CCNE also suggested that air cooling of debris instead of current water cooling is feasible and effective in evading the water problem. CCNE strongly urges the government to reverse the discharge decision and implement alternative measures that exist.

See also " Commentary: The IAEA Comprehensive Report does not provide a "scientific basis" for the oceanic release of ALPS-treated radioactive wastewater. The release plan should be halted and consideration given to the implementation of alternative proposals" issued by the CCNE on July 18, 2023. (<http://eng.ccnejapan.com/?p=398>)

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