



# Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia, Inc.

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## SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES

### RE: FIFTH AGREEMENT TO EXTEND THE 1987 REGIONAL COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING RELATED TO NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (Bali, 15 April 2011)

We note that the proposed extended agreement covers the Governments of Australia, Bangladesh, the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam

## NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION DANGER

1. The Medical Association for Prevention of War believes it is inappropriate to have such agreements with the nuclear weapons states, China India and Pakistan. We have documented elsewhere the illusory nature of safeguards which purport to separate civilian and nuclear facilities in China<sup>1</sup>. Cooperation helps legitimise and promote nuclear research for whatever purpose the partner country chooses.
2. It is particularly inappropriate to have a nuclear cooperative agreement with India or Pakistan, which are non-signatories of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This nuclear cooperation agreement thus actively undermines the treaty's stated purpose of supporting the NPT, and our Government's stated commitment to the NPT. Our Government expresses concern about the potential for development of nuclear weapons in Iran. and yet promotes nuclear research in Iran's neighbour Pakistan, and Pakistan's adversary India.
3. The majority of nuclear weapons states have developed nuclear weapons programs using nuclear facilities ostensibly designed for power generation only. Supporting any expansion of nuclear power production is flawed for many other reasons, but it must be acknowledged that nuclear proliferation is a major and very material risk.

## LESSONS FROM JAPAN

Japan, a highly industrialised and technically sophisticated nation, has recently had a major nuclear catastrophe at Fukushima.

Nuclear cooperation with Japan is against the wish of the Japanese people to have reduced reliance on nuclear power. This desire has increased since the Fukushima catastrophe - fuelled by Australian uranium - spread fallout over large areas of their country.

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<sup>1</sup> *Illusion of Protection*, MAPW with others, 2006. Available at: [www.mapw.org.au/download/illusion-protection-acf-mapw-2006](http://www.mapw.org.au/download/illusion-protection-acf-mapw-2006)

The information that has emerged since March 2011 shows that ongoing cooperation with the nuclear industry in Japan is highly irresponsible. The interim Japanese government report on this accident reported that contributing factors included a culture of poor government oversight and regulation, cost cutting by TEPCO, disregarding of several reports modelling possible tsunami risk, inadequate staff training and manuals, poor government coordination and organisation after the meltdowns, withholding of important information predicting fallout patterns - resulting in avoidable high radiation exposure to thousands of evacuees, poor protection for employees and nearby residents, and poor transparency and governance. Eight per cent of the land area of Japan is now contaminated with radioactive fallout, and three per cent has been evacuated. Over 100,000 Japanese people who were forced to leave their homes will probably be unable to return for many decades.

This disaster, in a technologically sophisticated country, has focused attention on the inevitability of further nuclear accidents.

Increased nuclear power increases the risk of nuclear accidents in our local region. This is not in Australia's best interests. Fallout does not respect national borders.

## **CESSATION OF MYANMAR NUCLEAR PROGRAM**

We note that Myanmar says it has stopped all nuclear development. Defence Minister Lt. Gen. Hla Min has stated (May 2011) that since the inauguration in March 2011 of the new administration of reformist President Thein Sein, all such nuclear development activities have been stopped<sup>2</sup>.

## **INDIAN NUCLEAR INDUSTRY**

We note the strong and continuing public protests against nuclear power in India, in particular near reactor sites. We also note the appalling safety and public health record at India's Jadugoda mine<sup>3</sup>.

## **NUCLEAR POWER AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

The National Interest Analysis (NIA) states that this is "a time when significant expansion in nuclear power production is underway or under consideration by a number of countries in our region." With the increasing efficiency and lowering costs of renewables, there is even less place for new nuclear power plants. This has been widely recognised in independent energy analysis: The March 2012 *Economist* led a detailed analysis on nuclear power with the statement that "A year after Fukushima, the future for nuclear power is not bright—for reasons of cost as much as safety."<sup>4</sup>

Arguments have been put to say nuclear power is needed to contain greenhouse gas emissions. New power plants take at least eight to ten years to come into production. They have a large carbon footprint in construction, and shipping and processing uranium also

<sup>2</sup> Reported in *House of Japan*, 4 June 2012: [www.houseofjapan.com/world/myanmar-says-it-has-stopped-all-nuclear-development](http://www.houseofjapan.com/world/myanmar-says-it-has-stopped-all-nuclear-development)

<sup>3</sup> *Dirty and dangerous*: A/P Tilman Ruff, in MAPW Newsletter, Autumn 2009: available at [www.mapw.org.au/files/downloads/MAPW\\_Newsletter-Autumn-09.pdf](http://www.mapw.org.au/files/downloads/MAPW_Newsletter-Autumn-09.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Nuclear power- the dream that failed* <http://www.economist.com/node/21549936>

generates emissions. The waste storage requires energy for hundreds of thousands of years. The energy produced is more expensive per kilowatt/hour, and relies heavily on government subsidies and indemnities. Without such indemnities and subsidies the industry would not be viable. Renewable technologies are cheaper, safer, cleaner and clearly not able to result in nuclear proliferation. The greenhouse gas emission arguments are spurious, particularly for new plants.

Several large nuclear production states are endeavouring to market nuclear technology to developing nations. But without a stable political or regulatory environment, and in countries lacking technological capacity or a suitable trained workforce, providing nuclear reactor technology is fundamentally unsafe.

## **NUCLEAR WASTE**

Supporting new nuclear power plants will only further increase the amount of nuclear waste generated. More than sixty years after the first nuclear reactor was used to generate power, there are still no completed high level waste disposal facilities anywhere in the world. The lack of any concrete strategy for permanent disposal of intermediate level waste in Australia, and the difficulty in finding a site even for disposal of low level waste, highlight this problem

## **ALTERNATIVES AND CONCLUSION**

Australia would better serve its own interests and those of its neighbours by replacing this treaty with a Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Renewable Energy and Technology.

Extending this treaty is not in Australia's national interest.

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