

# **Letter to President Clinton Against the Use of Plutonium (MOX) Fuel**

**171 Organizations Have  
Joined Their Names to This Letter**

**from Michael Mariotte**

**of NIRS  
(Nuclear Information Resource Service)**

**January 1, 1997**

**Here is a letter to President Clinton asking him not to support the use of MOX (mixed oxide) plutonium fuel in commercial nuclear reactors. NIRS (Nuclear Information and Resource Service) believes there are better ways of ensuring that the plutonium from nuclear warheads is made non-weapons-ready.**

**Because this issue has international ramifications in terms of supporting an international "plutonium economy" which would allow reprocessing and essentially turn plutonium into a commodity, and because the US government argues that it is choosing the MOX option in part because of international (especially Russian) support for MOX, it would be very helpful to us to be able to show that the international environmental/arms control community does NOT support MOX.**

**[The next paragraph is past history; see [press release](#).]**

**If you can sign on to this letter , please [e-mail us](#) with your name, organization, city & country. We will compile all of the signers and send the letter to President Clinton, and also to the US media. Also, please feel free to distribute this letter to your own networks for additional**

**signers. We will send this letter, and [distribute it to the media](#), on January 6 or 7.**

**Thanks,**

**Michael Mariotte**

**NIRS**

The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton  
President of the United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500  
U.S.A.

Dear President Clinton:

Please do not endorse the proposal to convert warhead plutonium into civilian reactor (MOX) fuel, in your country, or in ours. We fully support the effort by both the United States and Russia to dismantle nuclear weapons. The goal is to make this world safer. A MOX program will not meet this goal. We call upon you, on behalf of concerned citizens, to take a leadership role by turning to other options for making the warhead plutonium unavailable for weapons use.

Putting the plutonium from weapons into a nuclear power reactor will always result in the formation of additional plutonium. In order to truly make the world safer, leaders must choose options for making plutonium not-bomb-ready that also do not make more plutonium.

The use of MOX in the U.S. sends precisely the wrong signal in the effort to end nuclear proliferation. We oppose the use of MOX because of increased reactor hazards, but also because it promotes the plutonium industry. We oppose plans to start reprocessing and the construction of a breeder reactor which are the likely outgrowths of a MOX program here. It is time to turn to other sources of energy, that are truly clean, truly cheap and truly safe, without the potential for massive accidents like Chernobyl.

There are technical problems with MOX as well. Use of mixed oxide fuel in existing power reactors either in Russia, in the U.S., or elsewhere is highly experimental, and it is an experiment with very risky stakes. Plutonium in the system makes more--and more dangerous--types of radioactivity. This affects the discharges to air and water, and all waste types. Plutonium also affects the fission

process itself, making it more difficult to control and leaving an even narrower margin for human error, as well as affecting the physical integrity of the reactor itself.

For all of these reasons, and the many more problems that would appear if the MOX path were taken, we call upon you to reject the MOX option for plutonium disposition in the United States and support our efforts to stop the use of MOX here as well. It is a fine moment in history that we have come this far towards reducing the nuclear threat, but we must be careful now, and not allow falsehoods to take the place of the truth that people require both peace and a safe clean environment.

Sincerely . . . [name of you or your group]

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## **Nuclear Information and Resource Service**

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**January 14, 1997**

**Contact: Michael Mariotte or Mary Olson**

### **171 ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE CONDEMN U.S. MOX DECISION**

#### **ASK PRESIDENT CLINTON TO STOP PLUTONIUM FUEL APPROACH**

171 environmental, peace, and medical organizations today condemned outgoing-Department of Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's decision to pursue an option that would use plutonium-based fuel (or mixed-oxide, MOX) in commercial nuclear reactors as a means of attempting to make plutonium from nuclear weapons into a non-weapons-ready form.

The 171 groups, from every corner of the globe, said that the MOX fuel approach would increase international commerce in plutonium, would create even hotter high-level radioactive waste, and would provide a disincentive for anti-

proliferation efforts across the world.

The letter to President Clinton was signed by organizations from Russia, Japan, Turkey, Canada, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Slovakia, Lithuania and several other countries. 100 of the signers were from U.S. organizations, which also cited increased security, transportation, nuclear safety and other risks involved with plutonium-based fuel.

"Hazel O'Leary has made a great contribution by publicizing past radiation experiments on the American people," said Michael Mariotte, executive director of Nuclear Information and Resource Service, which coordinated the international letter to Clinton," but by supporting the use of plutonium fuel in civilian nuclear reactors, her legacy could be her greatest mistake. Use of MOX fuel would be the largest, and potentially most tragic, radiation experiment ever unleashed on the American people."

Said Harvey Wasserman of Greenpeace, USA, "The international nature of this letter's signers' indicates the global opposition to MOX fuel. Across the world, people are saying no to plutonium, and no to creation of a military-industrial-utility complex."

The DOE has said it must pursue MOX because Russia views its plutonium as an asset rather than a waste, and thus also wants to use the controversial process. But without western economic aid, Russia is unlikely to attain the resources to use the MOX approach. Moreover, Russian groups signing the letter indicated that the Russian people oppose use of MOX fuel as well. Vladimiar Sliviak of Russia's Socio-Ecological Union said that Russian environmental organizations are working to cut Russian funding and government support for MOX programs.

Secretary O'Leary has suggested that if U.S. opposition to MOX is too strong, then the U.S. government would consider using Canadian reactors to "burn" the plutonium fuel. But, said, Irene Kock of Canada's Nuclear Awareness Project, "Canadians refuse to be the world's dumping ground for high level nuclear waste. If plutonium fuel is sent to Canada, we're supposed to keep the waste. Canadians will not tolerate this deal--it's a very dangerous precedent. The U.S. and Russia must secure their plutonium stocks safely within their own boundaries."

"Ontario Hydro is simply using the plutonium fuel scheme to justify rebuilding the aging Bruce reactors, which will otherwise be shut down early, and to obtain operating subsidies," Kock continued. "Is the U.S. DOE prepared to subsidize Ontario's public utility?"

Said Michael Mariotte of NIRS, "This is just the first step in our anti-MOX campaign. We are now preparing to take our legitimate concerns to the American people to make it impossible for any U.S. utility or government entity to bring plutonium into our states and communities. We agree that weapons-ready

plutonium must be made inaccessible, but MOX fuel in commercial reactors simply compounds the problem. We're seeking solutions, not short-cuts."

A copy of the letter to President Clinton, with a list of all signers, is available upon request from NIRS.

Signers of the letter included 100 grassroots organizations and individuals from the United States, 36 organizations from Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean; 9 Russian environmental organizations; five groups from Canada, three from Japan and the Netherlands, two from Ukraine, Scotland, and Germany, and one each from Austria, Czech Republic, England, India, Lithuania, New Zealand, Slovakia, South Africa, and Sweden.

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