

Efforts to Build Public Confidence (Statement)

December 25, 2012

Japan Atomic Energy Commission

On March 11, 2011, the earthquake off the Pacific coast of Tohoku and the accompanying tsunami hit the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and destroyed all power sources. Insufficient preparation led to core meltdowns and hydrogen explosions, which released large amount of radioactive materials into the environment. Nuclear professionals formerly stressed the minimal potential for releasing large amount of radioactive materials into the environment, even during accidents such as earthquakes, because nuclear power plants are sufficiently earthquake-proof and committed to nuclear power safety based on “defense in depth” concept. However, this accidents have impaired trust in these explanations and exacerbated public distrust of nuclear professionals.

The Japan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) was aware that the decontamination of the environment polluted by radioactive materials, along with community requests and demands, was the top priority now, so that evacuees could go home as soon as possible. Immediately after the accidents, the Government, research and development institutions, universities and operators, etc. were requested to work on and contribute to this, based on their capabilities and responsibilities. Besides, we understood the enormous damage caused by lack of measures to make the level of Japanese nuclear power safety highest in the world, and while we had been highlighting the importance of ensuring safety to all parties concerned, we felt deep remorse for our lack of insistence that they achieve the world’s highest safety level.

On September 14, 2012, the Energy and Environment Council of the Government deemed that many Japanese wanted no dependence on nuclear power following a national debate. Accordingly, to realize a society not reliant on nuclear power as early as possible, they laid down the “Innovative Strategy for Energy and the Environment”, upholding the cornerstone of “realization of a green energy revolution.” At the same time, the strategy said the operation of nuclear plants whose safety was assured would be restarted as an important power source.

To promote actions based on this strategy, JAEC considers it necessary to sincerely accept distrust, anxiety, and concern of the public: primarily, how the national government and operators treat nuclear accident victims; whether the nuclear power plant can secure safety, what kinds of advantages and risks there are in operating nuclear power plants, how used nuclear fuel would be managed and the process of its final disposal.

Based on this acknowledgment, the national government and operators should carefully explain actions to be taken for those forced to leave their homeland, improvements/remedies taken to secure safety in future and the concept on which they are based, and furthermore and the way to realize the commitment to the world’s highest level of nuclear power safety based on recommendations made by the various Accident Investigation Committees for accidents at the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. They should also show new approaches in handling spent nuclear fuel and seek cooperation.

In taking such actions, administrative bodies should keep the following fundamental elements in mind: execution of accountability, disclosure of correct information, securing of transparency/fairness of actions/decisions, etc., ensuring public involvement in this decision process, and an intelligible explanation.

(Accountability)

First, it is important to reveal the mission of individuals/organizations tackling such challenges to public interests, for what, why, and how they do it. In other words, such individuals/organizations should be aware of taking actions for the public, on the grounds of awareness, planning and promoting actions, seeking solutions to challenges, the results achieved and how to handle risk management commitment. On this basis, they should continuously explain to the public that commitment is a proper action.

(Correct Information Disclosure)

Secondly, it is important to remember that these explanations should be provided based on sufficient and correct information to the public on a timely basis. For example, in discussing a facility's actions for nuclear power safety, we should carefully explain the nature of the threat facing a facility, its target, and how it intends to reach the target. In doing so, explaining using comparisons with other facilities is acceptable but must be done carefully. This is because essentially, evaluations should be made in terms of all factors, including costs, environmental impacts (EI), and stability and comparison based on one point alone may be improper, even if accurate.

However, we should also note that speed is sometimes more important than accuracy. In that case, we should immediately inform details of what has happened and why, and what would happen in the future while clarifying some uncertainties in such information.

(Transparency/Fairness and Public Involvement in Decision Process)

Thirdly, it is important to design a fair decision-making process, as the basis for various administrative decisions, and while making the process open, to provide opportunities for public participation in the process. In this case, the parties concerned should deeply appreciate that securing transparency means the public can view the decision-making process related to their interests, access information related to their interests, and make remarks on the same. Based on this acknowledgment, the greater the public interest in a decision, the more carefully we should notify the public at the earliest possible stage before making it. We should strive to give the public opportunities to express their views.

JAEC feels remorse for the lack of compassion at this point in the process of preparing documents carried out by the Subcommittee on Nuclear Power/Nuclear Fuel Cycle Technology and continues to reform its operations based on verification results.

Further, administrative bodies should establish a verifiable decision-making process, namely, from the creation of administrative documents, hearing from experts, interested parties and the public, to final making decisions.

(Easy to Understand Explanations)

Fourth, public explanations should be clear and plain, with accuracy a prerequisite. It is often noted that if the public cannot understand information released, it cannot be considered transparent, even if we believe transparency is attained in doing so. It is not easy to ensure material is both accurate and comprehensible, but court decisions have long since been written in normal Japanese. Administrative bodies must not forget to check the processes of creating documents and preparing explanations from this perspective, continuously educating and training themselves in this area.

In future, for administrative decisions concerning energy and nuclear policies, the national government should act for the public that meet these four fundamental requirements, and accordingly give the public more opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. It is important to sincerely listen to public opinion and questions by striving to provide more opportunities to engage with the public and try to understand each other through communications. In other words, when the national government and operators explain their own actions to the public, they should not do so on a one-sided basis. Rather, they should engage in two-way communication to deepen mutual understanding and develop a relationship built on trust through conversation.

Here, the use of experts capable of promoting such communication neutrally and fairly is considered helpful. In addition, it is also important to seek experts' opinions on issues that are the subjects of debate. In this case, we consider it proper to seek diversified opinions of experts, considering the fact they may be biased. To achieve this, we should not only devise a method to seek opinions of experts in the engineering area, but also those of the arts and science.

Further, some experts may have possible direct interests in decisions. Therefore, we must not forget to consider this potential and take proper measures in selecting experts whose opinions we seek. This applies to cases where we use advisory councils, etc. to create draft decisions. In other words, in selecting a council member, we should fully consider the fact that opinions may be biased, some may capitalize on decisions, or others may have certain relationships with such organizations that will be affected by the decisions (those with conflicts of interest).

Conversely, operators should bear in mind the need to verify the validity of their past actions, particularly explanations on measures against severe accidents and anti-disaster measures through the concept of actions on future nuclear power at the time of recent national debates over "energy options toward 2030" and explanations of actions on measures to improve the safety of nuclear power plants from the perspective of the four above-mentioned fundamental requirements, use the results of verification to deepen their consideration of what future actions should be, and implement more effective actions.

In addition, as for individual nuclear facilities, we need approaches based on the understanding that there are greater interests from those closer to the applicable facility. In this regard, the related administrative bodies of the national government should take specific

measures by consulting with local authorities based on a provision under Paragraph 4, Article 6 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Act for Establishment of Nuclear Regulation Authority: “Based on nuclear power plant accidents in the Tohoku Earthquake, the Government shall promptly review what information disclosure to local authorities on disasters, etc. caused by nuclear sites and nuclear accidents should be, take necessary actions based on these results, and considering the importance of developing a closer partnership and cooperation system, act to share information among national government, local authorities, residents, nuclear operators, etc. and among concerned administrative bodies and other necessary measures.

In addition, the House of Councilors Environment Committee said, in a supplementary resolution of a bill concerning the Act for Establishment of Nuclear Regulation Authority, “Based on existing nuclear safety agreements between local authorities and nuclear operators, and considering the important roles of local authorities in nuclear safety regulations and disaster prevention measures, the government should develop a closer partnership and cooperation system among local authorities, national government, and operators within one (1) year of enforcement of the law, study what a desirable system of laws should be, referring to examples overseas and take the necessary actions within three (3) years of enforcement.”

The national government, operators, and local authorities should cooperate, consult on what information sharing with residents should be, and take proper actions promptly, keeping in mind the purposes of this supplementary provision and a supplementary resolution pending completion of studies on developing future specific actions by law, etc.

For example, in the case of nuclear power plants, based on NRA studies, in compiling a plan related to measures concerning nuclear emergency preparedness at power plants, information on actions to ensure safety and projects in the nuclear power plant should be regularly provided to local authorities and their residents in the “urgent protective action planning zone (UPZ)” (zones within roughly 30 kilometers of a nuclear power plant) and a platform should be developed for two-way communications between national government/operators and local authorities/their residents. Specifically, we should develop a platform where the national government can provide information on results reviewing the use of nuclear power plants and actions of nuclear operators to ensure safety based on nuclear energy policies, nuclear operators can provide details of specific uses and safety ensuring actions, etc., and questions-and-answer sessions among national government, operators and local authorities and residents can be held. One example is “Local Society Securing the Transparency of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant” (*Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Genshiryoku Hatsudensho no Tomeisei wo Kakuhosuru Chiiki no Kai*) in Niigata Prefecture. We should develop such a platform. Further, we should study what and how the nature of the information distributed should be so that residents unable to participate can still gain information and details of the Q-and-As.

Conversely, we can refer to the example of the French Law “Nuclear Safety and Transparency Act” (Transparency Act) which institutionalize the “Commission Locale d’ Information (CLI),” although some points need to be examined. For example, the CLI consists of representatives of local assemblies, experts, and intellectuals because it is based on the French local government system. We must study based on what Japanese local administrations

should be. In addition, certain responsibilities imposed by CLI on operators overlap with those imposed on operators in safety agreements concluded between local authorities and operators in Japan. We should consolidate them with safety agreements. Bearing this in mind, we should start developing a full-scale system immediately based on experiences gained from the above-mentioned actions for the time being.

With a kind of self-reproach, JAEC drafted this statement to reaffirm that national government and operators consider the importance of these basic requirements in promoting actions concerning nuclear power in future, and finalized it, taking into consideration of public comments.

End