

Japan Atomic Energy Commission's View on the mid-term
implementation plan for spent nuclear fuel reprocessing to be adopted by
the Nuclear Reprocessing Organization of Japan

October 28, 2016
Japan Atomic Energy Commission

In response to the request for an opinion that Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry has made (ref.,20161012 Shi-No.6 dated October 14, 2016) as per the resolutions accompanying the Act for Partial Revision of the Spent Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing Fund Act, Japan Atomic Energy Commission expresses hereunder its view on the mid-term implementation plan for spent nuclear fuel reprocessing (hereinafter referred to as "the Mid-term Implementation Plan") to be adopted by the Nuclear Reprocessing Organization of Japan (hereinafter referred to as "the Organization").

In compliance with a statutory requirement, the Mid-term Implementation Plan specifies the sites where reprocessing and fabrication of MOX fuel will take place. Since those facilities are under the IAEA's safeguards, the Commission judges that the plan is appropriate from the viewpoint of peaceful use of nuclear energy. As there is no description on the timing and the volume of reprocessing and fabrication of MOX fuel, however, the Commission is currently not in a position to express its view on the plan's appropriateness from the viewpoint of supply-and-demand balance of plutonium. Thus, the Commission expects the Mid-term Implementation Plan that includes the timing and the volume of reprocessing and fabrication of MOX fuel to be submitted prior to its actual implementation.

Whereas the Commission expressed its official view on March 29, 2016, that the "plutonium utilization plan" that the electric power companies adopt and publish is expected to clarify the purpose of utilization and the volume of plutonium to be separated. When the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry is to approve the Mid-Term Implementation Plan that includes the timing and the volume of reprocessing and fabrication of MOX fuel, the Commission expects that such plan presents a concrete and realistic prospect of supply-and-demand balance of plutonium consistent with the plutonium utilization plan based on Japan's policy of "not possessing plutonium reserves of which use is unspecified."

The Commission recognizes the importance of appropriate governance structure to be put in place on both the Organization and its contracted operator in order for them to properly execute the Mid-term Implementation Plan, and hence expects that the plan be efficiently and effectively executed under a proper organization and division of roles.

Safe and smooth operation of the Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant is critical to successful development of the nuclear fuel cycle of Japan. The Commission, therefore, expects that Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited endeavor to implement a proper process control method, enforce an effective environment conservation of the neighboring area, and, further, pursue accumulation and succession of the technical expertise and development of human resources that have acquired technical knowledge as well as scientific principles.