

Appropriateness of fiscal 2009 “Plutonium Utilization Plans”

Revised by Electric Utilities

15 September 2009

Atomic Energy Commission

On 12 June 2009, ten electric utilities announced revisions to their plutonium utilization plans, taking into account the Japan Nuclear Fuel Limited (JNFL)’s rescheduling of the start of the operation of its mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication plant. On 2 September 2009, they announced further revisions of them, reflecting the changes of the work plan for the Rokkasho reprocessing plant (RRP) announced by the JNFL on them. Considering the great concern of plutonium utilization both in domestic and international communities, the Atomic Energy Commission considers the swift revision of the plans in response to changes in related activities appropriate from the viewpoint of assuring transparency of the plutonium utilization in Japan.

In their recent plutonium utilization plans, the electric utilities announced that there would be no further recovery of separated plutonium* at the RRP in fiscal 2009. Meanwhile, their plans also stated that the plutonium that had been recovered in and before fiscal 2008 and was currently being stored at the RRP would in principle be fabricated into MOX fuel and be used in their commercial light water reactors (It’s called “Plu-thermal” in Japan) from fiscal 2015 onwards. They estimated that the amount of such plutonium each utility had was equivalent to about 10 to 80 percent of the MOX fuel necessary for executing the plan in a single year. The Atomic Energy Commission considers the electric utilities’ plans as they now stand to be appropriate.

- * Plutonium that has been recovered from spent fuel at reprocessing plants and stored for loading into nuclear reactors in reprocessing plants, fuel fabrication plants and nuclear reactors.