Report on the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum, 5-7 October 2006, Stockholm, Sweden, with Focus on the Radioactive Pollution of the Baltic Sea Region

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Introduction

On 5-7 October 2006 180 representatives from voluntary organisations and representatives from international organizations and national governments convened in Stockholm for the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum. The overarching theme was Human Rights and Democratic Participation. The need for sharing experiences, finding common values and principles as well as expressing the willingness to cooperate with other NGOs and authorities on different levels was commonly articulated.

The Forum was, beside plenary meetings, structured around 11 different seminars in four thematic areas:

- Civil Security – Trafficking, Violence against Women/Children, Criminality and Drugs
- Discrimination and Social Inclusion
- Environment and Sustainability
- NGO-legislation, Legal Security and Civil Society

The respective Thematic Working Groups finalized *Seminar Summaries* of their discussions and recommendations during the NGO Forum. In addition, each Thematic Working Group finalized an *Action Plan* for forthcoming activities.

This report draws on the documentation prepared by the Baltic Sea NGO Forum secretariat (see www.bsngoforum.org), but focuses on information about radioactive contamination of the Baltic Sea Region. Following first is a brief background on the Environment and Sustainability theme. A short text on toxics and radioactivity from the first

plenary of the Environment and Sustainability theme on Friday 6 October is then given. Presented next is the main discussion about radioactive contamination of the Baltic Sea region, which took place in the second plenary of the theme. The action plan then follows. At the end is the resolution adopted at the environment action plan meeting on Saturday 7 October.

Theme Background: Environment and Sustainability

The aim of the Environment seminar of the 6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum was to introduce the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as the regional implementation plan for the EU Marine Strategy.

How grass-root environmental NGOs can contribute to the drafting process (until November 2007) was discussed, and how they can cooperate with governments for realising and supervising the set objectives. The workshop participants formulated concrete ideas on how their organisations could contribute to the BSAP process, who would they like to cooperate with and what responsibilities they might take during the period before the next forum. This action plan gathers the most important issues addressed.

Plenary 1, October 6: HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the role of NGOs

Moderator: Ms. Pauli Merriman, WWF
Organizer and rapporteur: Ms. Maret Merisaar, Coalition Clean Baltic

Only the section on Toxics and Radioactivity is included here.

Toxics and Radioactivity

The CCB proposals (tasks for governmental bodies) for the EU Marine Strategy Hazardous Substances chapter are as follows:

- Eco-labelling of fish (environmental toxins, e.g. dioxins, cadmium, and PCBs).
- Contamination with radionuclides: Ban on shipment of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive wastes via waterways. Find solutions for reducing environmental risks for hazardous storage of spent nuclear fuel e.g. Sosnovy Bor, in St Peterburg region.

Discussion on networking: The environmental impact assessments and public hearings for creating new nuclear power plants must be carried out according to the requirements. They should not be just cosmetic events after the decisions are taken (case in Finland).

Plenary 2 October 6: Radioactive Contamination of the Baltic Sea Region

Moderator: Mr Per Hegelund, The Environment Movement's Nuclear Waste Secretariat, MILKAS, valiantdk@yahoo.com
Rapporteur: Charly Hultén, Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement

The session had the following structure. Presentations from CBSS and HELCOM MORS, respectively, followed by a break. Then, a short film, “Prohibited Manifestation” from Russia, followed by four presentations from environmental NGOs.

Mr. Philipp Schwartz, Senior Advisor at the CBSS Secretariat and Secretary to the WGNRS

The aim of the CBSS **Working Group on Nuclear and Radiation Safety** is to aid member states in their work to ensure and improve radiation protection. Toward this end the WGNRS collect information and identify objects that may require measures. Priority objects are installations at Paldiski (EST), Sosnovy Bor (RUS), Ignalina (LT) and Greifswald (D, now shut down). Priority activities include: information exchange between military and civilian authorities; an inventory of radiation sources, their handling and control with a view to improving emergency preparedness; illicit trafficking in radioactive materials; and an annual communication exercise (mock event at unannounced time). Harmonisation of intervention levels (e.g., when evacuation or distribution of iodine is to be recommended) is another ongoing process.

Radiation monitoring data are exchanged between countries, but is not made available to the public, as it is believed that members of the public would be unable to interpret them. No plans to make such information available in an easily digested form were forthcoming.

More general information is available on the CBSS website, including the newsletter ***BaltInfo***.

Question: A map showed major differences in density of the member states’ monitoring stations. Germany is virtually packed with stations, whereas Scandinavia has rather few. Mr. Schwartz explained that the German case is partly an artefact of the historical fact that Germany once had reason to fear a nuclear attack.

For more information see the PDF of Mr. Philipp Schwartz’ PowerPoint presentation at http://www.milkas.se/files/schwartz200610.pdf.

Mr. Sven P Nielsen, HELCOM-MORS

MORS is the division of HELCOM that deals with monitoring of radioactivity and radiation protection. HELCOM-MORS has several monitoring programs: discharges from sources to the sea, environmental levels of radioactivity, indicator levels, a sediment baseline study (spatial distribution of nuclides). The unit conducts recurrent validations of measuring stations and produces thematic reports. The sediment baseline project is currently focused on improving inventory estimates.

It is the explicit goal of HELCOM to restore radioactivity levels in the Baltic Sea to pre-Chernobyl values. [A catalogue of observations of various nuclides followed.] In terms of individual radiation doses to individuals in critical groups, the contribution of nuclear facilities is small in comparison with residual radiation fallout from Chernobyl from atmospheric testing, and the nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield (northwestern England). It should be noted that individual doses are not empirical, but are calculated on the basis of modelling.

Questions:

1) MORS' diagrams are illegible online; they are also difficult to interpret because the vertical scales differ between diagrams. Surely, something can be done about this?

2) Information about empirically observed values would be appreciated. Mr. Nielsen responded that raw data could be made available, but not in summary form.

3) A map indicated observed concentrations of plutonium off the Finnish coast. These may be due to the fact that plutonium adheres to organic material. Thus, effluents of organic material from the Finnish mainland may explain the concentrations. That the locations coincide with the two loci for Finland's nuclear energy reactors is sheer coincidence.

4) That Sellafield is the source of a good measure of the radioactivity in the Baltic is demonstrated thanks to fingerprinting, i.e., tracking of clusters of nuclides from Germany, through the Skagerak and Kattegatt and into the Baltic.

For more information see the PDF of Mr. Sven P Nielsen's PowerPoint presentation at http://www.milkas.se/files/nielsen200610.pdf.

Film ("Prohibited Manifestation" from our joint-European action in St Petersburg 2004)

Per Hegelund, The Environment Movement's Nuclear Waste Secretariat, MILKAS (Sweden)

Presentation: Documentation from the Swedish Defence Research Establishment (FOA) shows us, that routine releases from one country's nuclear installations (Sellafield) can pollute all of our waters and be an even greater factor (Northeren Scandinavia and Murmansk), than the accident at Chernobyl (reference 1).

Also, many scientists caution that the radioactivity from so-called background radiation is not comparable to that from man-made elements. Human beings have evolved in the presence of background radiation, we do not interact biologically with these elements to the extent we may do with brand new radioactive elements.

The Baltic Sea is the most radioactive sea in the world (HELCOM, reference 2). The Chernobyl accident, atmospheric nuclear bomb tests and Sellafield's releases are the main contributing factors. We cannot influence these historical contributions, done is done, but we can influence the contributions of current nuclear activities in the region. At the top of our agenda at present is the question of nuclear waste management and storage. Both Sweden and Finland are planning final repositories for their spent nuclear fuel – and plan to locate these final repositories at the shore of or below the Baltic Sea, and local authorities describe the sea as a "recipient" for expected releases! The sea has only 1% exchange with the ocean. What we put into it more or less stays there.

In Sweden localization of nuclear waste repositories has been left in the hands of the industry. Why should we trust the region's most polluting nuclear facilities with the task of caring for highly radioactive waste, the most dangerous waste in human history? We must influence our own governments to protect our common marine environment. If they do not, how can we expect other countries' governments to cease their pollution?

Reference 1: Radioactive sources of main radiological concern in the Kola-Barents region. See illustrations page 19 and 15. (Publication nr: FOA-B--98-00343-861-SE)

Reference 2: Info from HELCOM – “The levels of anthropogenic radionuclides are higher in the Baltic Sea than in any other water bodies around the world” (from “Hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea” – Draft Helcom Thematic Assessment in 2006).

For more information see “The Radioactive Contamination of the Baltic Sea,” Per Hegelund’s presenation at the workshop, at http://www.milkas.se/hegelund200610.html.

Saulius Piksrys, Community Atgaja

The Lithuanian case**:** During the Soviet period Lithuania was the energy production centre for the entire western region of the former Soviet empire. So Lithuania inherited huge generating capacities: two nuclear units (2 x 1500 MW), more than 2000 MW thermal capacities some hydro and other.

The environmental NGOs opposes nuclear energy on the grounds that it is dangerous, polluting, unhealthy and expensive. What is more, the industry is corrupt/corrupting.

In juridical terms, the Lithuanian nuclear regime has largely been “legislated by decree.” This applies to the localization of a site for the nuclear waste repository, Stabatiskes, as well. The site has poor geological conditions, but has the advantage of being already owned by the nuclear industry.

The environmental groups have cooperated with local trade unions and municipalities to promote a 30 km zone around Ignalina NPP as separate region of higher attention in terms of mitigation of social issues related with decommissioning of Ignalina NPP. In this latter context, the Community Atgaja has liaised with groups in Slovakia, who face similar problems in the case of Bohunice.

- In Spring 2006, the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania resolved to conduct a feasibility study for the renewal of a nuclear capacity in Lithuania, probably at Ignalina.

- Plans to establish a grid connection between Lithuania and Sweden, and with Poland have also been announced. What will come of these proposals remains to be seen.

For more information see the PDF of Mr. Saulius Piksrys’ PowerPoint presentation at http://www.milkas.se/files/piksrys200610.pdf.

Rashid Alimov, Bellona, St. Petersburg

Bellona is an international actor in environmental issues.

Four issues concerning nuclear pollution are focal:

- *Illegal life-term extension* of 11 reactors, that are past their 30-year design lifetime. The decision to renew capacity is a breach of Russian law.

- Bellona equates *the export of nuclear-generated electricity* to Finland with importing nuclear waste: The benefits of the technology land in Finland, the waste remains in Russia.

- *A dry waste storage facility* has been built – without a building permit and without an EIA (environmental impact assessment) only 90 metres from the Gulf of Finland.

- *Uranium tailings are being imported through the Baltic* to St. Petersburg from Germany and France – 9740 tonnes from Germany alone in 1996-2001, about 6 thousand tonnes in 2001-2005. The final waste stays in Russia, it is a form of importing radioactive waste.

For more information see the PDF of Mr. Rashid Alimov's PowerPoint presentation at http://www.milkas.se/files/alimov200610.pdf.

Gerd Söderholm, Women Against Nuclear Power, Finland

A freelance journalist, Ms Söderholm has a particular interest in how issues relating to nuclear energy have been treated (or rather not been treated) in Finnish mass media, how the industry seems to have silenced public debate.

The decision in 2002 to OK the fifth reactor depended on a solution to the problem of nuclear waste. The Finnish government in 2000 simply decided that the problem was solved.

Nuclear matters are totally controlled by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Chief Inspector of Mining, Krister Söderholm, in the Ministry - is a mining industry man, who will soon return to the mining industry.

On uranium prospecting: Trade unions accepted the Areva (previously Cogéma) initiative on uranium prospecting for reason of job opportunities in exploration and mining. The information meeting in 2004 on possible uranium mining in Finland in the future was closed to the public and the media. A local meeting at Askola in January 2006, where uranium mining - if taken place - was presented to local politicians was likewise closed to the public. Women Against Nuclear Power have, in collaboration with Réseau Sortir du Nucléaire in France, spread information about the environmental consequences of uranium mining in Limousin.

For information see Ms Söderholm's written presentation at http://www.milkas.se/soderholm200610.html.

Observations

All presentations contained some aspect of communication difficulties, e.g. a belief that the lay public would not understand technical information, a lack of transparency in decision making, and (self?)-censorship on the part of mass media.

Information gaps of this sort are a hindrance to cooperation. Bridging the gap requires work on the part of all parties.

All parties agree that nuclear installations do contribute to the radioactivity of the Baltic Sea. There is some disagreement, however, as to whether or not this is serious. The environmental NGOs believe it is, and expressed mistrust of the companies and, to some extent, their governments on issues relating to nuclear energy. Greater transparency would help clarify this issue.

Theme Action Plan: Working Group on Environment and Sustainability

Contact Person: Maret Merisaar, Coalition Clean Baltic, Estonian Secretariat, maret.merisaar@ccb.se (The group decided that Maret Merisaar will continue to be the contact person for the group until responsibility for projects can be specified).

The action plan includes other subjects, e.g. **"Eutrophication of the Baltic"** and **"Climate Change"** (not included here).

Action Plan: The Radioactive Contamination of the Baltic Sea Region

Contact Person: MILKAS (Sweden), Per Hegelund, valiantdk@yahoo.com
Rapporteur: Charly Hultén, Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement.

Discussion:

- The nuclear sector is notoriously non-transparent. It is clear, however, that both the industry and radiation protection agencies consider the Baltic Sea an "appropriate recipient" for radioactive effluents, to quote the Swedish authority.
- Consciousness-raising among civil society organizations is therefore a first priority, with a view to opening decision-making about nuclear planning to a meaningful public dialogue.
- The Group are agreed as to the need for a moratorium on new nuclear establishments around the Baltic.
- The Group are very concerned about Russian plans to import spent nuclear fuels on a large scale to harbours in the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland, i.e., ships carrying highly hazardous cargo will cross the entire southern Baltic on a regular basis. At the minimum the region should have assurances that transports will take place only using vessels of the highest safety class, i.e., ships equipped with the best available containment technology. We NGOs outside Russia will ask our governments to approach the Russian government on the matter.
- The Group will seek to initiate ecological studies of the effects of routine emissions of heat and radioactive fluids and gases from coastal nuclear power plants in all countries.
- To facilitate the transition from oil- and nuclear-based power systems throughout the region, the Group wish to organize "technology transfer" and demonstration projects among NGOs. The Swedish and Finnish participants will network and seek funding for a ambulating exhibit with renewable and efficiency enhancing technology, check-lists and expert participation.

Interested Organizations:
MILKAS (Sweden), Per Hegelund, valiantdk@yahoo.com
Bellona (St. Petersburg, Russia), Rashid Alimov, rashid@bellona.ru

Women against Nuclear Energy (Finland) Gerd Söderholm, gerdsoderholm@yahoo.com
Swedish Anti-Nuclear Movement (Sweden), Charly Hultén, inotherwords@telia.com
Environmental Group FRI (Belarus), Maryna Karavai, m.karavai@gmail.com
Community Atgaja (Lithuania), Saulius Piksrys, saulius@atgaja.lt

Resolution

"The levels of anthropogenic radionuclides are higher in the Baltic Sea than in any other water bodies around the world."

> (Quote from "Hazardous Substances in the Baltic Sea – Draft HELCOM Thematic Assessment in 2006" to be found at www.bsngoforum.org)

On the 6th of October 2006, participants in the workshop on the Radioactive Contamination of the Baltic Sea, conclude:

Knowing the serious condition of the Baltic Sea, as exemplified by the statement above from Helsinki Commission experts 2006,

- **we demand, as a minimum, a moratorium – a stop for any additional nuclear facilities to be located at the waters of the Baltic Sea!**
- **we urge the governments of the Baltic Sea States not to plan new nuclear projects in the region, unless they are necessary to ensure decommissioning of existing nuclear power plants.**
- **we hope that environmental NGOs of the Baltic Countries will take proactive position to ensure minimization of radioactivity in the Baltic Sea region.**

The resolution was supported at the Environment Action Plan meeting on Saturday 7 October.

For More Information

If you want to be kept updated on continual developments in the issues of this workshop, send an e-mail to the moderator – Per Hegelund, e-mail: valiantdk@yahoo.com