



**The position of the Coordinating Committee  
of the Belarusian National Platform  
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum  
on the need to suspend the launch of the Belarusian nuclear power  
plant against the backdrop of the COVID-19 disease pandemic**

The Coordinating Committee of the Belarusian National Platform Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses solidarity and full support for the statement of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign on the planned launch of the BelNPP and the COVID-19 pandemic.

CC of the BNP EaP CSF believes that in the situation where there are fifteen infected and more than a hundred employees suspected of having COVID-19 (further information on April 8, 2020), further work on the construction and preparation of the station for launch is impossible and unsafe for life and the health of both the workers themselves and the citizens of the Republic of Belarus as a whole.

We draw the attention of the Belarusian authorities to the need to suspend the construction of the BelNPP and fulfill all the requirements contained in the Statement of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign attached to this document.

We ask the Delegation of the European Union to Belarus to convey to the EU authorities the position of the Coordination Committee of the BNP EaP CSF and the content of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign Statement in view of the potential danger of the situation not only for Belarus, but also for the EU member states.

Coordinating Committee of the Belarusian National Platform  
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum.

**Statement of the Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign on the planned commissioning  
of the Belarusian NPP and COVID-19 pandemic**

In view of the escalatory COVID-19 epidemic (officially announced pandemic by WHO) – both in the world and Belarus – and related border closures, in particular, with the Russian Federation, Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign urges the government to cancel the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP in Ostrovets scheduled for 2020.

We believe that the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, the closed borders and the effective quarantine in the Russian Federation, the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Belarus, and the consequent potential exposure to the infection of the Belarusian NPP workers, along with the attendant problems of the Belarusian NPP project implementation will significantly increase radiation risks related to the commissioning of this power plant.



The commissioning of the first nuclear unit is to be carried out by Russian specialists, since the construction contractor is the Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation, while there are no experts that could efficiently substitute Russian colleagues in Belarus. Closed borders and the pandemic-related increased danger to the health and life of the staff pose additional and serious risks of nuclear safety associated with human factors and logistics, including the transportation of nuclear fuel from Russia. It should be pointed out that during the commissioning of nuclear power plants, the risk of radiological accidents is higher.

The COVID-19 pandemic substantially complicates taking the steps to address the problems of the NPP-2006 project safety that were recommended to Belarus following the European stress tests at the NPP. It also makes it impossible to take adequate emergency response measures to protect the population (such as evacuation) in the event of a radiological accident, including a cross-border one. This is related to the measures taken by the EU countries to combat the pandemic – quarantine, flights cancellation, and others.

It is projected that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to an economic recession in 2020, in Belarus and the whole world. This is another factor complicating the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP since it can significantly affect standby rating and the electric power markets.

No solution is offered for the problem of spent nuclear fuel (SNF) to be produced by the Belarusian NPP. There is no relevant dry storage area for the fuel on the NPP territory. There are no facilities for SNF storage and processing in Russia, and it is rather unlikely that in the context of the pandemic, these facilities will be designed and built.

We urge the Belarusian authorities to assess the situation rationally and to postpone the commissioning of the Belarusian NPP. Moreover, we intend to appeal to international organisations, in particular, IAEA, with a request for assistance in this matter.

It should be pointed out that the implementation of the Belarusian NPP project involves several problems, which we have repeatedly emphasised – law violations, including international law registered by the UNECE Aarhus and Espoo Conventions committees; the operational commencement of construction of the first nuclear unit reactor building with no approved project documentation in place; several incidents, including dropping the reactor vessel and hitting it against a railway utility pole, and some other problems. Besides, the Belarusian NPP is being constructed in a very opaque environment at all levels, so we only see the tip of the iceberg – most of the other violations are hidden from the public.

*Information: Belarusian Anti-Nuclear Campaign (BANC) is a public campaign uniting the Ecohome NGO, the Belarusian Green Party, the public campaign “Ostrovets Nuclear Power Plant is a crime”, the movement “Scientists for Nuclear-Free Belarus”, and other organisations, activists and experts. The primary goal of the campaign is nuclear-free Belarus, as well as its neighbouring countries or territories. BANC has overseen the Belarusian NPP construction and maintained its independent expert criticism since 2009.*

*The Belarusian NPP is under construction near Ostrovets in the Grodno region of Belarus. The works are performed by the Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation from a standard Russian NPP-2006 design utilising the state credit funds provided by the Russian Federation.*

