Submission Concerning Uranium Sales to China
From The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
(Australian Section) Inc.

Introduction

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom was established in Europe in 1915. We are an international NGO in consultative status with the United Nations' ECOSOC and UNESCO. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has special consultative relations with the FAO, ILO and UNICEF. This submission is made on behalf of the Australian Section of our organisation henceforth referred to as WILPF. WILPF works for social, racial and environmental justice, for human rights and an end to wars as a means of dealing with human conflict.

We thank the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties for this opportunity to make input to this inquiry. We also thank the Committee for the extension of time to make our submission.

Preamble

While WILPF recognises that both the Nuclear Transfer Agreement and the Nuclear Cooperation Agreement have already been signed in April this year by the respective Foreign Ministers, nevertheless we take this opportunity to convey our concerns regarding the adequacy of the treaty instrument for the sale of Australian uranium to China.

We wish to once again reiterate our very grave concerns about the export of Australian uranium to a nuclear weapons state such as China which, while it is signatory to the NPT, and to the CTBT, has never ratified the CTBT. Nor has China agreed to many international human rights and labour protection conventions and treaties. While these treaty "gaps" exist for China, WILPF believes that it is irresponsible on the part of the Australian Government to agree to the sale of Australian uranium to China. While the case for selling Australian uranium ore appears to have been strongly made by those corporations willing to make profits from the mining and export of uranium, it is not acceptable for government where the potential exists for the welfare, health and safety of the entire community to be jeopardised by exposure to radioactivity to encourage and assist those few whose primary motive is profit and who may therefore be motivated by greed. These corporations have a clear vested self-interest, and, as a consequence, their capacity to make wise judgement in the interests of all and not just for their shareholders is highly questionable. In this situation, it is even more pressing to ensure that the proper role of government to protect the safety of the whole Australian population and the Australian environment is not diminished or treated as a consideration subordinate to the generation of wealth for a few. The role of government to exercise judgement in the interests of the whole community needs to be preserved.

According to the Global Nuclear Survey sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency, 14th December 2005, there is strong opposition in Australia and indeed worldwide against new nuclear power production:

> *"A new 18-country opinion survey sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found that "while majorities of citizens generally support the continued use of existing nuclear reactors, most people do not favour the building of new nuclear plants." Indeed, the findings of the survey, conducted by Globescan Inc. show that "six in ten citizens (62%) overall believe that existing nuclear reactors should continue to be used, yet six in ten (59%) do not favour new nuclear plants being built."*

Clearly there is widespread public opposition to nuclear power production which people believe has inherent dangers. In addition, a September 2005 SBS-commissioned Newspoll of 1,200 Australians found that 53% were opposed to uranium exports to China, with only 31% in favour.

WILPF remains opposed to the mining, processing, trading and exploitation of uranium because of its radioactive pollution and inherent danger to human life and the human gene pool. As U-238 breaks down over centuries, it creates protactinium-234, which radiates potent beta particles that may cause cancer as well as mutations in body cells that can lead to birth defects. As Drs Rosalie Bertell and Helen Caldicott have stated, these mutations in the human gene pool, unlike cancers which affect individual persons, affect the whole future of the human species as these mutations are permanent and virtually unchangeable for future generations.

WILPF recognises that the uranium mining lobby is using the cover of the current debate about global warming to make claims for the use of nuclear energy which are extremely misleading. Because nuclear energy does not pollute primarily by way of greenhouse gas emissions, the uranium mining lobby makes the claim for instance that nuclear energy is "clean and green". It is disturbing that the propaganda of the uranium mining lobby is reproduced by DFAT personnel in their Regulation Impact Statement of 2006:

> "*Meeting [China's] expanding energy demand with non-fossil fuel technologies such as nuclear power will have clear positive environmental benefits."*

Nothing could be further from the truth. While the DFAT document reveals the success of the uranium mining lobby in communicating their agenda to the present Federal Government, nevertheless the difficulties with uranium mining remain as they have always been: the industry has found no safe means of dealing with its waste products; and there is an inextricable link between nuclear energy for so-called "peaceful purposes" and nuclear weapons proliferation.

In this context where DFAT staff are producing documents containing such tendentious

language, WILPF has reservations about making our submission. It is our sincere hope nevertheless that the Committee members can take into account the longer-term implications of a greatly increased volume of sales of Australian uranium to China.

A Thirty-Year Treaty for the Long-Term Problem of Nuclear Waste
The Nuclear Transfer Agreement is intended to remain in force for thirty years and can be terminated by eirther party before that date.

> *"The Agreement shall remain in force for an initial period of thirty years. The Agreement shall terminate:*
> *(a) if either Party notifies the other Party at least 180 days prior to the expiry of the initial thirty year period, or 180 days after notice of termination thereafter;"*

The Nuclear Transfer Agreement which remains in force for only thirty years is therefore an extremely poor and inefficient instrument for dealing with substances which remain radioactive and toxic to humans for their half-lives of millions, even billions, of years. U-234 has a half-life of 244,000 years, U-235 714 million years and U-238, the great percentage of all uranium, a half-life of 4.5 billion years. Consequently the mining of uranium results in a huge burden of toxic legacy for many, many generations of humans into the future.

In addition, there are many possible scenarios which would render impossible the operation of the safeguards as envisaged in the treaty instruments.

The Lure of Profit
Although China's mandatory renewable energies targets are considerably higher than Australia's, China is nevertheless pursuing burgeoning requirements for energy by rapidly building nuclear power plants. With the planned increase in nuclear power by 2025, China will be the fifth largest nuclear energy producer worldwide:

Country*	**1990**	**2000**	**2001**	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**	**2025**
United States	577	754	769	794	812	816	816
France	298	394	401	447	478	520	550
Germany	145	161	163	137	107	15	0
Japan	192	294	309	369	394	426	411
Canada	69	69	73	108	110	118	98
Russia	115	122	125	141	154	129	99
South Korea	50	104	107	141	171	209	220
India	6	14	18	46	55	66	66
China	0	16	17	66	129	142	154

Source: Energy Information Administration, *International Energy Outlook 2004,* Appendix A, Page 170.

While this may represent an irresistible business opportunity to Australian uranium mining companies, we believe that Australia would surely do better as a responsible global citizen to encourage China to use their fledgling Renewable Energy Laws (passed in January 2006) to develop renewable non-fossil energy resources from wind, sun, water, biomass, geothermal, and tidal sources rather than to increase the nuclear energy sector.

The Intractable Problem of Radioactive Waste
The accumulating stockpile of radioactive waste is already a world problem.

It is also known that China is planning to use, or may already use, deep well injection to dispose of liquid radioactive waste. Yet, according to the School of Engineering at Vanderbilt University:

> *"There are large uncertainties in our knowledge of the behaviour of liquid wastes in geological strata, and as a result there is a potential for migration of substances from the place of its disposal to the accessible environment."*

China's injection of nuclear waste into geological strata adds to the dilemma posed by the nuclear industry's overall waste management problems. Disposal of nuclear waste in this way creates difficulties into the future both for production of food safe for human consumption and for water supply/resources.

The Link between "Peaceful" Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Proliferation
The link between the uranium mining and nuclear energy industries and the proliferation of nuclear weapons remains inextricable. Four countries have already used nuclear programs that were ostensibly for "peaceful, non-military purposes" in order to develop arsenals of nuclear weapons - Israel, India, Pakistan and South Africa; North Korea may possibly be a fifth.

WILPF has particular concerns about the inadequate safeguarding of nuclear materials in China as well as China's history of unwillingness to be thoroughly open and accountable. China has shown that it is reticent about divulging any nuclear accidents as it was not until a year after a level 2 accident occurred in China (accidents are graded 1-7, seven being the worst) that it was revealed that it had happened. Above level 2 accidents must be announced worldwide.

It is a grim irony that so much effort is expended on developing laguage in the Nuclear Transfer Agreement and the Nuclear Cooperation Agreement to distinguish so carefully between development of nuclear energy "for military purposes" and development of nuclear energy "for non-military or peaceful purposes" when the diversion of nuclear material to produce nuclear weapons can so easily be achieved. Tagging of uranium to identify its origin is impossible - it all looks the same. Indigenous Chinese uranium can be diverted to produce a greatly increased number of nuclear weapons while the newly increased quantities of imported Australian material can be amply substituted for the purpose of non-military energy production where the indigenous supply may have once

been dedicated. According to the *Taipei Times* of January 21, 2006: "Whether or not Aussie uranium goes directly into Chinese warheads - or whether it is used in power stations in lieu of uranium that goes into Chinese warheads — makes little difference. Canberra is about to do a deal with a regime with a record of flouting international conventions." In short, it is beyond dispute that the import of Australian mined uranium into China simply makes easier the reallocation of increased supplies of indigenous uranium for military purposes.

In addition, Chinese statements have suggested that deployment by the United States of their so-called "Missile Defence" would force Beijing, according to the Monterey Institute of International Studies 2002, to expand the size of its nuclear arsenal and intensify its nuclear weapons modernisation efforts: http://www.nti.org/db/china/wnwmdat.htm Incidentally, we note Australia continues to be a willing participant in the US "Missile Defence" scheme which will inevitably drive China to increase the size of its military arsenal. This is not a responsible or ethical stance for Australia to take.

Another point to consider is that the five '"declared" nuclear weapons states - the US, the UK, Russia, France, and China - routinely transfer personnel from their "peaceful" nuclear programs to their WMD programs. China's nuclear power plants can easily be adapted to process their residual material for military purposes including nuclear propulsion for military non-nuclear applications, and munitions, including depleted uranium munitions.

A final irony of all the careful energy and effort expended upon the development of these treaty instruments is that Dr Mahamed El Baradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency has recently said that the basic safeguards system is "fairly limited" and efforts to improve it have been "half hearted" because of the IAEA's "shoestring budget."

China is a secretive state with an egregious record on human rights, a poor record on freedom of the press and freedom of expression and an appalling record of military exports. In 2001, the CIA reported that China had provided missile technology to North Korea and Libya as well as "extensive support" to Pakistan's nuclear program. In 2003, the US Government imposed trade bans on five Chinese firms for selling weapons technology to Iran.

Conclusion

There is no protection in the treaty instruments under consideration that leads us to believe that uranium exported from Australia may not come back in the form of nuclear weapons to destroy Australian populations and Australian cities at some point in the long future of their useable life.

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