

<p><i>Argentine Agreement</i></p> <p>Submission No. .... <i>2</i> .....</p>
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# Friends of the Earth, Australia

## ~~Presentation to Joint Standing Committee on Treaties~~

August 2001

<p><i>Hungary Nuclear</i></p> <p>Submission No. .... <i>1</i> .....</p>
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<p><i>Czech Nuclear</i></p> <p>Submission No. .... <i>1</i> .....</p>
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### Introduction

Friends of the Earth Australia (FoEA) appreciates the opportunity to submit on the series of nuclear cooperation agreements presently before the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (the Committee). While FoEA has serious concerns about all nuclear co-operation agreements it would like to present comments on the following treaties before the Committee:

1. Agreement between Australia and the Argentine Republic Concerning Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy
2. Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and the Transfer of Nuclear Material
3. Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Czech Republic on Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and the Transfer of Nuclear Material

FoEA is a member of Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) - the largest federation of environment groups in the world. FoEI has a policy of opposition to nuclear development based on the shared experience of its impacts amongst many of its 63 member groups – including the Czech Republic, Argentina and Hungary.

All of the treaties currently before the Australian Parliament would allow for the development of controversial projects within the above-mentioned nations as well as here in Australia. FoEA therefore urges the Committee to take into consideration the practical effects of the agreements during its deliberation. As the Committee would be aware nuclear developments continue to be extremely contentious in many nations. All of the projects facilitated by the following agreements pose considerable public health and environmental risks.

### 1. Agreement between Australia and the Argentine Republic Concerning Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

This treaty has clear implications for Australia and FoEA endorses the positions made to this committee by the Australian Conservation Foundation and Greenpeace. We further support the position of the Sutherland Shire Council noting the impact such a treaty would have directly on the community they represent in Southern Sydney.

### 2. Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and the Transfer of Nuclear Material

FoEA notes in the National Interest Analysis (NIA) Document:

'That the primary purpose of the proposed Agreement is to facilitate the sale of Australian uranium for use in Hungary...the producers (WMC) consider that they can win approximately 20 per cent of the Hungarian market, resulting in new exports worth A\$5 million at current prices.'

In real terms this would amount to approximately 170 tonnes of uranium oxide at current prices. While this may be a feasible quantity to export it is questionable whether this would be a legitimate or needed market for mining company WMC. For example, one standard 1000MW-power reactor consumes around 250 Tonnes of uranium oxide per year.

...'The proposed Agreement will also create a framework for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology between Australia and Hungary, and contribute to developing Australia's relations with Hungary'.

FoEA understand that Hungary may play a role in the Argentine INVAP tender for a new reactor in Sydney. If this is the case the intent of the Agreement and NIA are misleading if not deceptive. FoEA is awaiting a response on this treaty from Magyar Termeszetvedok Szovetsege Erszebet Schmuck (Friends of the Earth Hungary). We would forward this statement for the committee's reference and provide further information where required.

### **3. Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Czech Republic on Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy and the Transfer of Nuclear Material**

FoEA is extremely concerned that the Australian Government intends to sign a treaty with the Czech Republic on nuclear matters. Several European Governments along with the European Parliament have condemned the Czech Republic's nuclear program, in particular the controversial Temelin Nuclear Power Plant. The treaty would effectively allow the export of Australian uranium to the Czech utility CEZ, which operates the Temelin (and the Dukovany) nuclear power plants.

The National Interest Analysis Document states that the agreement sets out to facilitate the export of uranium by Energy Resources of Australia and WMC. FoeA would like to remind the Australian government's facilitation of the Jabiluka uranium development - owned by Energy Resources of Australia - was condemned by the European Parliament (1998). As Western Europe steps away from supporting the nuclear industry, pursuing uranium export contracts with the former Eastern Bloc is negligent. The export of Australian uranium would contribute to unnecessary and unwanted impacts on the Czech community – as the following statement from FoE Czech Republic clearly shows:

#### **Statement from Hnutí DUHA-Friends of the Earth CZ**

Czech Nuclear Power Plants are built upon outdated Soviet-designed reactor blocks:

Dukovany Nuclear Power Plant, comprising four reactors started in 1985-1987 is not equipped with basic safety measures, such as containment structures. Therefore the protection of environment in a case of heavy accident is insufficient.

Temelin Nuclear Power Plant with two reactors under construction is currently the most controversial nuclear project in Europe. Despite its extensive upgrades, Temelin is still suffering from a numerous technical defects and its overall reliability is lower by magnitude than comparable Western reactors. The European Parliament already twice passed a resolution calling on the Czech government to cancel the project (1999, 2000).

Recent decision making processes were not open to public. Last spring, a coalition of 150 Czech civic initiatives organised a petition action calling for a referendum about the start-up of Temelin. The fact that 120,000 valid signatures were gathered in less than three months is a strong indication that people want to be involved. Despite this, the parliament rejected a proposed law that would initiate the demanded referendum.

The deficit of democratic process is stressed by the fact that the Czech Republic has large 'over-capacity' and is the second largest electricity exporter in Europe. Therefore, there is no urgent need to put Temelin into operation and thus expose public to risks associated with its reactors.

Last but not least, Czech Republic has not resolved the issue of spent nuclear waste. A permanent repository that would enable safe and reliable long-term isolation of dangerous trans-uranium isotopes and fission products does not exist, and there is no concrete plan for such a facility. The government is recently even considering the option to export the spent fuel to Russia for long-term storage - a plan with huge strategic risks of plutonium misuse and unacceptable environmental impacts.

On the basis of these facts, the Australian parliament should refuse the proposed contract with the Czech Republic.

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## **Conclusion**

Friends of the Earth holds grave concerns about the implications of all nuclear cooperation agreements before the Committee. We maintain that the practical ramifications of these treaties are valid and significant matters for the committee's deliberation. We urge the committee to not proceed with haste and allow time for independent positions to be fully presented. Friends of the Earth will continue to correspond with the committee on these matters and is available to respond to queries as below.

Friends of the Earth, Australia  
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