

Arabs lead UN drive for nuclear power

IAEA report ridicules zero growth, appropriate technologies

In a tightly coordinated maneuver in the United Nations General Assembly Nov. 2, the Arab bloc and leading Third World countries allied with the Soviet sector nations and protechnology Western European forces to pass two resolutions increasing technical assistance in nuclear power to developing nations and increasing their representation in the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency. The resolutions also called for the convening of a 1981 or 1982 conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

In a move which caused some surprise, the resolution increasing IAEA representation from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America was presented by the Ambassador from Saudi Arabia, Mr. Baroody, who noted that "it is very rarely that I submit resolutions." Baroody also called for the broadening of the agenda of the IAEA's scheduled conference on the nuclear fuel cycle to stress "measures to promote international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for economic and social development, particularly in the developing countries." In view of the infrequency of Saudi sponsorship of such resolutions, and also because the Saudis currently occupy the chairmanship of the IAEA Board of Governors, Baroody's move is seen as an indication of full and forceful Arab bloc support for nuclear power in the emerging nations.

But the strong and broadly based support for nuclear energy at the UN, among both developing and developed nations, also reflects the fact that the majority of the international community — hard-hit by the high cost of energy since 1974 — is increasingly unwilling to accept demands for austerity and deferral of industrialization plans. And developing nations in growing numbers — including the OPEC countries — are turning aggressively and with determination to nuclear forms of energy as the solution to their problems.

A second UN resolution, introduced by Yugoslavia, a strong force in the Non-Aligned Group, called for "much greater emphasis on questions of technical assistance ... on a long-term basis" to Third World nations. This resolution opposed earlier British Empire and American resolutions that channeled

most of the IAEA's efforts and funding to the policing of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Annual report

The resolutions, which were passed by a consensus at the end of the day-long debate, followed an unprecedented, strong annual report to the General Assembly by IAEA head Dr. Sigvard Eklund.

In his speech Dr. Eklund denounced the coupling of non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and strongly criticized the "irrational" attacks on nuclear power by those, he said, who "hide behind terms like 'appropriate,' 'soft' or 'intermediate' technology" to deny nuclear energy to both developing and advanced sector nations.

Eklund called upon the signatories of the July 1978 Bonn Summit to honor their stated commitments to nuclear energy and, in a pointed reference to the United States, "not to abridge or change their supply contracts" with other nations.

The IAEA head also referred to the collaborative efforts of his organization with the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Europe-based Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development, and noted the advantages of having the IAEA headquartered in Vienna where other energy agencies, including the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), are located.

The IAEA is known to be strongly influenced by progrowth industrial and scientific forces who are the political backbone of the European Monetary System (EMS). Observers at the UN agreed that Saudi support represented a close policy coordination between the EMS and the Arab Monetary Fund.

In the day-long debate, Soviet bloc nations gave unusually strong support for transfer of nuclear technologies to the developing countries. Czechoslovakia asked the Assembly to "recall that Czechoslovakia is the initiator of the idea that technical assistance should be granted as a matter of priority to the economically least developed countries," while Mr. Komives, the Hungarian representative, demanded that fusion power be included in the framework of the proposed conference on new and renewable energy.

The final sally in this important victory for world development of nuclear energy came from Pakistan, which requested that the Saudi resolution delete reference to a December 1977 Assembly resolution that coupled non-proliferation with nuclear energy development. The Saudis agreed, and Mr. Maik, the Pakistani representative said quietly, but triumphantly, "the (Saudi) proposal has the support of the majority of the member States of IAEA, including that of the Group of 77 (the Third World nations — ed.)."

The response of the British Empire nations, including Canada and Australia, and also that of the United States, was to reiterate their "concerns" about nuclear proliferation.

But they were not about to call for a vote, and allowed the resolutions to pass by consensus. This is all the more striking since strong U.S. disapproval had squashed a similar resolution proposed by Nigeria in the 1977 General Assembly.

— Leif Johnson
United Nations correspondent

IAEA head: developing nations need nuclear power

Sigvard Eklund, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, gave an unprecedented, strong endorsement of the extension of nuclear power to Third World nations in his report to the United Nations General Assembly on Nov. 2. Some highlights:

... The International Fuel Cycle Evaluation which began last year is now fully under way, with 53 countries participating. ... The most important aspect is that, if a country is prepared to renounce nuclear weapons and to accept safeguards covering all its nuclear activities to verify compliance with that commitment, it is free to engage in any form of peaceful nuclear activity, including that based on regional cooperation. Indeed, the more technologically advanced countries should help it to gain access to peaceful technologies.

This implies that there is an equal obligation on supplying countries not to abridge or change their supply contracts. Irrevocable safeguards must be balanced by irrevocable commitments to supply. ...

As history shows, there is no correlation between the spread of nuclear weapons and that of nuclear power. ... Nevertheless, in spite of all the facts and logic and against all argument, the opponents of nuclear power continue to persist, irrationally, in maintaining that nuclear power leads to proliferation. The outcome of that argument and of other campaigns being waged by the opponents of nuclear power in the

industrialized countries will affect the developing nations also. They cannot be indifferent to the possible results.

Program to solve the energy shortage

On the global energy front, there are certain steps the industrial world could take to ease the energy situation. Among the more important are the following:

... Secondly, the industrial countries must forge ahead with nuclear-power programmes, which at present offer the only immediately available alternative to traditional means of producing electricity on a large scale.

Thirdly, as developing countries turn increasingly to nuclear power in the next decades, they will be in competition with the industrial world for available uranium resources. To reduce this competition it is desirable that all countries should promote prospecting for uranium and that the development of the fast breeder reactor should continue, since thereby the world's nuclear-fuel resources would be extended 100-fold.

Fourthly, as I have already said, the developing countries must be helped to introduce peaceful nuclear-power technology wherever this is economically promising.

The remarkable paradox that we now face is that, while the Governments of the main industrial countries are committed to all or most parts of this four-point programme, ... the introduction of nuclear power has slowed down considerably, and even halted in some countries.

Regulatory morass

We now have a situation in which ... nuclear power plant operators in the free-market countries are being compelled to turn to other sources of energy. One principal reason for this is the almost incredible complexity of the regulatory and juridical procedures that nuclear projects must now contend with. Although the time needed to build a nuclear power plant is of the order of six years, it can now take as long as a dozen years in some industrial countries to steer a nuclear project from start to finish through the maze of juridical and regulatory hurdles. The operator of the plant cannot plan effectively over such a long and uncertain time span, and his capital costs spiral as interest charges mount up. The matter is made even more difficult by major changes and uncertainties in Government policies in some countries.

'Appropriate' technologies not the answer

As I said at our General Conference in September, the reasons for this confusion are probably imbedded in certain fundamental changes of attitude in some quarters of affluent countries towards science and technology in general. I remarked in Vienna that,

hiding behind such terms as "appropriate," "soft" or "intermediate" technology, there are many wishful thinkers today who would have a world where the developing countries

while the industrial world contents itself with zero growth and consumes the fruit of past achievements. Let me repeat that there should be no mistake: small non-conventional energy sources may provide the best way of meeting the energy needs of small, rural communities, but they cannot turn the wheels of industry of any country nor can they help it to attain eventually a self sustaining economic base, nor can the industrialized world ever maintain its standard of living without expanding its energy consumption.

The main sources of technical assistance in the nuclear-energy field are the Agency's various programmes. As the report before this Assembly shows, they have been growing steadily, although not nearly as fast as many of the developing countries, and I myself, would wish. As I have said, the Agency's budget received unanimous support in September of this year, but there were many developing countries that expressed regret that the growth in our safeguards activity was not matched by an increase in the programmes designed to promote the use of nuclear power, especially in the technical assistance programme. . . .

Oil-producing nations join the nuclear club

An Arab journalist recently stated that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) sees as a solution to the dollar crisis the United States adopting a global program for fusion and fission research and development. He indicated that the majority of the leaders within the oil cartel see that such a resolution to the "energy crisis" led by the United States would trigger new confidence within the international community in the U.S. economy and Washington's commitment to economic growth.

Such a sentiment reflects the growing support for nuclear energy by the oil producing nations as the most viable alternative to petroleum. Despite the much publicized myths of the "greedy sheikhs" who are making millions by subjecting the world to their "overpriced" oil, the oil producing states are in fact increasingly advocating the development of nuclear energy in order to conserve their precious oil reserves to feed future refining and petrochemical industries.

Nuclear energy is being adopted not only as a future power generating source but as the basis for desalination projects and for medical purposes. The size of nuclear programs varies between the OPEC nations, depending upon their respective stages of development, population size and long-term development plans.

But there is one invariant which characterizes all of the nuclear plans within OPEC. In no case have U.S. companies been given contracts. As a result of the Carter Administration's policies on non-proliferation and in particular Energy Secretary Schlesinger's negative position towards nuclear energy, Japan, France, West Germany and the Soviets have received every major contract.

In brief, here is what the nuclear programs of five major OPEC nations, and the outlooks of various OPEC national leaders, look like on the issues of both fission and fusion.

Iran: With one of the most advanced nuclear pro-

grams in the underdeveloped sector, Iran currently has four fission reactors under construction, two from the French firm Framatome, and two from West Germany's Kraftwerke Union. In total, Iran projects that an additional 12 to 16 reactors will be constructed before the turn of the century, eight of which are to be supplied from the U.S. — most likely by the Westinghouse Corporation. However, the recent crisis in Iran has upset these plans, and the purchase of eight additional reactors from France and Germany has been postponed for at least a year.

The Shah of Iran has been one of the most vocal proponents of nuclear energy internationally. Last year his government sponsored a forum attended by 41 nations, to which the Shah sent a message of greeting naming fusion energy as the new energy source for the world in the 21st century.

The Iranian Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) has also begun research and development into nuclear energy — most importantly laser technology. Earlier this year the semi-official Iranian daily, *Kayhan*, published enthusiastic praise of fusion power and announced that the IAEO has embarked on a program of laser fusion research.

Not only is nuclear energy envisioned as a source of power for Iran, but the Shah himself foresees the day when nuclear plants will power desalination projects along the Caspian Sea as a means of irrigation. During a September visit to Iran, Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda promised assistance to Iran with its nuclear program. *Kayhan* later reported that the Japanese firm Mitsubishi was planning to send a delegation to Iran to propose the sale of reactors to Iran.

Saudi Arabia: Only over the last two years have the Saudis begun to investigate the applicability of nuclear energy to their economic development. In December, 1977 Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Zaki Yamani signed an agreement with the French for