

It is with great respect and full agreement that I read the letter written by Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi, Morihiro Hosokawa, Naoto Kan, Yukio Hatoyama, and Tomiichi Murayama criticizing the European Union's decision to include atomic energy and natural gas in its sustainability taxonomy.

To call nuclear energy sustainable suggests a revisionist history that fails to pay respect to the victims of Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear accidents, who have suffered greatly psychologically, financially, and medically. It also fails to recognize the link between the development of civilian nuclear energy capacities and the threat of nuclear proliferation. No country knows better the horror of atomic weaponry than Japan. Yet, in the post-war years, the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were down played to make way for the development of nuclear energy. Nuclear energy was sold as being safe and climate friendly. As I speak, Ukraine is under attack. The Chernobyl nuclear plant has fallen to Russian forces, raising concerns both about how the area is being used to stage attacks on Ukraine and the potential for radioactive release. Vladimir Putin has threatened the use of nuclear weapons.

We are naïve to believe that just because a country is politically stable at one moment in history, that it will be in the next. We are naïve to believe that nuclear power plants might not be bombed or subject to cyber-attacks. And, we are leaving future generations with an enormous security and financial burden in terms of maintaining the security of power plants and dealing with the waste they produce. The German Nationale Begleitgremium, which I co-chair, has been tasked with bringing transparency and citizen participation to the search for a location to build a high-level radioactive waste site. The challenge is enormous, as in order to protect future generations, the site must safely contain any radiation for a period of at least one million years. Winning public acceptance of a future waste location could be the hardest part of this challenge. And while Finland and Sweden may have functioning high-level radioactive waste facilities in the near future, globally little progress has been made on this back-end problem.

We must also be aware that states which develop nuclear energy are only a step away from having the know-how to develop nuclear weaponry. North Korea, India and Pakistan are cases in point. Japan's need to shut down all of its nuclear power plants after the Fukushima nuclear crisis for safety checks also shows how unreliable such a dependency on nuclear power can be.

Finally, it is clear that countries that rely on high shares of nuclear energy have done far less to build out renewable energies than countries that have chosen to limit, phase out, or reject nuclear power. Investments in nuclear power divert finances which are greatly needed for improvements in energy efficiency, energy savings, development of new technologies and processes, and renewable energies.

The illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia has been indirectly funded by western dependence on Russian gas. Our dependence on fossil fuels continues to support dictators around the world. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that while having a lower carbon footprint than coal or oil, is nevertheless, a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Both Europe and Japan have indirectly helped finance dictators around the world with their purchase of fossil fuels, including natural gas. Calling the use of natural gas can sustainable makes a mockery of the word sustainable.

I believe that the majority of Germans do not agree with the new European taxonomy. Austria and Luxembourg have indicated their plans to bring a lawsuit against it, and Germany's new coalition government has also expressed its reservations.

Clearly, we all need to do more to reduce our energy demand. In addition, we need to invest our finances and human capacities into the development of renewable energies and storage capacities. The European Union should withdraw its current sustainability taxonomy. It is not sustainable.

I thank Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi, Morihiro Hosokawa, Naoto Kan, Yukio Hatoyama, and Tomiichi Murayama for their support in this very crucial matter.

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