



## Media Release

12 November 2011

### Axpo AG

## Axpo to forgo uranium from Mayak until the necessary transparency is established

**The current production processes at the Russian uranium processing plants in Mayak in the Chelyabinsk region and the Siberian Chemical Combine (SCC) in Seversk close to Tomsk correspond to internationally accepted regulations, meet statutory requirements, and as far as Axpo can ascertain do not infringe any limiting values. In particular there is no evidence that current production causes any inadmissible additional exposure for man and the environment in the relevant areas. This is the main finding of the extensive investigations carried out by Axpo following criticism of fuel element supplies from Russia.**

During these investigations Axpo was granted access to the plant in Seversk by the operators, but has yet to be granted access to the Mayak plant. For this reason Axpo has negotiated with its supplier Areva to enable the exclusion of uranium from the Mayak plant as long as the supply chain cannot be fully monitored. More fuel from the SCC plant in Seversk is to be used instead.

Axpo will therefore continue to monitor the situation at the Russian plants together with the Russian operators and authorities, also by exchanging information with international experts and environmental organisations, so that any new developments in the Mayak and Seversk regions are detected in good time. In particular Axpo is advocating that, in addition to the measurements taken so far, further independent measurements be taken on the radiological situation in the Techa river.

Should any findings other than those currently ascertainable emerge, Axpo reserves the right to reassess the situation and take new decisions accordingly.

In summary the main findings were as follows:

- The area around the Mayak plant (Ozyorsk, Chelyabinsk region) has been contaminated by radiation from various incidents since the 1950s. Today's reference values were clearly and repeatedly exceeded so that large areas are contaminated for the long term, resulting in impairment and damage to man and the environment.
- As recently as the 1990s there was an incident at the Siberian Chemical Combine (SCC) in Seversk (Tomsk region) during the handling of radioactive materials that led to reference values being exceeded and the contamination of man and the environment.

#### Axpo Holding AG

Corporate Communications

Zollstrasse 62 | CH-8021 Zürich

T 0800 44 11 00 | F +41 44 278 41 12 | [www.axpo.ch](http://www.axpo.ch)

- In the areas around both the Mayak and the Seversk production facilities, large parts of the vicinity are exclusion zones and not accessible. At the same time the local authorities and the operators have undertaken rehabilitation measures to reduce radioactive pollution outside the exclusion zones (mainly along the Techa river downstream of Mayak) and have pledged to take further rehabilitation measures also within the production sites to reduce potential risks to man and the environment.
- On the whole the Russian authorities and operators have proven to be open and cooperated with the Axpo representatives. However it has not yet been possible to visit the Mayak plant, which is still sometimes used for military purposes. It was possible to visit the plant in Seversk.
- Storage processes which would not be allowed in European operations were noted in Mayak and Seversk. In Mayak low and intermediate-level liquid waste is stored in an “industrial containment basin system”, although this is strictly separated from public bodies of water. In Seversk low and medium-level radioactive liquid solutions are injected directly into layers of gravel that are encapsulated in layers of clay, and at a depth that is below the groundwater level. Neither process leads to any actual impairment of the environment, and both conform to Russian regulations. The operators have undertaken geological studies and constantly monitor the environmental impact through drilling and sampling.
- It proved impossible to establish either in the area surrounding Mayak or in Seversk that the current production processes were resulting in limit violations and therefore in inadmissible additional contamination of man and the environment. From the measurements carried out by the operators as well as the tests by the persons in charge it was not possible to conclude that any contamination was caused by current production, even though earlier contamination is still measurable.

In evaluating all these circumstances Axpo therefore concludes that there is no reason to withdraw from the supply contracts; on the contrary, by maintaining the contracts Axpo is more likely to have a positive effect on generally improving the situation. As Axpo has so far not been permitted to inspect the plant in Mayak, Axpo is forgoing supplies from this plant for the time being. Axpo attaches the greatest importance on obtaining comprehensive transparency on circumstances at the Russian plants.

Axpo has therefore chosen to adopt the following initiatives and take the following measures:

- Follow up on a visit to the Mayak plant in order to confirm the findings to date. Access to the plant by an Axpo delegation with representatives appointed by Axpo. A written request has been sent to the Director General of Rosatom. There are also contacts at the political level through the Federal Office for Energy as permission for access is more likely to succeed at a political level.
- Table questions on the Russian programmes and production sites through the IAEA Joint Convention. The committee convenes every two years, and as Switzerland is also a signatory



to the Convention, questions can be submitted directly. The Swiss supervisory body ENSI has already been informed that Axpo intends to submit the questions on Mayak and Seversk in accordance with due procedure through the supervisory body by January 2012 for the attention of the IAEA.

- Maintain dialogue and the exchange of information with the plant operators.
- Continue the dialogue with Rosatom in order to monitor further improvements and developments.
- Continue the dialogue with Greenpeace and also with Russian environmental organisations in order to learn of any new information on the infringement of reference values and any new hazards.
- Together with the Russian operators and authorities, strive for further confidence-building measures, e.g. independent measurements and audits of local environmental conditions, particularly along the river Techa in the Chelyabinsk region.

Axpo undertakes to continue to monitor procedures at the production sites until the current supply contracts expire.

**Note to editorial departments:**

**For more information:**

Axpo Media Office | Rainer Meier, Tel 079 404 17 07

**Questions to Manfred Thumann, CEO Axpo AG:**

Tel 0800 44 11 00

**We kindly ask you to sign onto his callback list until 2 p.m., Manfred Thumann will call you back between 2 and 3 p.m.**

**About Axpo**

The Axpo Group with Axpo AG, Centralschweizerische Kraftwerke AG (CKW) and EGL AG is one of the leading Swiss energy companies with local roots and an international outlook. Electricity production, trading, sales and services are combined in the corporate groups.

Together with its partners, Axpo provides electricity to around three million people in Switzerland. Axpo Holding AG is wholly owned by the cantons of north-eastern Switzerland.