

From: Brian Robinson [B_Robinson@imeche.org.uk]
Sent: vendredi 30 novembre 2001 16:39
To: TREN ENER SUPPLY
Cc: Lisa Rist
Subject: security of energy supply

Dear Ms Commeau,

I am writing to present the views of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers on the EC Green Paper "Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply". The Institution represents over 80,000 professional engineers involved in a wide range of governmental, commercial, industrial and charitable work. Whilst we have members in all parts of the world, the overwhelming majority are based in Europe.

We welcome the Green Paper and are greatly impressed by its thoroughness and rigour. Clearly the issues of energy supply and demand at an EU level are various and highly complex, as they are at national level. We can claim to have considerable expertise in matters of energy technology, so will endeavour to restrict our opinions to those areas, rather than to matters of primarily fiscal, market, political or social dimensions.

We are strongly supportive of the principles of sustainable development, and seek to encourage technological progress and innovations that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. We therefore agree with the Green Paper's assertion that "sustained efforts should be made to promote the penetration of new and renewable energy sources" and that the EU "must turn its attention to the most effective instruments for controlling demand". Huge savings in energy demand, and huge expansion in renewable generating capacity are both technologically possible, and would help to meet security of supply, environmental and competitiveness objectives. They must be pursued and supported vigorously by Member States and the EU. Such support will not just mean fiscal and other market incentives, but also greatly increased funding for research, development and demonstration (R,D & D) projects, particularly for wind, solar and biomass energy. Significant reductions in the demand for energy are possible with the right encouragement. Combined Heat and Power schemes, energy efficient lighting, energy labelling and better design of buildings can all play a useful role. Fiscal and other financial measures, however, are needed to ensure the widespread adoption of these technologies.

Nuclear energy is carbon neutral and can certainly contribute to security of supply objectives, but it is expensive and cannot be regarded as truly sustainable until such time as there are reliable and acceptable technologies for the disposal or storage of nuclear waste. We believe the nuclear option should remain open, but considered as a lower priority than demand-side savings and expansion of renewables. We cannot see any justification for the current high levels of expenditure on nuclear energy research, particularly for fusion reactors. Fusion technologies are not relevant to energy supply and use in the foreseeable future and the money would be better spent on supporting R,D & D programmes in renewables and energy efficiency. Research in the nuclear field should be primarily concerned with finding solutions to the waste disposal/storage problem, and maintaining a "critical mass" (no pun intended) of expertise so that the nuclear option remains open should efforts to develop renewable technologies and control demand prove unsuccessful.

Whilst technologies clearly exist to help EU countries reduce their dependence on fossil fuels for electricity generation, heavy reliance on fossil-fuels for transport seems certain to continue for many decades to come, particularly by road and air. The strategic emphases here must

therefore be to encourage substantial improvements in fuel efficiency and emissions performance, and adopt measures that reduce demand for fossil fuel-based travel, whilst also funding the research, development and demonstration of technologies based on alternative fuels. We support efforts to encourage passengers and freight out of road vehicles and into rail and other (non carbon-based) networks, providing such a transition is managed according to the principles of sustainable development and wealth creation. Issues of (perceived) safety, security, cost, ambience and convenience are particularly important in attempting to persuade people to switch from private car to public transport. Technological innovation of itself is unlikely to be successful without supporting fiscal and other incentives.

Although not covered by the Green Paper, we would also like to take this opportunity to encourage the EU to take a strong leadership role within the global community on energy matters. Such leadership should include promoting the development of sustainable energy technologies in other parts of the world, via political influence, international aid and other mechanisms.

Yours sincerely,

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