

Russian Official: Our Future Belongs To Nuclear Energy

by Rachel Douglas

Sergei Kiriyenko, head of the Russian Federal Atomic Agency (Rosatom), was in the U.S.A. for a week-long visit ending May 24. He had talks with Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman, and other Administration officials. Their agenda included steps towards a U.S.-Russian agreement on peaceful nuclear cooperation (a so-called “1-2-3 agreement”), the situation with Iran’s nuclear program, and the need for lifting the “anti-dumping” duties on Russian enriched uranium sales to the U.S. electric power industry, which were enacted in 1992.

“We share the view,” Kiriyenko said of his talks in Washington, “that it will be impossible to ensure global energy security in the next 30-40 years without large-scale development of atomic energy.” Since late last year, when Kiriyenko became head of Rosatom, Russia has charted a national program to build nuclear power plants at home and abroad.

Kiriyenko confirmed the scope of Russia’s plans, in a reply to the final question of his press conference, transcribed here, which came from Marsha Freeman of *EIR*. The Children’s Nuclear Academy, referred to here is a project to recruit high school students to careers in nuclear science, through competitive science projects and study.

EIR: Could you describe what your major goals are, in the big reorganization going on since your appointment as head of the Russian nuclear agency? There is a similar reconsideration going on in the U.S.A. And, I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about projects like the Children’s Nuclear Academy, because one of the challenges in creating the next-generation nuclear science and engineering, is that we don’t have the people being educated.

Kiriyenko: I’m going to start with the second question. Your questions are very pithy, and long.

The Children’s Nuclear Academy: Yes, this exists, and I view it as a very interesting project, because in sectors like nuclear power, the main value, the main characteristic, is its very great innovation potential, its great human potential. The main wealth of the nuclear industry is not the buildings, machinery, reactors, and so forth. All of that is secondary. The main wealth is the capa-

bilities of the people, who work in this sector—their intellectual, creative capabilities, their potential to innovate. Therefore, for the reproduction and expanded development of the nuclear power industry, the chief thing we need to reproduce is this unique human potential.

I told an earlier questioner, that I am certain the Russian nuclear sector can be competitive in the world market, and this is because of the people who work in the industry. Therefore our program for training and educating personnel is of fundamental importance for us, and the Children’s Nuclear Academy is one of the elements of such a program.

Now, on the other part of your question, here are the main elements. We have now prepared a federal program and submitted it to the government. First and foremost, it provides for the extensive development and construction of nuclear power plants within Russia. By 2030, we should complete 40 new nuclear power units at our plants. That is what is required, merely to maintain nuclear power’s share within electric power generation in our country. If we want to increase that share, which, indeed, is economically appropriate and sensible, then we will need to develop even more rapidly.

Secondly, we have the objective, set by the President in his recent Message to the Federal Assembly, namely to take steps to integrate Russia’s nuclear power industry into the world market. That means new contracts for building nuclear power plants abroad; it means new contracts for supplying nuclear fuel. . . . And what we are discussing now, about lifting the discriminatory restrictions on the supply of Russian goods and services to any markets, is also a very important objective, which is linked with the development of new technological solutions, of a new generation of technologies in the nuclear power industry—a new generation of reactors, a generation of fuels, a generation of waste-processing technologies. These are the most important tasks.



Courtesy of the Children's Nuclear Academy

These young people are participants in the Children’s Nuclear Academy scientific competition for 2006. Their shirts say, “Energy of the Future,” and in the background is the Rosatom logo. Kiriyenko is at center.