

Press Release

Solidarity with the people of Koodankulam on the nuclear reactor issue

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National Coordination Committee (NCC)

Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP)

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The National Coordination Committee (NCC) of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP), India which is meeting today and tomorrow in Koodankulam voices its strong solidarity with the people of Koodankulam and its neighbouring environs in the matter of the nuclear reactors and related facilities that are being set up here. That these potentially catastrophic facilities are being constructed in complete disregard for the longer term health and safety of the local population is shocking. The serious threat posed to the livelihoods of the local populace, especially the fishing community, is unacceptable. It is also shameful that the authorities should have resorted to fake and farcically conducted public hearings aimed at deluding the public. This is an affront to the basic values of democracy and to the fundamental rights of the Indian people.

The CNDP also wishes to make clear its total opposition the Indo-US Nuclear Deal that is proposed to be carried through the Nuclear Suppliers Group and then the US Congress. This opposition is of particular importance to the people of Koodankulam and its wider environs since passage of the Deal through the NSG will give the needed 'go ahead' to Russia for supply and construction of four more reactors (of unproven safety record) in this area. This Deal will further consolidate and deepen the strategic alliance between India and the US and thus have serious repercussions on the future relations between India and its neighbours and with its traditional allies and other countries which have every reason to distrust the US. There will also be grave repercussions on the efforts to promote global and regional nuclear disarmament as well as on India's energy security prospects for which nuclear energy is most certainly not the answer.

We are opposed to the Deal on all of these three counts. Strategic proximity with the US would only provide further fillip to the US project for unfettered global domination, which has at the moment suffered serious setbacks being continually delivered a bloody nose in Iraq, and also Afghanistan. The unique exception for India, as is provided under the Deal, would undermine the current non-proliferation order - for whatever it is worth — by encouraging the threshold nations to cross the nuclear Rubicon and in the process gravely damage the prospects of global nuclear disarmament. It would also further worsen the ongoing nuclear arms race in South Asia by radically boosting India's capabilities for fissile material production by freeing up all the indigenously produced uranium for that purpose while imported uranium would be used for power production. Pakistan has taken note of these developments and should this Deal go through will no doubt make all efforts to enhance its own production of fissile materials and delivery systems to match India as best as it can. India, on its part, by endorsing the US Ballistic and Theatre Missile Defence systems and preening itself as a "responsible" nuclear power because being accepted as such by (of all countries) the US, seems

oblivious to the fact that the BMD-TMD systems guarantee that Russia and China will seek to quantitatively and qualitatively enhance their nuclear arsenals with similar knock-on effects on India's and then Pakistan's nuclear arsenals.

The radically boosted nuclear power programme, following as a consequence of this Deal, would throttle investments for developing environmentally benign renewable sources of energy including wind, solar etc., having grave impacts on the prospects of India's long-term energy security. This is apart from the fact that nuclear power is not only highly uneconomic but also intrinsically hazardous - throughout the complete fuel cycle from mining to power plant - and potentially catastrophic. There is furthermore no fail-safe method for disposal of nuclear waste and outlived plants. Nor has the Indian public been properly informed as to why popular pressure and government wisdom throughout most of Europe has led these countries to completely abandon the path of nuclear energy and to phase out their existing plants. The desperate claim by the pro-nuclear energy lobbies to promote nuclear energy as an "environmentally clean" source of energy has few buyers though our government seems determined to try and fool the Indian public on this score. Countries like France and Japan which have much of their electricity supplied by nuclear power plants have seen systematic and high levels of growth in their greenhouse gas emissions.

Given these serious implications, we reiterate our principled opposition. The claim that India's "strategic interests" have been taken care of only implies that India is out to further accelerate its downhill journey along the path of self-destruction by further intensifying its weaponisation programme and thereby making South Asia and the world even more dangerous and diverting scarce resources from social sectors even otherwise badly starved of funds.

The CNDP NCC also reiterates its solidarity with global peace movements towards global nuclear disarmament in general, and a nuclear weapons abolition convention that follows the model of international conventions that have already banned biological and chemical weapons - other weapons of mass destruction, in particular.

This NCC also commits itself to a nuclear-weapon-free South Asia and to building an anti-nuclear South Asian coalition towards that objective.