



President Juncker
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

27 November 2017

Subject: Elevated Ru-106 levels

Dear President Juncker,

As you will be aware, the French Institute for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety (IRSN) detected the presence of Ru-106 at levels of a few milliBecquerels per cubic meter of air in south-eastern France between the end of September and the beginning of October 2017.

After consulting their European counterparts, it became apparent that Ru-106 was present in the atmosphere during the same period in at least fourteen European countries. (Simulations based on the measurement data and weather patterns, run by IRSN but also verified by other international experts, show that the plausible source of the release of the Ru-106 lies somewhere south of the Ural mountains (although the exact location is impossible to pinpoint in this manner).) On Monday 20 November, the Federal Service for Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring of Russia (Roshydromet) released data that showed that Ru-106 were much higher than normal with levels that were almost 1000 times the normal level at the most potent site in Argayash in the south Ural mountains.

Since Ru-106 is not normally detected in the air, its presence can only be due to an uncontrolled release. As there have been no other artificial radionuclides measured over Europe, this rules out an accident at a nuclear power station. The most likely source is a nuclear fuel treatment site or centre for radioactive medicine.

Based on the levels of ruthenium detected over Europe, it has been estimated that the release at the site itself would have been significant - between 100 and 300 terabecquerels - and that if an accident of this magnitude had happened in France it would have required the evacuation or sheltering of people living within a radius of several kilometres around the



accident site. In terms of maximum admissible levels of contamination for foodstuffs, these may have been exceeded for distances in the order of 10s of kilometres away from the source of the release. The half-life of Ru-106 is 1.2 years.

As far as we are aware, no country has informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it is the origin of this release, although this is required by the 1986 convention on the early notification of a nuclear accident. However, over the last week it has been speculated that Mayak, a spent nuclear fuel processing plant in the South Urals, is the site of the release.

We call on the European Commission to take the following urgent action:

1. As a matter of urgency, we call on the Commission to contact its counterparts in Russia requesting information on the cause, scale and exact location of the accident, as well as on any measures which have been taken to prevent any such release happening again. If this information is not forthcoming, the IAEA should be asked to take appropriate action. The Commission should also prepare a European task force including independent specialists to visit the site of the accident as well as the contaminated areas.
2. The Commission should signal its readiness to provide support in evacuating, if needed, the local population, as well as providing expertise and support for the measures needed to decontaminate the area and surrounding environment;
3. EU Member State Embassies in Russia should provide information relating to the release on their websites as well as any precautionary health protection measures that travellers to or from the affected region could take;
4. As a precautionary measure, and at least until the exact location of the accident is definitively established, we call on the Commission as suggested by both IRSN¹ and CRIIRAD² to put in place checks at EU borders of food and feed imported from Russia for Ru-106 and any other less mobile nuclear contamination which may have been released into the environment and which may now be contaminating the local area as a result of the accident. Any food or feed which is contaminated above maximum admissible levels should be not allowed to enter the EU.
5. We ask that a publicly accessible dedicated webpage for the compilation of all results of measures in the EU, both atmospheric and related to food and feed imports, to be set up. Results should be recorded regardless of whether maximum admissible levels are exceeded or not.

¹ http://www.irsn.fr/EN/newsroom/News/Documents/IRSN_Information-Report_Ruthenium-106-in-europe_20171109.pdf

² http://balises.criirad.org/pdf/cp_criirad_17-11-10_radioactivite_%20ru106.pdf



We hope you will agree that these precautionary measures are essential in order to ensure a high level of health for EU citizens, as well as the population local to the release, and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Harms MEP

Bart Staes MEP

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Claude Turmes MEP

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cc. High Representative Mogherini, Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner Vella, Commissioner Andriukaitis and Commissioner Cañete.