
Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant To Be Dismantled Only After Construction Of New Nuclear Plants In Armenia

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Medzamor nuclear power plant, despite of the agreement on partnership between Armenia and E.U. and participation of the country in the 'East partnership' project, which envisioned its closing, to be dismantled if only new nuclear power works to be constructed in the territory of Armenia.

"Closure of the Nuclear Power Plant, in Armenia's view does not mean giving up the nuclear option. As such, the possibility to build a new nuclear site with one of the nuclear powers," Licinia Simao, an expert on the South Caucasus countries, said.

The annual meeting of the Armenia- EU Council of collaboration took place in Brussels on Dec. 9, In course of the meeting the Foreign Minister Armenia Eduard Nalbandyan presented the steps on implementation of Action plan within the framework of the European neighborhood policy undertaken by Armenia. According to him, the implementation of the program is a priority direction of the collaboration between Armenia- EU, one of purposes of which appears providing safety of Armenian nuclear power plant and implementation of the program of building of new plant.

E.U insisted on immediate closing of Medzamor nuclear power plant and stated that the plant did not meet up-to-date nuclear safety demands. The U.S., France and Russia have already voiced their preparedness to assist Armenia to replacement Medzamor nuclear power plant to a new one.

Medzamor nuclear power plant was designed by Soviet specialists and it consists of two blocks, which were put into operation respectively in 1976 and in 1980. By the special decision of the USSR government the plant was stopped after the December earthquake of 1988. On Nov. 5 1995, after 6 years and 5 months of conservation, the second block of the plant was repeatedly neglected, in the process of restarting Russian specialists took active part.

The program of promising development of the electric power sector of Armenia was developed in two basic versions - nuclear and nuclear-free. In 2006 Armenia declared that the period of operation of the Armenian station would be completed in 2016. Armenia, after signing of the Action plan within the framework of the program of new European neighborhood policy, was bound to shut the obsolete station within the shortest possible periods.

"It has always been E.U. policy to have Medzamor closed. EU policy, which doesn't commit Armenia," Nicolas Tavitian, Director of Inside Europe, an Armenian think-tank in Brussels, said to Trend News via e-mail.

However, the replacement of the Medzamor nuclear power plant will be possible to modern one.

Observers consider closing of the obsolete plant in Armenia not only the matter of time, but also an issue of collaboration with one of nuclear powers; it is most probably with Russia.

The plant in Armenia would not be shut, because now it ensures with 40% of needs of Armenia for the electric power and now it is irreplaceable, Vladimir

Yevseyev, the senior scientific worker of the Institute of World Economics and International Relations, said.

This is only basis for the relatively economic independence of Armenia, but even additionally energy resources must supply to this plant. " Armenia will not close its nuclear station under the pressure of West", Yevseyev said to Trend News. "The discussion can deal with the construction of new plant, and I think that Russia would want to participate in this process".

Russia is well placed to take the lead in cooperating with Armenia, since it controls important stakes in the Armenian energy sector already. "This would mean another strategic asset for Russia in the Caucasus and would greatly undermine the attempts of the EU and the US to expand foreign policy options for the countries of the region," Simao, a candidate at the University of Coimbra, told Trend News via e-mail.

But Russia must clearly understand that it is not the one, who is ready to participate in the possible project, Yevseyev said. The U.S., apparently, France, have demonstrated readiness to contribute their will to assist the project, " Russia is not only partner, which is ready to participate in the project, but it hopes that tender on construction will give precisely to it", Yevseyev said.

According to estimation of experts, the replacement of Medzamor by a modern one will take place not earlier than in 2012.

According to Yevseyev, the construction of new plant can be expected, when the complete production of the resource of existing plant occurs. "This will occur already to 2012-2015, and then the need for a new plant will occur, which has higher criterion of safety and respectively completely is arranged the West," Yevseyev added.

According to Tavitian , the financial crisis, which began in the U.S. in summer and touched world financial markets, will not influence on construction of a new plant in Armenia.

According to experts, irreparable ecological catastrophe can take place while the Medzamor nuclear power plant continues operating. The plant does not meet the up-to-date standards of electric plants, Ali Aliyev, the Azerbaijani expert on ecology issues, believes.

The plant is located in the very earthquake-hazard region, where the strongest earthquakes constantly occur

"In the case of earthquake the Medzamor nuclear power plant will not be able to conceal itself, which is provided in contemporary plants, and this will lead to the ecological catastrophe", Aliyev, the head of the Geological and Ecological Department of the Ecology Ministry of Azerbaijan, said to Trend News. Armenia is a small country, where there are no places for burying of emissions from the plant. The supply of electric power from Turkey and Azerbaijan could be stand as an output from the alley. "If Armenia had good relations with its neighbors, country would need no plant", Aliyev said.

The concerns on the European side are with security of the facilities and with assuring that Armenia finds energy alternatives. The model of construction of the nuclear power plant is similar to Chernobyl and the plant is located in an active seismic area, making the possibility of an accident extremely high," Simao said.
