

PRESS RELEASE

Nuuk, Greenland & Copenhagen, Denmark

26 April 2013

Avataq (Greenland's Nature & Environment Association), The Danish Ecological Council and NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark today - on the International Chernobyl Day - urge Naalakkersuisut (the Greenland Government) and the Danish government to maintain zero tolerance policy against uranium mining.

The request is based on the fact that Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt recently announced at a meeting with Greenland's government leader Aleqa Hammond that Denmark will not stop uranium extraction in connection with a project to extract rare earth minerals in Kuannersuit (Kvanefjeldet) in South Greenland.

In a press release, the three organizations write that uranium extraction is unnecessary as it is possible to extract rare earths elsewhere where they do not occur with uranium.

"The planned uranium extraction in Kuannersuit (Kvanefjeldet) will leave millions of tons of tailings containing some of the most toxic radioactive materials. The waste will remain radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years and the long-term consequences can be an extensive radioactive contamination which, due to health hazards, may make it necessary to prohibit farming, fishing, hunting and livestock farming in significant parts of South Greenland, as well as living healthily there," says Mikkel Myrup, Chairman of Avataq. "In Greenland, we are therefore pleased with all the international support we can get to our resistance to uranium extraction."

The resolution is supported by 48 NGOs from 27 countries around the world, including some of the largest international networks of environmental organizations.

The call comes on the 27th anniversary of the meltdown of reactor 4 at the Ukrainian Chernobyl nuclear power plant. It is not only major accidents, but the whole chain of processes from extraction to the use in reactors and the subsequent storage and control of radioactive waste for hundreds of thousands of years that is dangerous.

"The nuclear power was abandoned in Danish energy policy in 1985, and the ban on uranium extraction is entirely linked to it," says Palle Bendsen from NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark. "It is reprehensible that the government will now change course in the issue of uranium extraction and hence nuclear power. The mining project in Kuannersuit could make the Kingdom of Denmark the fifth largest uranium exporter in the world."