

The 26th Fukushima Dialogue: Comment by NPO Fukushima Dialogue

The discussion in this Dialogue highlighted two key issues regarding decommissioning and waste management: the lack of trust between local national authorities and local people and the difficulty for the latter to be involved in the decision-making processes related to the future processes.

Decommissioning and waste management raise complex issues and require long-term perspectives for their management. The multiplicity of organizations involved and the psychological impact of the accident among the local people has contributed to the perception of a lack of consistency in the responses. This perception makes it difficult to build trust. Furthermore, after the accident, the response varied depending on the different evacuation zones, which further complicated the understanding of the decisions and damaged trust.

Local communities are not involved in the decision-making process regarding the decommissioning and waste management of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. For some residents, this leads to a sense of powerlessness which favor indifference and further distances the residents from the issues of decommissioning and waste management, turning these topics into matters that are hardly even discussed within the community.

Several proposals for improving the current situation were identified during the dialogue discussions. It was for example suggested to establish a permanent framework to ensure continuous and clear communication between local communities and authorities. Through this framework, providing a long-term outlook would allow for progress despite occasional setbacks, while also enabling the use of past failures as learning opportunities. This approach would lead to the gradual improvement of trust and foster long-term stability.

The importance to promote active and fair participation of local community people in decision-making processes related to decommissioning and waste management was also emphasized. The current apparent indifference stems from their difficulty to have access to fora to share their views with authorities. When individuals feel they can meaningfully contribute and affect change, their motivation increases, which in turn sustains their engagement. Increasing the transparency of the decision-making system, open to all relevant parties, would foster a long-term, sustainable response.

1st November 2024