

Japan Concurred with NSG Approval of US-India Nuclear Cooperation

From September 4 to 6, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), consisting of 45 countries (including Japan) held an extraordinary general meeting in Vienna. There, the member countries reached a consensus to approve the proposal by the U.S. to grant an exemption to India on a condition that India would continue its moratorium on further nuclear weapons testing, etc. India has exploded nuclear weapons and has not joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The NSG lifted its restrictions on exports of nuclear reactors and nuclear materials to India.

With that approval, the only hurdle remaining to be cleared for the Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal agreement is the ratification by the U.S. Congress. The Bush administration, which has promoted the agreement, will leave office on January 20, 2009, and it is unclear whether the agreement will be approved by the Congress by the end of 2008.

All Japanese governmental officials involved said it was a "difficult" decision.

On September 8, for example, Vice-minister Mitoji Yabunaka of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "We had to make a tough decision considering many factors."

Also, at a press conference the same day, Vice-minister Harufumi Mochizuki of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) spoke on the approval of supplying nuclear equipment and materials to India, saying, "The NSG also regarded it favorable to agree from the point of view of global nonproliferation."

In response to a question about possible Japan-India nuclear cooperation, Mochizuki said, "It is possible that India will approach Japan for nuclear cooperation. Upon a specific request from that country, Japan will have to first conclude a nuclear cooperation agreement with it." He added, "We will make our decision on individual cases after hearing how India views the purpose and intent of such cooperation."

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