

The 29th N-20 JOINT STATEMENT

May 21st, 2025

The 29th edition of the N-20 meeting gathering the leaders of the nuclear industry in France and Japan (*) took place on May 21st, 2025, in Paris, France

Once again, the N-20 members insisted on the essential contribution of the nuclear energy to reach carbon neutrality and to ensure the security of energy supply with respect to the current energy challenges. This observation is well considered in the respective energy policies: in Japan the recent 7th Strategic Energy Plan and in France the energy policy under finalization both rely on nuclear power to achieve the set decarbonization objectives. They also highlighted the importance of sovereignty aspects in a context of worldwide geopolitical tensions.

Current priorities and issues for the nuclear fleet were presented. Japan's efforts are focused on restarting its reactors shut down since the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. This effort is continuing at a sustained pace, and the first restart of two boiling water reactors at the end of 2024 is a major milestone worth noting. However, achieving our two countries decarbonization goals requires not only nuclear electricity production targets but also ensuring their long-term sustainability through improving the performance of existing reactors and introducing new reactors.

N-20 members emphasize the convergence of views of both sides on the overall nuclear fuel cycle policy. Both countries wish also to continue to step by step implement a closed fuel cycle policy. Japan's desire to start and then extend the life of its reprocessing plant in Rokkasho and France's decision to extend existing Back-End facilities beyond 2040 and to implement new ones create opportunities for long-term synergies between our two countries for both reprocessing and MOX recycling. This is illustrated for instance through the implementation of the SFMOX project (reprocessing of spent MOX). Moreover, as discussed during the previous N-20, concerns about the supply of uranium ore or enriched uranium are increasing. New projects are expected: mining contracts in Mongolia have been announced end of 2024 as well as projects to increase the enrichment capacity in France and in Japan and to reuse Reprocessed Uranium. We also observe the gradual parallel development of a fast neutron sector in Japan and France with different technologies (large reactor or advanced modular reactors) which would complete a light reactor fleet. The closure of the fuel cycle, with the target to resolve the problem of fissile materials supply for fuel, could be progressively achieved and will require the deployment of fast reactors as well as fuel cycle facilities able to specifically reprocess spent FR MOX fuels. It was explained by France the ongoing work until End of 2025 for the definition of a roadmap therefore.

Also, it was positively noted that, by end of 2024, the long-standing collaboration on SFR reactors between France and Japan was renewed with the signature of the general agreement and also the two implementing agreements involving MHI, MFBR, JAEA, JAPC, CEA, FRAMATOME and EDF.

The positive development of nuclear activities observed last year has been reinforced in 2025, on a global scale with numerous announcements of significant increases in nuclear electricity production, which is a positive step toward the global goal of a tripling of nuclear energy production. We also emphasize with the announcements from our two countries the existence of a long-term nuclear sector and discuss the opportunity to strengthen our cooperation in the field of construction of new reactors (EPR/EPR2 in France, new build in Japan). SMR projects seem to be taking off again and collaborations on both sides are also in that field possible. In Japan, the government is providing support for the development of next-generation advanced reactors, including light water reactors, high-temperature gas reactors, and fast reactors.

Decommissioning and waste management are key for the sustainability and acceptance of nuclear generation. The two countries presented their strategies and existing exchanges in respective areas of expertise. Emphasis was placed on treatment and recycling of radioactive waste, particularly for reactor metallic components such as heat exchangers. These challenges require innovation, industrialization and investment leading to more cooperation between Japan and France.

The issue of human resources, both within the sector and upstream, at the teaching level, remains a major point of interest. The issue of strengthening the supply chain and the collaborative search for common solutions is also an important topic specially to implement new nuclear projects.

Both sides are pursuing the development of advanced reactors. The successful collaboration between France and Japan on Fast Reactors is all the more interesting today as the problem of uranium resources appears increasingly crucial. The members emphasized the need to maintain and develop R&D infrastructure and material testing reactors with international collaboration. In this area, the importance of the reactor JHR is well understood since it will probably be one of if not the last experimental reactors in function in FIDES II, OECD/NEA new framework for fuel and material R&D irradiation test, within the 2040s decade.

() The N20 members are CEA, EDF, Framatome and Orano in France and JAIF, JAEA, FEPC, TEPCO, Kansai EPCO, Chubu EPCO, JNFL, Toshiba ESS, Hitachi-GE Nuclear Energy, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) in Japan.*