Newsletter 2024 # 1 / May 2024

Contents

1. / On our own behalf

Dear friends, supporters and fellow campaigners,

We continue to follow developments in uranium exploitation, the uranium market and continue to work with partner NGOs, especially in Africa, and also in other regions of the world; we support them wherever possible.

Currently, we receive no financial support for our work. That doesn't make it any easier for us.
Therefore, we have a request:
If our information on uranium / mining, uranium market, human rights and environmental protection on uranium mining **is important to you – please you support us.**

Account: MENSCHENRECHTE 3000 e.V., GLS Bank, IBAN: DE83 4306 0967 7926 8789 00, BIC: GENODE61FR1
Purpose: uranium-network.org or simply "Uranium".
We are about to create an option for donations via credit card.

Nuclear-Free Future Awards – a new home

In this context, it should also be noted that the Nuclear-Free Future Awards – previously presented by the Nuclear-Free Future Foundation, Munich / Germany - have moved to Beyond Nuclear, USA and is now presented by Beyond Nuclear together with IPPNW Germany: https://nuclearfreefutureaward.org/ (or https://nffaward.org)
and on facebook: https://www.facebook.com/thenuclearfreefutureawards

Actually, one of the founders of our partner-NGO in Tanzania, CESOPE, was honored with the Nuclear-Free Future Award, category Resistance, in 2022 (https://nuclearfreefutureaward.org/anthony-lyamunda-tanzania/).

The 2023 Nuclear-Free Future Awards ceremony took place in November 2023 in New York:
"**Noboddy does this work alone**", including a 15min video featuring the 2023 Awardewes:
https://beyondnuclearinternational.org/2024/04/28/nobody-does-this-work-alone/

The focus of this newsletter is on Africa; we will also report on other regions in future newsletters.
Please find more details on our website www.uranium-network.org (or ask: mail@uranium-network.org)

2. A Uranium Market update

Grafik: https://tradingeconomics.com/commodity/uranium, 22. May 2024

The skyrocketing rise of the price of uranium price (spot market) has petered out for the time being.
After a record high at the beginning of February 2024, the price has fallen and is currently bobbing along, albeit at a high level (around US$ 90/lb).

The hype around the - alleged - nuclear power development continues to dominate the media, and, as was to be expected, Germany is often attacked for its nuclear phase-out. The media and certain parties never tire of talking about a 'return to nuclear power'.

However, the facts expose the talk of a “renaissance” of the nuclear industry as a fairy tale. We refer to the World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2023 (https://www.worldnuclearreport.org/-World-Nuclear-Industry-Status-Report-2023-.html). **In fact, the number of nuclear power plants is decreasing slightly worldwide**.

3. COP 28 and the ‘Nuclear Pledge’ - What does it mean for uranium mining?

The “Nuclear Pledge” made by 22 countries at COP28 in Dubai is proving to be unrealistic: in order to triple nuclear power capacity by 2050, **between 10 and 20 new nuclear power plants would have to be connected to the grid every year** until 2050 (the figures vary depending on the conditions used).
In the past 20 years, an average of 5 nuclear power plants have been connected to the grid each year.

It’s completely unrealistic to multiply this number in the short time until 2050: there is a lack of companies and skilled workers, a lack of money and it will also become challenging to procure uranium. Uranium production would have to triple (roughly), too.

Much less attention than to the “Nuclear Pledge”, is paid to the promise of a much larger number of countries, namely 133, to **triple renewable energy capacities by 2030** [1]; in view of the actual almost exponential increase[2] in renewable energies, this seems much more realistic.

What does this mean for the uranium price and uranium mining?

The increase in the uranium price on the spot market (on which the above chart is based) **is very likely the result of speculation**.
EURATOM's European Supply Agency (ESA) documents the price developments for uranium trading with long-term contracts (which make up the vast majority of the uranium market); here, a long-term price decline tends to be observed; in Q3 2023, the spot market price paid by EU companies was around USD 51/lb - slightly more than half the current price on the spot market.

[1] https://www.cop28.com/en/global-renewables-and-energy-efficiency-pledge
[2] www.worldnuclearreport.org/The-World-Nuclear-Industry-Status-Report-2023-HTML.html, p. 413, 417, 418 etc.

As existing uranium mines will eventually be 'exhausted' – i.e. there is not sufficient uranium-bearing rock – the search for new uranium deposits will continue, albeit with far less verve than investor websites make belief. This can also be seen from the often hesitant progress of new uranium projects.

4. Developments in the US: Stop for Uranium Imports from Russia – and the Consequences

Developments in the USA are significant because of their influence on the global uranium market.
After uranium imports from Russia to the USA were previously excluded from sanctions (approx. 12% of the uranium required for US nuclear power plants is imported from Russia), **a law was passed in the USA in mid-May 2024 banning the import of enriched uranium from Russia** 90 days after the law is signed. However, the law also grants the **possibility of exceptions** if the necessary uranium cannot be procured elsewhere, but those are only allowed to the end of 2027.[3]
According to this law, non-enriched (natural) uranium could be imported into the USA – however, this would be of little use since the US have very little enrichment capacity – and only enriched uranium can be used in (US) nuclear power plants.

Expected effects
> The pressure on uranium deposits outside Russia or the Russian sphere of influence may increase (slowly), even within the US where several companies are trying since years to revive uranium mining in the US (which has fallen to almost zero)[4].

The Pinyon Plain (ex Canyon) Mine, next to the Grand Canyon, is one example: The company, Energy Fuels, started mining at the beginning of 2024. (see: https://uranium-network.org/current-projects/usa-grand-canyon/)
"*Legislation banning Russian uranium imports should have been a driver to phase out nuclear power. Instead, the new bill will further victimize Native American communities with US uranium mining expansion, writes Linda Pentz Gunter*." (see: https://beyondnuclearinternational.org/2024/05/19/terrible-news/)

> Investors could or will see an incentive to invest (more) in uranium mines outside the Russian sphere of influence, as the US law is expected to increase demand for uranium from regions outside the Russian sphere of influence.

5. Africa

5.1 Geopolitical developments, Uranium mining and 'nuclear diplomacy'

Developments in Africa cannot be considered without taking into account general political developments and geopolitical aspects. Russia and Russian state-owned company ROSATOM have been working for many years via a "nuclear diplomacy" to expand their sphere of influence by low-level activities; here are just a few examples:

[3] https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/1042
[4] https://wise-uranium.org/umopusa.html , US uranium requirements. approx 18 137 t U (WNA)

In **2010**, **ROSATOM bought the company that had discovered the Mkuju River uranium deposit in Tanzania**. Currently, no mining seems to take place – but ROSATOM retains ownership.
In **the mid-2010s**, Russia tried to sell nuclear power plants to South Africa (as well as French AREVA tried); all this failed at the time due to the efforts of two environmental activists.[5]

ROSATOM was also involved in getting young people interested in nuclear technology; initial conferences of African Young Generation for Nuclear (AYGN) (2017 ff) were sponsored by ROSATOM, among others.

Russia / ROSATOM continues to try to make nuclear power palatable to African states:
2022: "*Russia and China throw weight behind Africa's nuclear power drive - Continent's growing energy needs tie into tug of war for regional influence*", July 22, 2022
(https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Energy/Russia-and-China-throw-weight-behind-Africa-s-nuclear-power-drive)

2023: "*Russian nuclear energy diplomacy and its implications for energy security in the context of the war in Ukraine*", 27 February 2023, (https://www.nature.com/articles/s41560-023-01228)

In **October 2023**, the **new government of Burkina Faso** signed an agreement with Russia to **build a nuclear power plant in Burkina Faso**. ("*Russia is building a nuclear power plant to meet Burkina Faso's energy needs*", https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67098444)

2024: At ATOM-EXPO conference in Sochi, Russia, ROSATOM concluded a contract with ESKOM, the South African energy supplier, for the training of nuclear technicians:
"*On the sidelines of ATOMEXPO-2024, Rosatom signed two cooperation agreements to train specialists for the nuclear industry*" March 27, 2024, (https://www.rosatom.ru/en/press-centre/news/on-the-margins-of-atomexpo-2024-rosatom-signed-two-cooperation-agreements-on-training-specialists-fo/)

2024: "*Russia plans to set up several nuclear energy projects in Africa*", March 28, 2024
https://www.esi-africa.com/industry-sectors/generation/russia-to-set-up-several-nuclear-energy-projects-in-africa/

In Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, junta / governments have taken power that are clearly turning towards Russia; in some places, Chinese companies are following suit re: uranium exploitation (→ 5.4 Niger).

5. 2 Tanzania

Besides ROSATOM, the Russian state-owned company (local subsidiary: Mantra), at least two companies are actively exploring for uranium in Tanzania:

> **AuKING**, an **Australian company** owned by a Tanzanian living in Australia, initially explored the Manyoni region (central Tanzania), following in the footsteps of companies that had tried their luck there in the 2010s. **Recently, the company has also become active in the Mkuju River region** - in the area where ROSATOM already owns the Mkuju River uranium project.

> **Gladiator Resources**: the company was initially active near Mijingu, where there is a phosphate mine with considerable uranium admixture. In the meantime, the company has also shifted its activities to the Mkuju River region.

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/23/goldman-prize-awarded-to-south-african-women-who-stopped-an-international-nuclear-deal

What are we doing?
Our colleagues at CESOPE are planning activities that - once again - take a critical look at uranium mining and nuclear power. We support them.
It is important to challenge the narrative that nuclear power would help in the fight against climate change.
The network of **Don't Nuke the climate** is working on this issue, visit: www.dont-nuke-the-climate.org

5.3 Namibia - ROSATOM reaches for Namibian uranium

The former Rössing uranium mine was bought by the **Chinese CNNC**, which also operates the neighboring Husab mine (formerly: Rössing South). Thus, uranium mining in Namibia is currently (largely) in Chinese hands.
Paladin, the company which narrowly avoided insolvency in 2017/18, operates Langer-Heinrich mine. The company states it produced new 'yellowcake' in the first quarter of 2024 – and put it on stock.

Since 2021, **ROSATOM**, the Russian state-owned company, **wants to set up an in-situ leaching (ISL) uranium mine in eastern Namibia**, near the border with Botswana, **in an artesian basin** that supplies the Omaheke region with water for people and livestock. ISL in an artesian basin is in itself a complete no-go - but ROSATOM assures that it can be managed without any problems. ROSATOM repeatedly refers to the jobs that would be created – a rather effective argument in poor Namibia.

Large sections of the population in the region are opposed to the uranium mining plans as they fear that the groundwater will be endangered; their livelihood, livestock farming, is at risk, as well as the drinking water.
They organized themselves into **SAUMA - Stampriet Aquifer Uranium Mining Association** (www.saumanamibia.org) - an NGO opposed to uranium mining (in spite of the name).
SAUMA is a 'spin-off' of the NAU - Namibia Agricultural Union.

In spring 2024, the approval procedure for an ISL pilot project was pending, with many statements arguing against approval. No decision has yet been announced.

ROSATOM flew journalists from Namibia, among others, **to Kurgan, Russia**, to show them how “well” ISL uranium mining is going there. Unfortunately, we know from various sources that ISL mining is by no means going “well” there. As early as 2017, residents of the region had already protested against the establishment of a uranium mine with a petition (addressed to Putin) - unsuccessfully, as it turns out (see: https://wise-uranium.org/upru.html#KURGAN).
An update on the developments can be found on https://sites.google.com/view/alexejschwarz/startseite.
Alexej Schwarz had lived in the region and had supported local people opposed to the ISL uranium exploitation. In April 2024, (20th and after), Kurgan region was in the media due to extensive flooding and the threat of radioactive contamination (e.g. “Radioactive Leak Threat in Russia as Flood Heads for Uranium Mines” [6])

What do we do?
We have been cooperating with SAUMA for three years and support them with information.

6 www.newsweek.com/russia-radioactive-leak-threat-uranium-floods-kurgan-1892653

5.4 Niger

> ORANO (formerly Areva): Orano still operates its uranium mine in Arlit; ORANO recently announced that uranium mining would continue as it had found ways to import the necessary chemicals and export the yellowcake in compliance with ECOWAS sanctions. However, the current status is not clear.

> Global Atomic: The company is pushing ahead with the DASA project near Arlit. On May 7, the new Nigerien Minister of Mines visited the project.
"*It was an honor to host the Minister of Mines and other dignitaries at our Dasa operation. The Minister expressed his continued support for the project and confirmed that the government recognizes the strategic value of Dasa and the short-term economic benefits in terms of local jobs, taxes and royalties*."
(www.axinocapital.de/news/global-atomic/regierungsdelegation-besucht-dasa-projekt)
It remains to be seen how serious the threats to revoke license(s) are. Africa Intelligence' says:
"*Despite issuing a series of ultimatums to the uranium mining companies, the Nigerien authorities are struggling to find real alternatives.*"[7] (i.e. real alternatives for income for the state of Niger).

> GoviEx: GoviEx's uranium project, the **Madouela project**, is doing less well; it is not as advanced as Global Atomic's DASA project. The new Nigerien government / junta set a deadline of July 3, 2024 for the company to start mining uranium otherwise the mining license would be withdrawn (and awarded to another company). This deadline is unlikely to be met given the current status of the project.
(see: https://goviex.com/site/assets/files/4823/2z_madaouela_license_final_190424.pdf)

The new junta/government in Niger is indeed dependent on generating revenues, and those from uranium mining cannot be replaced overnight by other revenues, even if revenues from uranium mining only account for around 6% of GDP.

> Azelik uranium mine of the Chinese CNUC

Uranium was first shipped to China from Azelik, which is majority-owned by Chinese companies, in 2012. In 2015, operations were (allegedly) suspended due to excessive costs (including interest); Tuareg women had also protested against the project as it threatened their salt production and thus their livelihood.

Now the mine is to be restarted, as reported by French broadcaster TV5, among others (https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/niger-une-societe-chinoise-va-reprendre-lextraction-duranium-apres-dix-ans-dinterruption).

What are we doing?

Where possible, we support Aghir'in Man, the NGO critically monitoring the rehabilitation of the abandoned mine of ORANO subsidiary COMINAK in Arlit, and organize some financial support. Qualified technical support is difficult to get in the region.

Note: In case ORANO - like the French and US military - were to be expelled from Niger, the rehabilitation of the COMINAK mine would be in question and the jobs – which are few in comparison to the time of mining – would be lost.

[7] "Junta calls bluff of foreign uranium miners", www.africaintelligence.com/west-africa/2024/05/09/junta-calls-bluff-of-foreign-uranium-miners,110224449-eve

5.5 Mauritania

The company **Aura Energy Ltd**. has developed the Tiris uranium project in northern Mauritania, close to the border with Morocco and Western Sahara, and continues to (successfully) attract new investors. However, no major progress is reported on the ground in regard to the project.

However, the company already received approval for the project.

The project is located in the middle of a desert region. The deposit is very close to the surface and can therefore - according to company information - be mined cost-effectively using excavators and shovel loaders. Nearby, the company has discovered a large underground water deposit that would allow the uranium ore to be processed on site.

Whether it makes sense to waste rare water in the Sahara for uranium mining remains to be seen.

There are no known critical voices from Mauritania.
(Details: https://wise-uranium.org/upafr.html#MR)

5.6 Mali: Mining project in Falea

In 2011, plans to mine uranium in the Falea region led to cooperation with the local Malian NGO FALEA21 and ASFA; together, we had organized a major international conference against uranium mining (which was followed by conferences in Tanzania and South Africa later on).

The project – after initial exploration drillings – has been stalled ever since; it has been sold twice: the first owner, Rockgate, initially sold it to Denison Mines, who later sold it to GoviEx (the company which is currently planning to start a uranium mine in Niger → 5.4 Niger).

Due to the ongoing uncertain political situation in Mali, the current owner of the Falea project also left the country for now. Civil society organizations are still very active and are monitoring the situation closely.

Unfortunately – as we also learned – a nearby river, the Faleme, near the border with Senegal, draining into the Atlantic ocean, is so polluted by gold mining that its water can no longer be used to irrigate the fields.

Note:
The English version of the newsletter contains more links to (English) websites than the German version.

Impressum
uranium-network.org
uranium-network.org is a project by MENSCHENRECHTE (Human Rights) 3000 e.V.
P.O. Box, 79018 Freiburg / Germany
Contact: mail@uranium-network.org