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April 16, 2012

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu,

On Friday, April 6th, while traveling in Japan, I was able to visit the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station with the assistance of Japan's Ambassador to the United States. I am enclosing a copy of my letter to him concerning this visit and my concern for the Japanese people who have endured the triple tragedy of an earthquake, a tsunami and multiple nuclear power plant failures. The letter also expresses my concern about the long-term safety of the site and the large inventory of radioactive materials and spent fuel literally at the waters' edge. I request that you provide me with a description of the assistance your agency is currently providing to respond to this crisis and identify what additional capabilities and support might be provided to assist the Japanese in their response.

As I described in my letter to Ambassador Fujisaki, the scope of damage to the plants and to the surrounding area was far beyond what I expected and the scope of the challenges to the utility owner, the government of Japan, and to the people of the region are daunting. After stabilization of the reactors themselves and control of contaminated water used to cool the reactors and spent fuel pools, efforts to address safe storage of radioactive materials and spent fuel seems paramount. The buildings that house four of the plant's reactors are only a short distance from the ocean, and only about thirty feet above sea level. These buildings – all of which appeared to be badly damaged – still contain many spent fuel rods. While it will likely take a number of years to fully retrieve damaged fuel from the reactors themselves, retrieval of spent fuel stored in the existing on-site spent fuel pools to safer storage either in dry casks or at the new centralized storage facility at Mutsu or a combination of these should be a priority given the possibility of further earthquakes over the several decades of response activities now proposed by the plant owner -- Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). Loss of containment in any of these pools, especially the pool at Unit 4 which has the highest inventory of the hottest fuel, could result in an even greater release of radiation than the initial accident.

TEPCO's December 21, 2011 remediation roadmap proposes to take up to ten years to complete spent fuel removal from all of the pools on the site. Given the

compromised nature of these structures due to the events of March 11th, this schedule carries extraordinary and continuing risk if further severe seismic events were to occur. The true earthquake risk for the site was seriously underestimated and remains unresolved.

I believe that it is imperative that the United States, along with other nations that have expertise in nuclear energy technology that can be applied to the myriad of safety and environmental challenges at the Fukushima Daiichi plant and surrounding area, make that expertise available to TEPCO and the Japanese government. Please describe what types of technical assistance your agency is currently providing to respond to this crisis and identify what additional capabilities and support might be provided to assist TEPCO and the Japanese regulatory agencies overseeing TEPCO's response especially with regard to the safe and timely retrieval, transfer and storage of spent nuclear fuel and other radioactive materials on the site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Wyden". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State

The Honorable Gregory Jaczko
Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission