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## SHIPMENT ALERT

### Second International Marine Transportation of Japanese Plutonium Fuel

12 January 2001 CNIC

According to Greenpeace , two armed British cargo ships are expected to leave England as early as mid-next week to transport 28 assemblies of mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) fuel to be used at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa 3 in Niigata Prefecture. Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), the operator of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa 3, also posted in its website on 11 January 2001 that it will announce the date of departure, names of the ships, port of departure, numbers of fuel assemblies and transport casks two days prior to the departure of the ships. However, they define "departure" as "the timing when the two ships leave the territorial waters of France and England and begin their navigation after meeting up and becoming a fleet." TEPCO also states that it will announce the route and the approximate arrival date in Japan one day after the "departure" of the ships. The two armed ships will escort each other. This will be the second shipment of MOX fuel.

The first shipment of MOX fuel took place in the summer of 1999 amidst strong protest from en-route countries. The two armed British ships "Pacific Pintail" and "Pacific Teal" carried 8 assemblies of MOX fuel for Takahama 4 and 32 assemblies for Fukushima I-3 and sailed around South Africa and through the

South Pacific. However, the fuel for Takahama was later rejected by the Japanese utility after the revelation in September 1999 of quality control data falsification by the manufacturer, British Nuclear Fuel plc (BNFL). This scandal resulted in a postponement of all MOX fuel utilization plans in Japan. In addition, the Japanese and British governments agreed in February 2000 to have the fuel for Takahama 4 shipped back to England.

Meanwhile, there have been efforts in Kariwa village to hold a referendum on the use of MOX fuel at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa 3. A proposal for the referendum was approved in the Kariwa Village Assembly by 9 to 8 in late December last year, but failed in a reexamination of it last week. The reexamination of the proposal was ordered by the Mayor. However, pro-referendum legislators and residents have now begun to collect signatures to realize the referendum by direct claim method. They are aiming to have the referendum held at the latest by early June.

On the other hand, the British cargo ship "Pacific Swan" which left Europe at the end of last year carrying 192 Japanese vitrified high-level radioactive waste has been met with great resistance in South America where it is sailing at the moment. On 10 January 2001, citing the possibility of "irreversible" damage to the public health and the environment, the Federal Court of Appeal in Buenos Aires ruled that the government must take steps to prohibit the Pacific Swan from transiting Argentine's 200 mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) waters.

Though no information is available on the route of this second shipment of MOX, past shipments of nuclear waste and fuel have gone through the following three routes: Caribbean and Panama, South Africa and the South Pacific, and around South America/Cape Horn.

We encourage all who are concerned or have questions about this shipment to contact the Japanese government, utilities, Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd, and others involved in this matter.

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