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Introductory Statement for the roundtable session
"Women and nuclear issue"
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WOMEN AND ENERGY IN SWEDEN

I'm a health physicist at Vattenfall, the Swedish State Power Board. Half of all the electricity Sweden needs for lighting, power and heating comes from Vattenfall. It is our task, as an energy utility, to supply that energy whenever it suits the customer and wherever the customer is - at home, at work or out and about. We also distribute natural gas and district heating.

Vattenfall is a public enterprise that produces, distributes and sells energy. It has roughly 10.000 employees in various parts of Sweden and a turnover of 70.000 million kWh of electricity and 15.000 million Swedish kronor, (that is more than 2 billion dollars).

I am a specialist in the radiation protection field and I am working at the head office in Stockholm. My main topics are the pathways to humans of the releases of radioactive substances and the related radiation risks and health effects. Most of my time since the Chernobyl accident I have been working with information and education in my group of subjects.

But now I would like to present a new project "Women and Energy" that has been started at Vattenfall in 1987.

Sweden is currently facing a new situation in energy politics. Nuclear power is to be phased out and replaced by new energy sources and by more effective use of electricity. This will be a great change for the whole society as nuclear power today is giving us half of our electricity. And Sweden is a high-consumption-country, in fact looking at the toplist of electricity consumption per caput in the world, you will find Sweden on the fourth place.

In general, women know less than men about the relation between energy, technology, environment and economy. This knowledge is required if women are to influence the choice of future energy supplies in Sweden. It is with this background the project "Women and Energy" has been started. Important decisions are to be made within the fairly immediate future with major consequences for Sweden's coming development. These decisions have until now often been made by men, but now it is the hope of Vattenfall that women will be able to influence these decisions. So that all of us may share responsibility for the path that has been chosen.

You may wonder why I'm working in this project? I'm clearly in favour of nuclear power compared with other available energy sources of today and the project is related to the phase out of nuclear energy. The answer is very easy:

The project is working with the purpose to spread knowledge of different energy sources and their effect on our environment and our economy. When fact is brought out it will favour the nuclear energy choice. Increasing the knowledge of the energy- environment-economy-field will give desinformation less chance to frighten.

How come the project want me to give speeches on radiation and health? That is also easy to answer: Even though we have a decision to phase out all Swedish nuclear power plants, this will not be finished until 2010. We are going to live with nuclear power in Sweden for 20 more years. And we know that women are interested in the effect on health and environment of all energy sources.

What has been done within the project during the first year? "Women and Energy" has organized seminars for selected categories of professional women, such as politicians, journalists, technicians and teachers. The idea is that these women will convey this information further within their respective organizations.

Information material has also been produced during the year, including a video, an informative magazine and brochures. A national opinion poll has also been carried out into how women regard energy.

This public opinion poll showed that: - only one out of four women knows what year the Swedish nuclear plants are to be phased out.

- One women out of two believes that the environment will be better if nuclear power is phased out
- One out of two women thinks that they don't get enough information about what is happening in the area of energy
- Women prefer to get their information through news and documentary programmes on the television.

During the coming years the project "Women and Energy" will build up regional contacts and network. The project will also establish contacts with other organisations, societies and study associations.

- Arrange seminars and study visits
- Public opinion poll on differences between the knowledge of energy that women and men have.

Women will need a forum to turn to with their questions. And if the answer is given by a woman there is a greater chance it will be understood, accepted and believed.

Vattenfall also needs more information about what women think about energy and turn this knowledge into part of its decision-making process.

Throughout all the industrial world, energy systems and their consequences for environment and economy, have a dominant impact on the society. Due to this it is important that people have sufficient knowledge, as a basis for their opinion.

The sensitive woman (mother) can be a strong force in the society. But she can also be a victim for desinformation that is emotional and frightening. Our project "Women and Energy" is one step, on a long road, to overcome this situation in Sweden.

Most important is the performance of the nuclear industry supported by competent people to people information.

Behave and educate!