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Scientists And Environmentalists Urge South Korea To Reconsider Nuclear Phaseout

7 Jul 2017 : Scientists and conservationists have written an open letter to South Korean president Moon Jae-in urging him to consider the climate and environmental impacts of a nuclear energy phaseout in South Korea. The letter said there is a strong consensus among climate policy experts that an expansion of nuclear energy will be required to "significantly reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality". It said the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Energy Agency, and dozens of climate scientists and energy experts have affirmed the importance of nuclear energy to climate mitigation. The letter said that over the last 20 years, South Korea has earned a global reputation for its ability to build well-tested and cost-effective nuclear plants. South Korea is the only nation where the cost of nuclear plant construction has declined over time. And in United Arab Emirates, South Korean company Kepco has proven it can build cost-effective nuclear power plants abroad just as it can at home. "South Korea's nuclear industry is especially important given the financial failures of French nuclear giant Areva and Japanese-owned and US-based Westinghouse," the letter said. "If South Korea withdraws from nuclear then only Russia and China would be in the global competition for new nuclear construction." The scientists and conservationists warned that solar and wind are not alternatives to nuclear. "In 2016, solar and wind provided 1% and 0.35% of South Korea's electricity, respectively. For South Korea to replace all of its nuclear plants with solar, it would need to build 4,400 solar farms the size of South Korea's largest solar farm, SinAn, which would cover an area five times larger than Seoul. To do the same with wind would cover an area 14.5 times larger than Seoul." Mr Moon campaigned in the May 2017 elections on a programme of cutting South Korea's reliance on coal and nuclear in its energy mix. In May 2017, Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power (KHNP) suspended the design process for the planned two-unit expansion of the Shin-Hanul nuclear power station because of uncertainty around the new government's energy policy. South Korea has 25 reactor units in commercial operation. In 2016, they generated 30% of the country's electricity, according to the International Atomic Energy

Agency. The letter is online : <https://bit.ly/2sNXWm5>



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