

## **BUILT TO LAST: CONDITIONALITY AND WHAT IT CAN DO FOR THE DISPOSITION OF RUSSIAN WEAPON-GRADE PLUTONIUM**

Complicated beyond belief, disposition will have to be made simple when politicians and publics are asked to approve and finance international arrangements to "dispose" of a first batch of excess Russian weapon-grade plutonium. Anything final is however a ways off yet. There's still plenty to do. This study is therefore written for negotiators and planners, and assumes familiarity with the subject. The focus is on conditionality. By this is meant performance requirements which donors in the first instance, and also the Russian Federation, might want a final agreement to meet. Nuclear safety, environmental protection, and irreversibility are key areas of donor concern. Thus far they have been raised only in general terms by participants in the intergovernmental talks on disposition.

Two main purposes drive this study. They are interrelated. The first is to persuade the reader of the need for a conversation about conditionality. The implication, to be considered shortly, is that not all will be well disposed to the idea. The view here is that a proactive conditionality can do a power of good for disposition by helping the parties to anticipate and ward off danger to the programme and to the people of Russia.

This study also hopes to provide an independent audit of the multilateral venture that's taking shape for the disposition of excess Russian weapon-grade plutonium (WG Pu). My plain question is whether in threading their way through the trees, the negotiators may be in danger of losing sight of the forest. By forest I mean the sustainability of disposition over a duration that could include seven and maybe even more U.S. administrations, the ever-present potential for political surprise in the Russian Federation, the possibility of nuclear accident, the diversion of funds to unauthorized purposes, and who knows what else. Obviously there's no way of being fully assured about what will happen to such a project, indeed to any project, once the deal is done. Nevertheless, we stand to gain from a vigorous effort to look beyond what might soon be agreed, to how it might perform over the long haul.

This report therefore begins with a discussion of conditionality as such. The question is whether it offers a means of enhancing the long-term sustainability of disposition. Then we go to the evolving U.S. approach to disposition, and to the utility of conditionality as a means of evaluating the variants being put forward for discussion by Washington. The prime concern at this point is to anticipate and protect disposition against foreseeable adversity. Next comes the thorny question of what room Russian realities might allow for our troika of conditionalities. The emphasis changes to how best to protect Russians and their environment against disposition. The options are then reduced to their essentials, and priorities for a long-term strategy of disposition are considered in conclusion.

Throughout, the discussion relies heavily on interviews with experienced and thoughtful individuals who were generous with their insights and information. Those interviewed are not quoted or cited in the text, but they are listed in an appendix. It should also be said that not a lot of time was spent in reading. I chose, for example, not to conduct research into Russian legislation on environmental impact assessment as it relates to the introduction of new-generation reactors at sites already licensed for nuclear use. The governing intent has been to bring the big picture into focus, to see what can be accomplished with the notion of conditionality, and to avoid