

Press Release of 30 October 2009

Energy group Vattenfall violates OECD guidelines

Greenpeace files complaint with Germany's Ministry of Economics and Technology

Berlin, 30 October 2009. Today Greenpeace filed a complaint with Germany's Ministry of Economics and Technology against the power company Vattenfall. The point at issue is the Hamburg-Moorburg coal-fired power plant. Vattenfall has massively violated the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). To date, these guidelines are the only comprehensive code of conduct for multinational companies, providing recommendations for responsible business conduct. Greenpeace has submitted a legal opinion proving that Vattenfall violates the recommendations, in particular those concerning national environmental policies and consumer protection. The Swedish group refuses to comply with German environmental standards and it applies double standards to the generation of electricity in Sweden and abroad. Should the complaint be accepted, the Ministry of Economics and Technology, headed by Rainer Bruederle, (FDP), could act as mediator.

"Greenpeace expects the new economics minister to set limits to Vattenfall's environmentally harmful business practices." says Greenpeace climate expert Karsten Smid. "Vattenfall should not be allowed to negotiate a privileged position for itself regarding Moorburg and thereby sideline German environmental law."

Vattenfall, a Swedish state-owned business, acknowledges the OECD guidelines, but in constructing the Moorburg power plant, the company has violated these guidelines in decisive points. For instance, Vattenfall is attempting to undermine German environmental law by filing a complaint with the World Bank arbitration tribunal. Vattenfall is demanding EUR 1.4 billion in compensation from the German government because of the environmental standards imposed on Moorburg. Furthermore, the company applies double standards. While in Sweden Vattenfall is particularly committed to renewable energy sources, in Germany the company concentrates on generating coal energy, which is environmentally harmful.

Vattenfall misleads the public on environmental impact

In its public relations campaign, "Climate Manifesto", Vattenfall claims that it is committed to climate protection issues. But in Germany, it is the energy company that generates the highest levels of CO₂ emissions per kilowatt/hour. The Moorburg coal-fired power plant now under construction will use up nearly 10 percent of the German energy industry's CO₂ budget in its projected 40 years of operation, while generating only a scant two percent of the total amount of energy produced. Greenpeace calculates that Moorburg emissions will exceed levels necessary for sustainable development by more than five times. According to Smid, "Vattenfall plays a significant role in keeping Germany from achieving its climate goals."

The OECD guidelines are one of the few formal tools available to non-governmental organizations such as Greenpeace, allowing them to take action against company misconduct. By filing this complaint, Greenpeace seeks to achieve the implementation of the guidelines for climate and environmental protection.

Notes to editors: Should you have any questions, please call Karsten Smid at +49 171 8780 821 or Press Officer Simone Miller at +49 171 8706 647. The complaint (26 pages) is posted online at www.greenpeace.de.

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