

# Current Status of KEDO Project and its Significance in Northeast Asia

by

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The KEDO project was implemented to resolve the DPRK's nuclear problem peacefully through the work and efforts of the international community.

The Agreed Framework between the United States and DPRK was signed in Geneva in 1994 in response to international concerns about the DPRK's threats to withdrawal from the Non-proliferation Treaty and worries about their nuclear weapons development program.

KEPCO, officially designated as the prime contractor of the project on a turnkey basis by KEDO on March, 1996, is constructing two Light Water Reactor units, each with a generating capacity of 1,000 MW. The plant is modeled on the ROK's Korean Standard Nuclear Power Plant (KSNP).

By adopting KEPCO as a prime contractor and KSNP as the reactor model at the KEDO project, which is a biggest joint project ever between the ROK and DPRK after a half-century of national division, we are very pleased at the international recognition of KSNP's and KEPCO's experience and expertise in the nuclear power industry.

A historical ground breaking ceremony was held to commemorate an important milestone in the construction of the Light-Water Reactor at the Kumho district of the DPRK on August, 1997.

After receiving the Construction Permit from the DPRK's nuclear regulatory authority in September 2001, excavation of the foundations for the reactor's power block buildings began, and its concrete pouring commenced full scale from August 2002.

Up to now, much of the work has focused on establishing the infrastructure necessary to support the formidable LWR construction efforts at the KEDO project site. The infrastructure work includes housing for workers and visitors, construction offices, medical facilities, dining and recreational facilities, banking offices, and other necessary structures such as access roads and bridges. In addition, KEPCO has established independent supplies of reliable electricity, drinkable water and communications.

As of the end of December 2003, the overall project progress was 34.5%. The progress of each division are 21.6% for construction, 69.5% for NSSS equipment, 47.5% for T/G equipment and 20.6% for the BOP.

Meanwhile, during the peak of the construction, about 1,500 people from the ROK, including 770 KEPCO and Integrated Construction Group personnel and medical staff joined together with 100 DPRK workers and 640 Uzbekistan workers on the site.

In addition to the established commercial air and sea routes into the DPRK, the ROK and the DPRK agreed to open a direct air route between Sondok Airport in the DPRK and Yangyang Airport in the ROK on July 20, 2002. This is the first non-commercial air route between the ROK and DPRK since the Korean war, and it is being used on a contingency basis, including for emergency medical evacuations.

In December 2001, as a part of training program for the operation and maintenance of the Light Water Reactors, KEPCO invited and gave 19 DPRK high level officials a 2-week course at the Korea Nuclear Training Facility and gave them a tour of the Ulchin nuclear power plants and other nuclear related facilities in the ROK. From June to October 2002, KEPCO gave a training course to 129 persons, the first group out of a total of 529 DPRK staff who will eventually be trained by KEPCO, at the newly constructed Kumho Nuclear Training Center adjacent to the project site. In addition, 25 members of the DPRK's nuclear regulatory authority attended

a 3-week orientation program at the Korea Institute of Nuclear Safety's training facility in Taejon, ROK, in July 2002.

However, as the conditions necessary for continuing the KEDO project were not being met by the DPRK, the Executive Board of the KEDO, consisting of the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the European Union decided to suspend the KEDO Project for a period of one year, beginning last December 1, 2003.

Because the suspension was based on the assumption that the project may restart at some time in the future, KEPCO has the responsibility to preserve and maintain the site and equipment from deterioration, loss and damage during the suspension period.

Therefore, KEPCO will establish and carry out a complete preservation and maintenance program which covers all aspects of the project including engineering, procurement, manufacturing and construction during the suspension period. The program will be implemented and documented in such a way that regulatory authorities can make an unambiguous determination that, when restarted, the Project does meet all the necessary conditions.

The ultimate goal of the KEDO project is to prevent the development of DPRK's nuclear weapon program. If the DPRK nuclear problem is resolved satisfactorily so that KEDO project can continue as originally scheduled,

we are sure that the KEDO project will contribute to making the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia safer, but also in solidifying reunification footing on the Korean Peninsula by demolishing the wall of distrust through the frequent exchange of manpower, material and joint work between the ROK and DPRK during the construction period.

Although the KEDO project has been suspended temporarily, KEPCO will do its best in close cooperation with KEDO and the Korean Government to restart the KEDO project by resolving DPRK's nuclear problem as soon as possible.

Because of the specific South-North history and the current international climate, unpredictable variables will undoubtedly continue to present themselves. In the long run, the future of the KEDO project depends upon how effectively we can all cooperate to cope with these problems. In this way, our continuing attention and support are crucially needed.