

Greenwire

7. INTERNATIONAL: Germany, Switzerland suspend nuclear plans (03/14/2011)

Countries are facing pressure for their own nuclear energy industries following fears of a nuclear meltdown in Japan.

In response to the accidents in nuclear power plants that followed Friday's earthquake and tsunami in Japan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced today a temporary halt to the government's plan to lengthen the lives of 17 nuclear plants. German officials also announced over the weekend that the government would begin a safety review of the country's nuclear reactors.

Nuclear reactors made up 23 percent of Germany's power production in 2009, the second largest behind lignite-fired power plants. Also over the weekend, Environment Minister Norbert Roettgen said that the German government would look to expand other greener sources of power, such as wind and solar (Jan Hromadko, [Wall Street Journal](#), March 14).

On the other hand, China won't back down from nuclear, though there are lessons to be learned from the accidents at Japanese plants, Chinese Vice Minister for Environment Zhang Lijun said.

China is currently building almost 30 new reactors amid efforts to reduce the country's dependence on coal-fired power plants. China receives about 10.8 gigawatts of nuclear power and hopes to start building nuclear plants with a capacity of 40 gigawatts by 2015 (V. Phani Kumar, [MarketWatch](#), March 14).

The Swiss government, meanwhile, has suspended plans to replace and build new nuclear plants.

The suspension affects three requests for "blanket authorization for nuclear replacement until safety standards have been carefully reviewed and if necessary adapted," according to Doris Leuthard, head of the Swiss federal energy department.

Leuthard said "safety has absolute priority" and that she has told the government to review the two hydrogen explosions at Japanese plants ([AP/San Francisco Chronicle](#), March 14). -- AP

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