

Uranium Mines: Areva, along with NGOs, creates an observatory to monitor health

PARIS - The French nuclear group AREVA has announced Friday the creation of an "observation" program, in cooperation with the NGOs Sherpa and Médecins du Monde ("Doctors of the World"), a program to observe the health (of people) in the surroundings of the mining sites where they exploit uranium, especially in Niger and Gabon.

Composed of 12 experts, half of them named by French AREVA, half of them named by the NGOs, this "pluralistic observation group" (GPOS) will observe and study the "potential impact" of uranium extraction activities of AREVA on the health of workers on the health of the population living in the vicinity of the mines.

For each sites where uranium is exploited, there will be a "local observation" of the health situation, together with the local administration and medical committees in which will be represented the NGOs, the local authorities and the French group (Areva).

"We are proud of this agreement which is not public; it regulates the past and organizes cautionary measures for the future", said the lawyer William Bourdon, president of SHERPA, an international NGO of jurists based in Paris, at the signing of the agreement.

Between 2003 and 2007, the NGO SHERPA has conducted inquiries and research on location in Niger and Gabon. In its conclusions, it speaks of "very serious suspicions" of a link of certain diseases and the radiation resulting from the uranium extraction and it denounced the "culture of secrecy" of AREVA.

The NGO CRIIRad (Independent Commission on Research and Information on Radiation) which had participated in the research activities has voiced "numerous reservations" on the common initiative between AREVA and SHERPA (...)

"This agreement will raise some discussions, we assume", responded M. Bourdon, claiming that they are defending the interest of the people on location without "taking sides ideologically, nor being naive".

"The agenda of certain NGOs, and that seems a bit paradox, does not reflect the agenda of the victims", he regretted.

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