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Press Release

EU COURT RULING ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY

Today's European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling on Sellafield, which found that Ireland broke European Union law by taking a case to a United Nations tribunal in an effort to get Britain to close the plant, has been strongly criticised by the People's Movement, an Irish organization campaigning for democracy within the EU and against any further erosion of Irish sovereignty.

A spokesperson for the organization, former MEP Patricia McKenna, said "this decision is a disgraceful but typical example of how the EU protects the interests of industry above the interests of public health and the environment".

Ms McKenna said "it is outrageous that, not only has our own government been denied the right to take action in the interests of its people, but with costs awarded against Ireland it means that the Irish taxpayer will have to foot the bill not only for this valid attempt to protect our waters from nuclear pollution but for the nuclear industry's case as well".

Reacting to the decision, minister for the environment Dick Roche, said that the ruling will be "very helpful" and that it "brings clarification, within the context of the European Union, as to how, and where, you should pursue issues relating to nuclear power". However, Ms McKenna said "the Minister's casual attitude to this ruling, which denies our democratically elected government the right to take action to protect our health and environment and even our fisheries, is staggering. How he can sit back and accept a development that clearly restricts Ireland's rights as an independent sovereign state to go to the United Nations and invoke provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to compel the British government to cooperate on the issue of the Sellafield MOX plant?"

"Minister Roche should be strongly condemning this blatant attack on his own government's ability to challenge the British nuclear industry. His reluctance to do so would indicate that he wants to avoid the thorny issue of the proposed EU constitution which reaffirms Ireland's commitment to the pro-nuclear Euratom treaty. The Government is in an untenable position as its support for the EU Constitution is incompatible with its attempts to challenge the British nuclear industry" concluded McKenna.

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