

Media Release

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Green Cross Educational Trip to Japan from 1 to 8 October 2014 offering insight into areas of radioactive contamination in Japan and how to cope with it

In early October, Green Cross Switzerland will accompany an educational trip to Japan and explain the interventions and actions taken under its Social and Medical Care programme in the contaminated areas of Fukushima. The group will include members of the Parliament and government representatives from Brazil, Great Britain, Canada, and Switzerland who will take a first-hand look at the impact left by the Fukushima nuclear disaster on the country, the people and on energy policies. One of the stops on the itinerary is the contaminated city of Tomioka, which is divided into three different restricted zones. The group will meet with mothers who have initiated and established family clubs in the Fukushima Prefecture with the assistance of Green Cross.

Since the nuclear accident in Fukushima eight percent of the land in Japan has been contaminated by radiation. 160,000 people were evacuated and housed in emergency shelters. The Social and Medical Care project is a self-help programme for people living in contaminated areas and was initially developed in Japan in the spring of 2011. Drawing from the experience and the aid provided in the Chernobyl region, Green Cross Switzerland has been focusing on communicating information about dealing with exposure to radiation and contaminated food products by setting up family clubs and arranging summer camps for children and adolescents.

Switzerland is spending CHF 1 billion a year on phasing out nuclear energy

During the "Nuclear Technology Dialogue" in Tokyo, Nathalie Gysi, Executive Director of Green Cross Switzerland, talks about Switzerland's energy strategy covering the period up to 2050 and the implementation of the 2011 parliamentary resolution to gradually phase out nuclear energy. Switzerland is expecting the costs of the new energy policy scenario to reach approximately CHF 40 billion. Investments to achieve optimal energy efficiency are projected at around CHF 70 billion. Additionally, the development of new production capacities for renewable energies will require about CHF 10 billion. On the other hand, cost savings of up to CHF 50 billion are expected from improved energy management and the resulting lower energy consumption. The cost to provide the necessary new power supply systems for decentralized energy generation is estimated at about CHF 10 billion. Switzerland's financial burden for phasing out nuclear energy amounts to CHF 1 billion per year until 2050. The new energy mix is anticipated to reduce the use of fossil fuels from 70 percent today to less than 40 percent. At the same time, carbon dioxide emissions will decrease from currently 5 tons to 2 tons per person by 2050.

The Social and Medical Care programme in Japan is a joint endeavour between Green Cross Switzerland and Green Cross Japan. Obtaining more information about how to deal with radioactive contamination of land, water, air, and food is a matter of great concern for the population of Fukushima. Families with children are particularly worried about the effects of radiation on the health of their children.

The goals of the Social and Medical Care programme of Green Cross in Japan are the following:

- prevent harm to the physical and mental health of children and their families living in areas of radioactive contamination in Fukushima, and

- provide information to raise awareness of proper precautions in areas of radioactive contamination to minimize the exposure of children to radiation.

Summer camps and family clubs

Children, adolescents and mothers from Koriyama City and Minamisoma in Fukushima Prefecture have been participating in summer camps and family clubs. In the wake of the nuclear disaster, emergency accommodations were set up in these two cities to house a large part of the people evacuated from the heavily contaminated areas of Futaba, Okuma and Tomioka.

Summer camps in an uncontaminated, healthful environment in Japan offer children and adolescents the opportunity to spend carefree time with other kids, playing sports and games and enjoying the outdoors. The camps also cultivate solidarity among the children and help them heal physically and mentally. Three summer camps for youngsters aged 12 to 19 have already been arranged since 2011. Another important aspect is the establishment of family clubs to share information and knowledge about how to deal with exposure to radiation and to stimulate contact between the victims to prevent families from falling into isolation.

The disarmament programme and the Social and Medical Care project of Green Cross Switzerland have been designed to cope with the consequences of industrial and military disasters and to foster the global phase-out of nuclear energy. The primary purpose of the programmes is to improve the quality of life of people impacted by chemical, radioactive and other kinds of contamination and to promote sustainable development in the spirit of cooperation instead of confrontation. The goals of the Zewo-certified environmental organisation are supported by the Green Cross parliamentary group consisting of 32 members of the Council of States and 104 members of the Swiss National Council, all working across party lines.

Green Cross Switzerland continues to provide urgently needed medical, social and technical assistance in areas where severe nuclear accidents have occurred previously (Chernobyl, Mayak, Fukushima, uranium mines in Central Asia). With its project experience and expertise in this field, the Green Cross environmental organisation is well equipped to offer politically viable technical solutions to dismantle shutdown nuclear plants and provide support and advice for the transport of nuclear materials and the storage of radioactive waste, while keeping people and the environment safe.

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