

Turkey is planning at least 8 and maybe even 40 new coal-fired power stations. The government encourages any kind of new power production, whether it is from coal, nuclear or renewables.

Turkey wants to *have it all*

| by Marc Guillet

‘Turkey is an international disgrace when it comes to increasing greenhouse gas emissions,’ says Greenpeace, which has made the country a top priority in its international ‘Quit Coal’ campaign.

According to Greenpeace, no fewer than 40 coal-fired power stations are currently being planned, built or proposed. ‘Turkey has even failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol,’ says anti-coal campaigner Hilal Atici in Istanbul.

Late this summer, four Greenpeace activists were arrested near Iskenderun after they occupied a loading platform to prevent a coal delivery to the Sugoza coal-fired power station. ‘The Sugoza coal power plant emits some 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) a year,’ says Atici. ‘That is three times as much as Iceland. This plant alone is the fourth largest single emitter of greenhouse gases in the world’.

Coal-fired power stations constitute 25 percent of Turkey’s energy mix, and the government has no intention of giving up coal as an electricity source. ‘Water and coal are the sources that Turkey can and must utilize with top priority,’ says Yusuf Yazar, Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources in Ankara. He says Turkey should not be ‘on top of the list of blame for environmental insensitivity.’ Instead, he asks, ‘what did western societies do to compensate for the severe damages they caused to environments for decades?’ He says this doesn’t mean that Turkish

authorities are indifferent to environmental issues. ‘Kyoto is about to be ratified by Turkey, not due to the pressures of some groups, but because of the respect for nature inherent in our culture.’

Electric energy consumption in Turkey is increasing dramatically – by 47 percent since 2000. The Turkish Electricity Transmission Company expects further growth of eight percent annually over the next 10 years.



Photo: AFP/Getty Images

Currently, 50 percent of the power generation is produced by natural gas-based power plants. This is the most expensive form of electricity production. That’s why the construction of these kind of plants ‘has been discouraged by the government,’ says Yazar.

The government instead encourages more coal-fired thermal power plants, hydroelectric power plants, and renewable sources such as wind and solar energy.

The Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry

of Energy and Natural Resources outlines his government’s plans: ‘We assume that we will have nuclear power plants of nearly 8,000 MW (installed capacity) and nearly 5,000 to 6,000 MW renewables (wind, geothermal and biomass – excluding hydroelectric) by the end of 2017. There are some licensed initiatives both for hydroelectric and coal-fired thermal power plants, most of which are expected to be completed in the same period (more than 10,000 MW installed capacity). We have been continuing to rehabilitate our existing coal power plants to increase efficiency.’

Yazar disputes Greenpeace’s figure of 40 new coal fired power plants, saying instead that Turkey will soon start building eight new ones. ‘Six coal reserve areas will be allocated by tender to the private sector where coal power plants can be constructed with a total capacity of 1,400 MW. And two big coal power plants will be tendered for contracts with a total capacity of 2,800 MW. For all these plants, new environmentally-friendly technologies are required.’

Greenpeace is not impressed. ‘Most of the new plants will use imported coal from Colombia, Russia and South Africa, so that does not help Turkey get more energy independent,’ says activist Hilal Atici. ‘And “clean technology” will not stop the emission of CO₂. Turkey should go for green options. It should make a priority of developing wind, solar and geothermal energy.’ ■