South Africa releases long awaited energy plan

The South African government has gazetted its new long-term energy plan, which includes new provisions for smaller nuclear plants. The 100-page 2019 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is the state’s official blueprint for future energy generation, including projected electricity demand, cost estimates, and the sources used to generate power. The IRP first came into effect in 2011 and called for the construction of 9600 MWe of new nuclear capacity over the period to 2030. A draft update to the IRP released for public comment in 2018 proposed nuclear capacity remaining at 1860 MWe – the capacity of the Koeberg nuclear power plant. Minister of Mineral Resources Gwede Mantashe told a media briefing that South Africa is not now planning large nuclear units, but smaller, modular nuclear plants.

A Cabinet on 17 October indicated that the IRP would include nine interventions to respond to energy needs in the next decade. These interventions included:

- The government will begin preparations for a nuclear build program to the extent of 2,500 MWe “at a pace and scale that the country can afford because it is a no-regret option in the long term”.
- The Koeberg NPP will be extended by another 20 years. The Koeberg plant was supposed to reach its end of life by 2024.
- The government will immediately start to buy power from private suppliers.

The plan also refers to the changing role of state power company Eskom, as its generation, transmission and distribution functions will be separated.