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UN Experts: Socio-economic recovery of Chernobyl-affected areas requires regular governmental interventions

The countermeasures and supportive economic development policy should be applied regularly



April 19, 2011 – Kyiv – During the workshop "Life in the Chernobyl-affected Areas: Outlook into the Future" organised by the UN International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) experts of four UN agencies: the IAEA, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation have informed about the current state of the Chernobyl-affected areas in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

"The experience of population in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in overcoming the Chernobyl accident is extremely valuable to the international community. Even today in Japan people are facing similar risks and it is important that the knowledge built is used to prevent and mitigate possible negative outcomes of nuclear risks worldwide. The United Nations strategy is to support the Governments in the affected countries in order to ensure that by 2016 the area manages to overcome the Chernobyl stigma that communities take an active role in local development and start to take control of their lives and that normalcy returns to the Chernobyl-affected territories", – stated Antonius Broek, UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus.

The main targets of the UN on Chernobyl include the return to normalcy and sustainable development of affected areas and are defined by the UN Resolution and the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl. The key challenges on the way of return to normalcy for communities are the socio-economic consequences and provision of scientifically sound information on safe living and healthy lifestyle.

Presentations of experts from four UN Agencies have shown that Governments of the three most affected countries have put significant efforts into overcoming the legacy of Chernobyl, nevertheless more work need to be done.

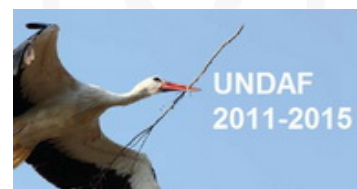
"Young people leave the region, investment is scarce and fear of radiation makes local produce difficult to market", – says Oksana Leschenko, UN coordinator on Chernobyl. "There is need for more international support to ensure socio-economic development of the area."

During the seminar, experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Health Organization have identified a number of measures that

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should be regularly applied to overcome negative consequences of Chernobyl. The most important of them are:

- Regular dosimetric control, so called “dosimetric passportisation” of affected areas which allows to identify levels of contamination in soils, food products and internal irradiation of population should be conducted annually with the involvement of international experts;
- Countermeasures e.g. liming or applying fertilisers should be ensured in all areas where there is a risk of growing food-products with higher levels of radiation;
- Improvement of basic health care, promotion of regular health screening and healthy lifestyle as well as better child care;
- Regular review of the regulation policy of affected areas, the “zoning” status of settlements and subsidies for the population based on the data of dosimetric control;
- Information campaigns on safe living at the affected areas and healthy lifestyle, awareness about actual levels of contamination.
- Policy supporting investments and improvement of business climate.

In the seminar representatives of district and regional authorities, communities, ministries of emergency in three countries: Belarus, Russia and Ukraine participated.

The seminar was organised by the UN project International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) launched in April 2009, aims to provide scientifically sound information for Chernobyl-affected communities. The initiative translates the latest scientific findings on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident into sound practical advice for residents of the affected territories. This project is the result of a joint effort of IAEA, UNDP, UNICEF and WHO in Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

Activities conducted under the ICRIN project include publication of hands-on information materials; training for a range of influential local figures, including teachers, medical professionals, community leaders, and the media outlets; and the creation of Internet centres in rural areas to provide local communities with tools to find the information they need.

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Additional information: UN & Chernobyl

In 1990 the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 45/190, which called for “international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant”. Since 1986, the United Nations organisations and major Non-Government Organisations and Foundations have launched more than 230 different research and assistance projects in the fields of health, nuclear safety, including the construction of the Shelter, socio-psychological rehabilitation, economic rehabilitation, environment and production of clean foods and information.

Since 2006, United Nations agencies have been engaged in the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006–2016). In implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/9, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prepared a United Nations action plan on Chernobyl to 2016 as a practical framework for cooperation during the Decade. It was approved by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl in November 2008.

The action plan defines a common vision and priority actions for the United Nations agencies aimed at overcoming the negative legacy of Chernobyl. It builds on agency mandates and competencies as well as on strong partnership and cooperation with Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Significant progress has been achieved by the United Nations organisations and bodies. Drawing on the reassuring findings of Chernobyl Forum, the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network project, initiated in April 2009, has been working on providing information to local populations in accessible, nontechnical language. Community-level development efforts in Chernobyl-affected areas show promising improvements in the quality of life of the local citizens. At the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, progress is reported on the construction of the new safe confinement (or new shelter) and the development of infrastructure for the safe long-term management of

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