

Chernobyl recovery is possible, says UN Assistant Secretary-General



The legacy of Chernobyl is very much with us today, even after two decades, but the future of Chernobyl-affected areas is far from bleak, underscored UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director Kalman Mizsei.

Mr Mizsei, addressing a high-level international conference in Kyiv devoted to the 20th anniversary of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, called on the world to remember the suffering caused by the accident and expressed confidence in the potential for the region's social and economic recovery.

The UN shifted its strategy on Chernobyl from emergency relief to long-term recovery and development in 2002. In line with this shift, UNDP assumed responsibility for UN-wide coordination of Chernobyl issues in 2004.

UNDP sees a lack of social and economic opportunities - the result both of resettlements and economic restrictions imposed after Chernobyl, and of dislocations following the disintegration of the Soviet Union - as the biggest challenge facing Chernobyl-affected communities in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

"The new UN development approach is already yielding practical results, in three important areas: first, the provision of factual and credible information; second, community social and economic recovery; and third, policy advice," said Mr. Mizsei.

With UNDP assistance in Ukraine, 207 community organizations have so far been founded in 139 villages, with almost 20,000 members. These organizations address priority community needs and also gain a new sense of self-reliance by implementing locally-designed projects. Typical examples include school renovation projects and the creation of new health clinics and youth centers. The youth centers are especially important in the small villages where there is often no place for the young to gain computer skills, learn about healthy lifestyles, or participate in social activities.

"More significant than these numbers, however, is the impact on community attitudes, transforming a deep-seated helplessness into a spirit of activism," Mr. Mizsei added.

Addressing policy issues, he highlighted the need to make government spending on Chernobyl more efficient and also to adjust broader economic and social policies in ways that "will spur economic development nationwide, including in the Chernobyl region."

Mr. Mizsei called on the sustained generosity of the international community in supporting the restoration of the region's economic and social vitality.

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Please visit the UN Chernobyl website: <http://chernobyl.undp.org>

International Atomic Energy Agency on "Chernobyl 20 years Later":
<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/Chernobyl/index.html>

World Health Organization press release on Chernobyl:
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr20/en/index.html>

More on UNDP and Chernobyl:
 24 April 2006: [Statement by UN Assistant Secretary-General Kalman Mizsei at 20 Years after Chernobyl conference in Kyiv](#)

- ▣ 19 April 2006: UNDP and Chernobyl: Q & A
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