

## UNDP Associate Administrator gives message of solidarity on Chernobyl, expresses hope for the future



The world must remember the casualties and vast damage caused by Chernobyl, but there is also cause for hope for the future. That was the message conveyed by Ad Melkert, UN Under-Secretary General and Associate Administrator for UNDP, in Minsk to attend an international conference marking the 20th anniversary of the nuclear accident.

"This year's anniversary is an occasion to remember the suffering and honor the victims of Chernobyl," he said. "While paying respect to the past, however, we need to take stock of the present and look ahead to the future."

On 26 April 1986, an explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear reactor spread radiation over a wide swathe of land, mainly in Belarus, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation.

UNDP is involved in projects in all three countries to assist Chernobyl-affected communities in creating social and economic opportunities. In Belarus specifically, UNDP works through the Cooperation for Rehabilitation (CORE) programme to restore community infrastructure and boost local incomes through the creation of new jobs.

"Our efforts have the dual aim of helping to restore self-reliance and self-sufficiency among affected communities," Mr. Melkert continued. "The creation of youth centres and health posts, the expansion of a village school, new connections to gas lines and new entrepreneurship activities can and do contribute to regaining independence, initiative, and identity."

While in Minsk Mr. Melkert visited a UNDP project on HIV/AIDS at a local prison. In addition to providing medical treatment to prisoners living with HIV/AIDS, the project works to train prison personnel, introduce voluntary testing and counseling, and establish self-support groups among prisoners living with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Melkert will also tour areas in the Gomel region affected by Chernobyl and visit a Project Fair organized by the Belarus Chernobyl Committee, UNDP, Swiss Development Cooperation, and the World Bank.

Mr. Melkert ended his remarks saying, "We are confident that Chernobyl has entered the right development path. It is already delivering practical solutions that, applied consistently, hold the prospect of restoring to millions the 'normal life' that Chernobyl so brutally curtailed twenty years ago."

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For more information about UN activities on Chernobyl, please visit: <http://chernobyl.undp.org>

For more information on CORE, see:  
<http://www.core-chernobyl.org/eng> and  
<http://un.by/en/undp/db/00011742.html>

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>

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