



Statement attributable to the spokesman for the Secretary-General on the 20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster



NEW YORK, 26 April 2006

Today marks the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the worst nuclear power plant accident in history.

As we look back over the past two decades, we need to remember the selfless heroism of the emergency workers who responded to the accident; the suffering of the more than 330,000 people who were resettled from contaminated regions; the risks and fears experienced by millions of people living in surrounding areas; and the painstaking and costly measures undertaken over many years to limit the population's exposure to radiation and to mitigate the accident's impact on health and the natural environment. These sacrifices must never be forgotten.

Last year, the UN Chernobyl Forum, a consortium of eight UN agencies and representatives of the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine, reached a scientific consensus on the impact of Chernobyl on health and the environment. This consensus, while recognizing that there is still a long way to go to achieve the full recovery of the territories affected by Chernobyl, also contained a vital message of reassurance to the affected populations. The Secretary General urges the widest possible dissemination of the Forum's findings.

Many hard lessons have been learned from Chernobyl, including the importance of providing the public with transparent, timely and credible information in the event of a catastrophe. The Secretary-General believes that the best way for the international community to pay homage to those who suffered from Chernobyl is to provide generous support to programmes designed to help traumatized communities regain self-sufficiency, and affected families resume normal, healthy lives.

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