

2008 Annual Report on UN Chernobyl Coordination

**Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation
on Chernobyl**

UNDP/Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS (RBEC)

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Summary: *The Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl had an exceptionally eventful and productive year in 2008. A number of important results have been achieved and landmark activities and events took place: the first Planning and Coordination Workshop for the Third Decade of Cooperation in Chernobyl Recovery Efforts was organized, the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl to 2016 was finalized, and the sub-regional project of International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) secured approval and funding of \$2.5 million from the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. The ICRIN project will be implemented by IAEA, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, with UNDP serving as the lead agency for the initiative.*

In 2008, efforts were also focused on coordination of UN system work in implementation of the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development to 2016, overall UN inter-agency coordination on Chernobyl, partnership with UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Maria Sharapova, commemorations of the Chernobyl 22nd anniversary; and programme development for sub-regional initiatives on Chernobyl. Innovative partnership building with tennis star Maria Sharapova resulted in launching of a new project, Scholarships for Youth from Chernobyl-affected Areas of Belarus. This will provide educational opportunities to talented youth from Chernobyl-affected regions of Belarus to continue their studies at Belarus State Academy of Arts and Belarus State University. Programming synergies were promoted through new ventures in cross-border cooperation and networking among the Country Teams. Knowledge sharing has been initiated between the Chernobyl and Semipalatinsk programmes of UNDP. It demonstrated that synergies can be obtained from best practices replication since these two areas face similar developmental challenges and have solutions which have proved to work on the ground.

UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting

A meeting of the **UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting** on Chernobyl took place on 26 April 2008. More than 60 people participated in the videoconference from ten locations (New York, Kyiv, Minsk, Moscow, Geneva, Paris, Rome, London, Vienna and Copenhagen), with the aim of sharing updates on UN involvement in Chernobyl recovery efforts. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Ad Melkert, UNDP Associate Administrator, who emphasized that UNDP remains committed to keeping coordinating efforts on Chernobyl as inclusive as possible. The IATF meeting in 2008 coincided with the 22nd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Ad Melkert acknowledged the wide participation in the meeting, and directed a special welcome to the first-time attendance by representatives from Kazakhstan, which is dealing with its own unpleasant nuclear legacy at the Semipalatinsk weapons testing site. He read the statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the 22nd Anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster. In his introductory address, Mr. Melkert also noted four highlight developments since the last IATF meeting: the appointment of tennis player Maria Sharapova as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador; the progress made by Ukraine, with support of the international donor community, in complex and costly works aimed at building a new “shelter” around the damaged reactor; successes in resource mobilization for UN Chernobyl efforts, particularly in Belarus; and the submission to the General Assembly of a new report

by Secretary-General on Chernobyl and the adoption of a new General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl in November 2007.

The draft UN Action Plan on Chernobyl to 2016 was presented at the IATF meeting, following its circulation for review in advance of the gathering. The document was drafted in implementation of the 2007 General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl which tasked UNDP with leading the process of drafting the Action Plan, as well as with coordinating the efforts of the UN system aimed at implementing the Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development. Comments and suggestions from the UN agencies on the draft Action Plan were invited.

Participants were briefed on progress with the resource mobilization for the International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN) project, UNDP's partnership with Maria Sharapova, the Secretary-General's 2007 Report on Chernobyl and on the new General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl. The agenda also included statements from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, updates from the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl as well as from UN Country Teams, UN agencies, and other organizations.

The IATF meeting helped to strengthen communication, coordination, and cooperation among the many agencies involved in Chernobyl recovery efforts. It underlined both the lasting impact of Chernobyl and the broad commitment by the UN and other organizations to help cope with the legacy left by the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

UN Action Plan for Chernobyl to 2016

The UN family and the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have agreed on the need for a forward-looking approach to Chernobyl, focus on the social and economic development of the affected communities, and providing local residents with the tools they require for regaining self-reliance, creating new livelihoods, and securing a return to normalcy. To achieve this aim, the affected areas most need sustainable social and economic development, new jobs, fresh investment and the restoration of a sense of community self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The three countries have already achieved great progress in Chernobyl recovery, but many challenges remain. International assistance remains important in meeting these challenges. In order to maximize limited resources, avoid duplication of effort, and build on recognized agency mandates and competencies, the stakeholders agreed on the necessity of drafting the UN Action Plan for Chernobyl to 2016.

The UN Action Plan is meant to provide a practical framework for implementation of the "Decade of Sustainable Development for Chernobyl-affected Regions." Recognizing that funding for Chernobyl recovery efforts remains limited, it is designed, as the latest UN General Assembly resolution states, "with the aim of maximizing limited resources, avoiding duplication of effort and building on recognized agency mandates and competencies". The Action Plan suggests a mid-term review in 2010, to coincide with the next report by the SG to the General Assembly on Chernobyl and the next General Assembly resolution.

Planning and Coordination Workshop for the Third Decade of Cooperation in Chernobyl Recovery Efforts

The first Planning and Coordination Workshop for the Third Decade of Cooperation in Chernobyl Recovery Efforts was a highlight of 2008 and took place at IAEA Headquarters in Vienna on 20-21 November 2008. It attracted a wide and high-level participation at the Deputy Ministerial level from the Chernobyl-affected countries, UN Resident Coordinators and representatives of UN agencies involved in Chernobyl-related work. Mr. Cihan Sultanoglu, Deputy Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, chaired the meeting on behalf of the UNDP Administrator and UN Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. The event underlined both the lasting impact of Chernobyl and the broad commitment by the UN and other organizations to help cope with the legacy of the accident.

The discussions during the meeting underscored the continued need for international assistance in coping with the problems of the Chernobyl-affected region. But they also pointed to the enthusiasm, within the UN and outside it, to find forward-looking solutions to help local communities and



national governments overcome these problems. Local solutions that proved to work on the ground are the key to achieving results in Chernobyl recovery.

The participants discussed multiple platforms that might be considered for bringing in the spotlight the best practices and experiences of Chernobyl-related interventions by the UN family as well as mechanisms for cooperation. Thus, UNDP will use the Regional Directors' Team meetings for briefing the senior managers on UN-family Chernobyl recovery efforts, synergies from joint interventions, and solutions that work on the ground. Also, UNDP can offer for utilization the capacity of a strong communications team from its Regional Centre in Bratislava. Cooperation with academic institutions can be explored further. Each involved agency will have a focal point on Chernobyl. UNDP (through its New York-based Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl) will serve as a Secretariat and a "clearing house", particularly for information sharing on Chernobyl-related work.

Replication of best practices will remain very important, particularly between the areas that face developmental challenges similar to those of the Chernobyl-affected regions. Expertise of UNDP Chernobyl practitioners can be utilized for capturing knowledge and sharing experiences region-wide as well as globally. Potential for cooperation with the programmes on preparedness in complex emergency situations can be explored.

The final version of the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl to 2016 was presented at the Planning and Coordination Workshop. It included comments which were received by the drafting team following the circulation of its draft on the eve of the IATF meeting on 25 April 2008. As a follow-up to the workshop, the UN Action Plan was revisited to reflect those suggestions/modifications which were made by the participants. Agreement on joint approaches in implementing the UN Action Plan and the Third decade of Chernobyl Recovery was a direct outcome of the Workshop in Vienna.



By the end of the workshop, all participants agreed that this was an excellent opportunity for sharing current practices, plans, build synergies and engage in a direct and personal dialogue on the issue of UN work on Chernobyl. They expressed appreciation for bringing the UN Chernobyl coordination to the new level and setting a good example of UN “Delivering as One”. A suggestion was made to organize workshops in this face-to-face format in the future.

Quadripartite Coordination Committee meeting

A meeting of the Quadripartite Coordination Committee (QCC) took place on 21 November 2008 in Vienna, on the margins of the Planning and Coordination Workshop. It was attended by representatives of the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine as well as UN Resident Coordinators/UNDP Resident Representatives in the three most affected countries and the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. The meeting offered a good opportunity to share views on what is needed and expected from the UN system in Chernobyl recovery efforts and which coordination mechanisms proved most effective. Participants asked that meetings of the QCC be organized on a regular basis in the future.

22nd anniversary of Chernobyl commemorations.

A Statement Attributable to the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon on the 22nd Anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster was released by the Secretary-General's office on 25 April 2008 and widely circulated in its English and Russian versions. A spokesman for the Secretary-General indicated that the accident had a huge impact on the region, and its consequences linger today. At the same time he expressed confidence that communities affected by the Chernobyl accident now have the chance and, increasingly, the means, to lead a normal life. "The UN will do all it can during the "decade of recovery" to support efforts towards the region's full renewal", the spokesman said. The Secretary-General called upon the international community to sustain its generosity in supporting the recovery of Chernobyl-affected areas.

In commemoration of 22nd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, the UN Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl organized a **screening of the award-winning documentary from Belarus "Chernobyl Jungle: Twenty Years without a Human"** which depicts wild life in the exclusion zone. Discussion after the film was facilitated by **Dr. Tim Hinton**, a leading expert from the Savannah River Ecological Laboratory and leading expert on the ecological consequences of Chernobyl nuclear accident.

During the month of May 2008, a **Chernobyl film festival** was organized at UNDP's Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS.

On 23 April 2008 a **conference on "Health and Environment: Global Partners and Global Solutions"** was organized by **World Information Transfer** at UN Headquarters. At this gathering which took place at UN Headquarters in New York, the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl delivered a presentation called "Overcoming "Victim Syndrome": Community Approach as Key to Recovery".

Partnership with Maria Sharapova, advocacy and awareness.

The new forward-looking approach to Chernobyl helped UNDP enter into partnership with the world's tennis star Maria Sharapova. She was appointed a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador at a ceremony in New York on 14 February 2007. Maria Sharapova's role is global, including promotion of international efforts to achieve the MDGs. But she is primarily focusing on the challenge of bringing prosperity to the Chernobyl-affected area, where her family has roots – and where her grandmother still lives in Gomel, Belarus.

At her appointment ceremony, Ms. Sharapova made a USD 100,000 donation to seven youth-oriented UNDP projects in rural communities of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine that still suffer the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster. Through these projects, the Maria Sharapova Foundation and UNDP are helping young people overcome "Chernobyl victim syndrome" and lay the foundations for future success. Some projects are already completed, and others are well advanced in implementation.

In September 2008, UNDP initiated another project in partnership with the Maria Sharapova Foundation – the **Scholarships for Youth from Chernobyl-affected areas of Belarus** (see below). "It has always been my dream to contribute to the recovery of a region where I have

a personal connection. Enabling talented young people to pursue higher education is part of a broader effort to build a brighter future for the region,” said Ms. Sharapova in a press release.

Ms. Sharapova was expected to travel to Belarus to launch the scholarship programme in person in September 2008, but was forced to postpone her visit in order to receive medical treatment for a shoulder injury that prevented her from participating in the Beijing Olympics and the US Open. Her visit is now planned for 2009. Preparations have already started for the field visit, including a dialogue with the Maria Sharapova team and the local stakeholders on the ground.

The Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl was invited to make a presentation at the annual **Sharapova Sponsor Retreat** (1-2 April 2008). It focused on Ms. Sharapova’s role in her capacity as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador in delivering the message of hope to the Chernobyl-affected communities, and particularly to youth. The importance and details of the projects implemented by UNDP with the funds from Maria Sharapova Foundation were also discussed.

The significance of UNDP’s fruitful partnership with Maria Sharapova goes well beyond her financial contributions. Ms. Sharapova, a daughter of the region, is already a role model for young people in affected areas. Her involvement in Chernobyl recovery efforts and focus on youth will help young people overcome “Chernobyl victim syndrome” and take the future into their own hands. “UNDP is honoured to count Maria Sharapova among its Goodwill Ambassadors,” commented Kemal Derviş, UNDP Administrator, in a press release announcing her appointment. “Her engagement helps to convey a message of optimism to young people in a once-blighted region where a return to normal life is now a realistic prospect.”

Programme development and resource mobilization.

Providing scientifically sound information for Chernobyl-affected communities remains a top priority of Chernobyl-related programming. A major breakthrough took place in November 2008 when the project on **International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN)** was approved for funding from the UN Human Security Trust Fund. This will be a 3-year multi-agency initiative with a budget of USD 2.5 mln. It will be implemented by IAEA, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP and target the Chernobyl-affected population of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. UNDP will serve as the lead agency for the ICRIN project through its NY-based Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. In particular, it will ensure that a proper communication and coordination mechanism is put in place between the implementing partners, prepare consolidated substantive reports to the donor and take the lead in organizing the ICRIN project Advisory Board. It will also be in regular touch on behalf of all the implementing UN agencies with the UN Trust Fund for Human Security Unit (which is also based in New York).

The new project will help build a bridge between the science and the people by delivering accurate, useful information to Chernobyl-affected communities through trustworthy local sources. It will build upon the information needs assessments of the population which have already been completed by UNDP Country Offices in three countries. The assessments showed that more than two decades after Chernobyl, people and communities need information on how to live safely with low-dose radiation. Besides the information provision

to the affected population, the project will empower and support the communities to act upon the newly received information by implementing the forward-looking community-based recovery initiatives. The ICRIN project will also create a monitoring system to identify the changes in people's perceptions and in human security levels as result of the ICRIN project implementation.

Projects in the field are already building a foundation for future ICRIN efforts. UNDP Belarus strives to ensure that the population's information needs are taken into account and addressed in all project activities implemented in Chernobyl-affected territories. UNDP Ukraine has established a network for information provision to affected communities. A similar network of district information centres is being established in Russia.

The new project "**Maria Sharapova Foundation Scholarship for Youth from the Chernobyl-Affected Areas of Belarus**" was announced in September 2008 and will provide education opportunities to talented youth from Chernobyl-affected regions of Belarus to continue their studies at Belarus State Academy of Arts and Belarus State University. The contribution of USD 210,000 from the Maria Sharapova Foundation will provide five-year scholarships for 12 students for a full course of university studies. Three incoming students will be awarded scholarships each year, over an initial four-year period. The Scholarship is the first in Belarus to be funded from a non-government international source to support studies within the country.

UNDP will play a critical role in ensuring smooth implementation of the Scholarship project on the ground, including outreach to educational institutions, in putting a sound sustainability mechanism in place before the Scholarship is handed over to the national counterparts, transparency of the selection process for the Scholarship recipients and efficiency of disbursements of funds. Working through UNDP will help ensure that the scholarships conform to accepted international standards. Moreover, the affiliation will promote synergies with other UNDP Chernobyl recovery efforts in the affected areas. The Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl will facilitate communication between the Maria Sharapova Foundation and UNDP CO in Belarus; support organizing the Scholarship Advisory Boards and ensure visibility of the Scholarship programme as the UN headquarters level.

Environment and Security (ENVSEC) is a European inter-agency initiative that helps European countries identify and address situations where environmental problems may aggravate inter-state or intra-state tensions, or where environmental cooperation can help build bridges between parties to conflicts and tensions. Attention is also paid to situations where security policies and measures may have environmental consequences. EnvSec's assessment of environment-security issues in Eastern Europe identified Chernobyl (among other national and regional concerns) as a unique case of cross-border and local impact with yet not fully resolved environmental consequences. The lack of detailed knowledge about radiological conditions in the near-border southern part of Belarus now administered as the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve drew ENVSEC's attention. The EnvSec-facilitated project has started in October 2008 to study the transuranic pollution migration across the border near Chernobyl.

Sub-regional cooperation on Chernobyl.

The Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl has worked to enhance sub-regional cooperation, particularly among UNDP Chernobyl teams in the field. It continued building synergies in three priority areas: information provision, policy change, and community development. **A sub-regional annual conference of all UNDP Chernobyl teams was held on 23 - 24 January 2008 in Moscow.** It focused on achievements along the main priority areas of Chernobyl sub-regional programming, partnerships and resource mobilization efforts, work with UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Maria Sharapova, advocacy and awareness on Chernobyl-related activities, synergies in Chernobyl recovery efforts as well as best practices replication, information and knowledge management. Giuseppe Belsito, Programme manager of the Black Sea Trade and Investment Programme and Cyprus Private Sector Development Programme manager, delivered a presentation and facilitated discussion on “Design and Implementation in UNDP regional programming: the experience of the Black Sea Trade and Investment Promotion Programme”. The participants also welcomed Mr. Pavel Vdovichenko, President of NGO “Radimichi” (Bryansk oblast, the Russian federation), who gave a presentation on the experience of implementing a youth project with support from the Maria Sharapova Foundation. The Chernobyl sub-regional team also defined a strategy and joint plans for 2008.

“UN Cooperation for Chernobyl Recovery” was the topic of a presentation by the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl at the **International Workshop “Public Authorities and Civil Society together for a Safe European Nuclear Future”** (“Learning from the Chernobyl Legacy to Make European Nuclear Energy Safer: the Role of Local Communities, Authorities and Central Governments in Emergency Preparedness and Management”). The workshop took place in Kyiv on 22-23 September 2008 and brought together local actors from settlements located in the vicinity of nuclear power plants as well as international organizers – IAEA, UNDP, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, and other international and national institutions.

Knowledge management: Chernobyl/Semipalatinsk Knowledge sharing.

Knowledge Management has become a priority for the Office of Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl as **interest in the successes of forward-looking solutions for Chernobyl recovery** has grown. Thus, a new Knowledge Management undertaking was initiated in 2008, aiming at the sharing of best practices between Semipalatinsk- and Chernobyl-related programming of UNDP. There are similarities in the challenges that are faced by the areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine which were affected by Chernobyl nuclear accident and territories around the former nuclear site of Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan. Those are particularly related to poverty, low level of living standards, lack of social services and opportunities for income generation, especially in rural settlements, widespread perceptions of ill-health and fears of radiation.

A lot of work has been done by UNDP (and UN system as a whole) to promote recovery of these two regions. Since cross-regional information sharing is a very important aspect of UNDP work, it was agreed to pilot the experience replication which may be mutually beneficial for the programmes in Semipalatinsk and Chernobyl.



knowledge sharing. Concrete follow-up activities will be further discussed by the teams on the ground.

A UNDP mission of sub-regional Chernobyl team to UNDP/Kazakhstan Semipalatinsk programme was initiated in November 2008 by the Office of Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl in partnership with UNDP/RBEC Bratislava Regional Centre. It demonstrated that synergies can be obtained from best practices replication and effective

Looking into the future

Looking ahead, **UNDP will continue working with Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine on implementing the 2007 General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl aimed at bringing normalcy and prosperity to people in Chernobyl-affected regions.** To make this aim a reality, UNDP and its Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl will work in the framework of the Third Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Chernobyl-affected regions and in line with the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl to 2016.

The highlight event in early 2009 will be **the formal launch of the ICRIN project.** It will take place **at UN Headquarters in New York at the time of the 23rd anniversary of Chernobyl** and involve high level representatives of the relevant missions to the United Nations and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security. Simultaneous launches of the project at the field level are also envisaged. Since UNDP will be the lead agency of the ICRIN initiative, the Office of UN Coordination of the International Cooperation on Chernobyl plans to be closely involved and dedicate a substantive amount of attention to this project. In particular, it will ensure effective cooperation and coordination between its multiple stakeholders (particularly the implementing UN agencies) and the overall smooth running of the initiative. **The Advisory Board of the ICRIN project** will be established and meet for the first time at the end of March 2009, in Vienna. The Office of Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl will organize two meetings of the Advisory Board per year for the purpose of approving the annual work plans, reviewing the project's progress and making sure that the involved agencies are working in unison. It will also work on project staff recruitment, start producing the consolidated reports for the implementing agencies and ensuring outreach to the UN Trust Fund for Human Security.

Chernobyl recovery efforts by the UN family will be presented at a regular meeting of the **Regional Directors Team for Europe and CIS** in the first quarter of 2009.

The next sub-regional annual conference of UNDP Chernobyl teams will take place at the end of March–beginning of April 2009 in Belarus. The meeting will approve a detailed workplan for UNDP activities under the ICRIN project and agree on operational modalities. Representatives of the Semipalatinsk programme will also be invited for discussing the strategy of cooperation and follow-up to the mission of Chernobyl sub-regional team to the Semipalatinsk programme (November 2008). In the future, possibilities will be explored for codifying the knowledge gained in the course of implementing Chernobyl recovery programmes and replicating it in those areas and programmes of UNDP where this experience may be relevant.

The 23rd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident will be marked by launching the ICRIN project at UN Headquarters and in the three most-affected countries (accompanied by a joint press release with the involved UN agencies) and a Statement attributable to the Spokesman of the UN Secretary-General. Also, a presentation will be delivered by the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl at the annual international conference on Health and Environment to be organized by the *World Information Transfer* at UN Headquarters (April 2009).

The next UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting on Chernobyl will be held in the fall of 2009.

Maria Sharapova's visit to UNDP project sites in Chernobyl-affected regions is scheduled to take place in 2009. **The first recipients of the Maria Sharapova Scholarships will begin their studies in Belarus in September 2009.** The seven youth-oriented projects in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine which received support from the Maria Sharapova Foundation will be finalized in 2009.

UNDP will continue to develop sub-regional Chernobyl programming in four priority areas: community-driven development; policy advice; information provision; and advocacy, particularly at UN Headquarters. In all four priority areas, UNDP will work on drawing experiences from the Country Offices in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. In the framework of cross-border cooperation it will continue to promote synergies and share good practices.