

# United Nations

## Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

SOC/4219  
30 May 1991

### INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE ON CHERNOBYL HOLDS FIRST MEETING

(Delayed in transmission.)

VIENNA, 24 May (UN Information Service) -- The first meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl was convened today at the United Nations Office at Vienna by the Director-General and United Nations Coordinator for international cooperation to the regions affected by the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

Participating in the meeting were representatives of 11 United Nations bodies -- the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCDD) and the United Nations Office at Vienna, together with the Vienna-based Permanent Representatives of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine and Byelorussia.

The meeting was convened by Director-General Margaret J. Anstee to coincide with the visit to Vienna of officials from the Chernobyl State Committees from the Soviet Union and the affected republics, who are currently working, in cooperation with the Director-General and her staff, in finalizing a joint plan of assistance requirements to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the accident. This plan will include a significant number of project proposals addressing urgent humanitarian needs in the broad sectors of health, resettlement, food and agriculture, environmental clean-up, social rehabilitation, economic development and the Chernobyl experience and nuclear safety.

The Task Force meeting provided a opportunity for an informal exchange of views on the wide-ranging requirements thus far received and on the most effective course of action to pursue in addressing the complex and multidimensional problems which have emanated from this accident. In this

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regard, it was recognized that whatever the scientific assessment of the extent of the radiological consequences of the accident, it had caused widespread human suffering of an unprecedented kind, due to the unique nature of the disaster, which must be addressed. Apart from concerns over matters of health, large numbers of people are suffering and will continue to suffer severe hardship from contaminated agricultural land and water, obligatory resettlement and the consequent disruption of their lives. All aspects of the situation will have to be carefully monitored for many years to come, not only in the interests of the affected people, but also because there are valuable lessons to be learned by other countries.

Among the many activities undertaken by the United Nations Coordinator since her appointment in March was an inter-agency mission in April to the Soviet Union and affected regions (including the reactor at Chernobyl), which she headed. In Minsk, she conveyed a message on behalf of the Secretary-General to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the disaster, which was given wide television coverage within the Soviet Union, Europe and parts of Latin America. She also held discussions with high-level officials in all regions on the "master plan" itself and on other areas of cooperation within the Chernobyl context.

The programme of economic and social requirements will be presented at a meeting of countries wishing to extend support and cooperation to mitigate the consequences of the accident, to be chaired by the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters on 20 September. The issue will also be an important item on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council at its summer session at Geneva in July.

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