

**SEMINAR ON ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF TECHNOLOGICAL
DISASTERS, 'CHERNOBYL AND BEYOND', TO BE HELD AT MOSCOW, 27-
28 MAY**

NEW YORK, 20 May (Department of Humanitarian Affairs) -- An international seminar on the theme, "Chernobyl and Beyond: Humanitarian Assistance to Victims of Technological Disasters", will be held at the Russian Academy for State Service in Moscow on 27 and 28 May. The seminar will focus on the specific and largely uncharted problem of technological accidents and their impact on people and their environment, bringing together international relief organizations, governments, scientists and other academics, as well as representatives from the private sector.

Technological disasters, which are man-made and should be preventable, have caused immense human suffering over the past two decades. Chernobyl and Bhopal bring to mind images of hundreds of thousands killed, injured, evacuated and displaced from their homes, some with no hope of return. Yet no clear multilateral response strategies currently exist to address the life-cycle of accidents of nuclear plant explosions, chemical leaks or oil spills.

The seminar will identify elements of an international assistance strategy to mitigate the consequences of technological disasters and to enhance the response to the needs of the victims. It will focus on risk-reduction measures that can be taken prior to a technological accident, the assessment of the specific requirements of those affected when a disaster occurs, as well as on the response itself, its financing and mechanisms for effective coordination.

Participants will also examine the role of the media, the lessons of Chernobyl and Bhopal, and ways to strengthen national legislation to assist victims. They will also hear the findings of an inter-agency needs assessment mission to the areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine still suffering from the effects of the Chernobyl disaster. That mission is to take place from 20 to 26 May.

The international seminar is sponsored by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry for Civil Defence, Emergencies and the Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters of the Russian Federation.

* * * * *