

**MEETING OF DONORS ON ASSISTANCE TO AREAS AFFECTED BY  
CHERNOBYL DISASTER TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY IN GENEVA**

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GENEVA/NEW YORK, 24 March (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) -- The United Nations Coordinator of International Assistance for Chernobyl, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Sergio Vieira de Mello, will chair a meeting of donor governments and organizations in support of the inter-agency programme of international assistance to areas affected by the Chernobyl disaster, on Thursday, 26 March, in Geneva.

The meeting, which will take place from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Palais des Nations, will review a funding document that was first introduced to donor governments and organizations at a special international meeting in New York last November. At that time, representatives showed strong interest in the programme and indicated that they could give positive consideration to supporting it after having studied the 50 specific projects contained therein.

The programme is based on the findings of the May 1997 United Nations inter-agency needs assessment mission to the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. It highlights the significant ongoing impact of the disaster on the affected population and outlines the needs which still exist 12 years later. This programme represents the main humanitarian effort of the United Nations with regard to Chernobyl and a formal inter-agency appeal to the international community for continued assistance to the affected populations of those countries.

In collating project proposals for this programme, priority was given to those activities which were deemed by United Nations agencies to be effective, benefitting from the support of the governments of the three affected States, and considered to have a high likelihood of bringing quick and tangible relief to the affected population. The projects contained in the document address outstanding problems in five key sectors: health, socio-psychological rehabilitation, the environment, economic rehabilitation and information policies.

Among the problems which will be addressed in the programme are the need to improve specialized medical care for those who were exposed to radiation and those who are living in contaminated areas, including through the acquisition of equipment for hospitals and the delivery of mobile stations for permanent control of those population groups; socio-psychological

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rehabilitation of the population from such consequences of the accident as anxiety, stress, problems of resettlement and adaptation to a new environment; the production of clean food and control of radionuclide contamination in foodstuff; safe management of contaminated forests and forest products; economic rehabilitation of the affected areas, including investment promotion; and the need to publish reliable information which will help to rebuild the trust of the affected population.

The United Nations urges governments and interested organizations to respond generously to this programme. Contributions can be made in cash and/or in-kind -- to the United Nations Trust Fund for Chernobyl, directly to implementing agencies or on a bilateral basis. This would ensure the fullest possible implementation of the proposed programme and would greatly help mitigate the many lingering effects of the Chernobyl disaster.

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