

25 April 2001

SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR GREATER ASSISTANCE FOR CHERNOBYL  
VICTIMS

Following is the text of a statement made today -- the fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident -- by Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

After 15 years, the devastating impact of the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor continues to affect the daily lives of millions of people in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Indeed, the legacy of Chernobyl will be with us, and with our descendants, for generations to come.

The three affected States have shouldered the heavy burden of providing assistance to their populations, while, at the same time, going through the pains of transition from communism to a market economy. Belarus, the smallest of the three, is the most severely contaminated. The Russian Federation is also seriously affected in absolute terms, even if the damage is smaller in relation to its vast size and population. And Ukraine, on whose territory the Chernobyl power plant is situated, has had the additional burden of closing down the nuclear power plant, a step for which it has been highly commended by the international community.

As we mark this sombre anniversary, the international community must do far more to help those who live with the invisible, yet very real, consequences of the disaster. At least 3 million children require physical treatment, and not until 2016, at the earliest, will we know the full number of those likely to develop serious medical conditions. I appeal to Member States, non-governmental organizations and private individuals to join with me in a pledge never to forget Chernobyl. Together, we must extend a helping hand to our fellow human beings, and show that we are not indifferent to their plight.

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