

27 April 2001

**DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL CALLS FOR GREATER ASSISTANCE FOR
CHERNOBYL VICTIMS**

Following is the text of remarks made yesterday evening by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette at the opening ceremony of an exhibition titled “Black Wind, White Land -- Living with Chernobyl”:

The word “Chernobyl” evokes a tragic event we would all like to erase from our memories. It is the symbol of a catastrophe, which is far from over for millions of people in Belarus, in Ukraine, and in the Russian Federation. Fifteen years after the explosion of reactor number 4 of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, its medical, economic, environmental, psychological and social effects are still being felt in the region.

Local communities are making heroic efforts at rehabilitation. The United Nations system, together with non-governmental organizations, is trying to alleviate their plight, but funding is far from sufficient, and the situation remains gloomy.

The saddest consequence of the disaster is that many children, including some not yet born at the moment when the reactor exploded, have developed serious medical conditions. Three of these young victims are with us tonight. They are living testimonies of the tragic impact of technological disasters on human life. But they are also inspiring individuals that show us the resilience and power of the human spirit.

The Chernobyl Power Plant has finally been shut down. It is my sincere hope that this moving exhibition will call wider attention to the continuing effects of the Chernobyl catastrophe, and will encourage the international community to do more to help its victims rebuild their shattered lives.

I would like to thank the artists who, with talent and sometimes at the risk of their own lives, have captured images of this desolate region and its courageous people. Let me also say a big thank you to the organizers, Adi Roche and the Chernobyl Children's Project -- one of the most active non-governmental organizations helping the Chernobyl victims, the Irish Government, and all those who made this exhibition possible.

Friends, the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe are too dreadful and too large scale for us to remain indifferent. The photos and artworks presented here speak for themselves. May we never forget the story they tell and the need to ensure that such a tragedy never recur.

Thank you.

