

Statement by H.E. Mr. Vitaly Churkin
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN
Opening of the Photo Exhibition “Chernobyl Seen by Children”
11 December 2007

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this exhibition of photographs by children of the Chernobyl-affected areas in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, as well as UNICEF for their support in preparation of this event.

Our three countries share a common history with its glorious and tragic pages. Already on the first day after the accident, all the peoples of the former Soviet Union contributed to the mitigation and liquidation of its consequences and assisted the affected population.

Shortly thereafter, this impulse of solidarity was strengthened by international support. These combined efforts allowed us to achieve significant progress in coping with the consequences of the accident, both in human and ecological dimensions. Now we are at a stage when the major emphasis should be given to economic and human capacity development in the affected areas, or the region’s sustainable future is impossible. And this is exactly the main goal of the programmes implemented by Russia in the Chernobyl-affected areas.

The projects, some of which are in the framework of international cooperation, are implemented in the areas of health care, environmental protection, construction of homes, infrastructure restoration, social protection, and economic development.

We are glad that not only Belarus and Ukraine, but also other CIS countries share our approach.

It is very symbolic that the works in this exhibition are by Chernobyl children themselves. Their art is filled with optimism, which lets us hope that soon life in the Chernobyl-affected regions will be back to normal.