

2007 Annual Report on UN Chernobyl Coordination

**Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation
on Chernobyl**

UNDP/Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS (RBEC)

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Summary: 2007 was an exceptionally eventful and productive year for the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. Efforts focused on preparation of the UN Secretary-General Report on Chernobyl, the General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl, UN inter-agency coordination, partnership with UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Maria Sharapova, commemorations of the Chernobyl 21st anniversary; and programme development for sub-regional initiatives on Chernobyl. An innovative partnership building with tennis star Maria Sharapova culminated with her nomination as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador with special focus on Chernobyl and personal donation to youth-oriented Chernobyl recovery initiatives in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The Decade of Recovery and Sustainable Development to 2016 has been declared and drafting of the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl has been launched. Programming synergies were promoted through new ventures in cross-border cooperation and networking among the Country Teams on the ground; and funding was sought for a \$2.4 million sub-regional project to provide the public in Chernobyl-affected regions with accurate and up-to-date information.

UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting

A meeting of the **UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting** on Chernobyl took place on 24 January 2007. More than 60 people participated from eight locations (New York, Kyiv, Minsk, Moscow, Geneva, Paris, London and Vienna), with the aim of sharing updates on UN involvement in Chernobyl recovery efforts. Membership of the IATF was expanded to include, as observers, organizations from outside of United Nations system, including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD, and the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The meeting was chaired by Mr. Ad Melkert, UNDP Associate Administrator, who emphasized that UNDP remains committed to keeping coordinating efforts on Chernobyl as inclusive as possible.

Participants were briefed on a series of high-level commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident – in Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine, and also in New York at a special General Assembly session in April 2006 as well as the Quadripartite Coordination Committee consultation. The agenda also included statements from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and updates from the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl, and from UN Country Teams, UN agencies, and other organizations.

The IATF meeting helped to strengthen communication, coordination, and cooperation among the many agencies involved in Chernobyl recovery efforts. It underlined both the lasting impact of Chernobyl and the broad commitment by the UN and other organizations to help cope with the legacy left by the accident more than two decades ago. The stakeholders agreed on the need for a forward-looking approach to Chernobyl, on the need to focus on the social and economic development of the affected communities, and to provide local residents with the tools they need to regain self-reliance, create new livelihoods, and secure a return to normalcy.

2007 UN Secretary-General Report on Chernobyl and 2007 UN General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl

In 2007 the UN Secretary-General's report on Chernobyl was submitted in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 60/14 of 14 November 2005 on the strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. This resolution requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly a report containing a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the resolution.

The report chronicled the activities undertaken by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the UN to promote recovery from the Chernobyl disaster, including participation in commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the accident. It concluded that United Nations organizations are united in pursuing a development approach to the Chernobyl legacy and emphasized the continuing need for community development efforts and the provision of accurate information to the affected populations. In particular, it focused on coordination of UN work on Chernobyl, ongoing UN assistance efforts, advocacy as well as information and public awareness. Annexes to the Report included reports from the Governments of the three most affected by Chernobyl countries – Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

On 20 November 2007 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster”. The new resolution wholeheartedly embraced the development approach. In an effort to make possible what it called a “return to normal life,” it proclaimed the period to 2016, the end of the third decade after the Chernobyl accident, as a “Decade of recovery and sustainable development” for the affected territories. Furthermore, UNDP was tasked with drafting a UN Action Plan and coordinating UN work on the Decade.

The resolution also underlined the importance of conveying to local populations a “message of reassurance” on the health impact of radiation. It also welcomed the appointment of Russian tennis star Maria Sharapova as a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador. Finally, the resolution noted the significant progress made recently in the long-running effort to transform the damaged Chernobyl reactor and its surroundings into a stable and environmentally safe site, and stressed the urgency of all parties working steadfastly to complete this task successfully.

On the occasion of the General Assembly’s debate on the Resolution on Chernobyl, Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu, UNDP Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director of UNDP’s Regional Bureau for Europe and CIS, held a noon briefing at the UN Secretariat. It took place on 19 November and provided an update on progress achieved in the areas affected by the disaster, ongoing projects, and the significance of the new UN General Assembly Resolution on Chernobyl.

UN Action Plan for Chernobyl to 2016

The UN family and the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have recognized that, after two decades, a return to normal life is a realistic prospect for people living in the Chernobyl-affected regions. To achieve this aim, these areas most need sustainable social and economic development, new jobs, fresh investment and the restoration of a sense of community self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The three countries have already achieved great progress in Chernobyl recovery, but many challenges remain. International assistance remains important in meeting these challenges. In order to maximize limited resources, avoid duplication of effort, and build on recognized agency mandates and competencies, UNDP proposed to coordinate the drafting of a UN Action Plan for Chernobyl recovery until 2016.

The UN action plan until 2016 will provide a practical framework for implementation of the “Decade of Sustainable Development for Chernobyl-affected Regions.” The idea of proclaiming such a decade was underlined at the commemorative conference held in Belarus in April 2006 to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. This proposal was reflected in the Secretary-General’s report to the General Assembly on Chernobyl for 2007 and was formally

adopted in the General Assembly's 2007 resolution on Chernobyl. The drafting group of the UN Action Plan on Chernobyl will present the draft Action Plan at an IATF meeting held to coincide with the 22nd anniversary of Chernobyl (26 April 2008).

21st anniversary of Chernobyl commemorations.

On 26 April 2007 UNDP hosted a video briefing with the Emergencies Ministries of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The briefing was chaired by Ms. Marta Ruedas, Deputy Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, and attended by representatives of the missions to the UN. Participants endorsed the suggestion that the UN formally designate a "Decade of Sustainable Development" for the Chernobyl area.

A Statement Attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the 21st Anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster was released by the Secretary-General's office on 25 April 2007 and widely circulated in its English as well as Russian versions. A spokesman for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called on the world to remember the pain and loss caused by the disaster, but at the same time spoke optimistically about the prospects for a return to normalcy in the affected regions. "Science has shown that, after two decades, a return to normal life is a realistic prospect for people living in the Chernobyl-affected regions," the spokesman said.

On 19-20 April 2007 a conference on "Health and Environment: Global Partners and Global Solutions" was organized by World Information Transfer at UN Headquarters. Ms. Marta Ruedas addressed the gathering with a presentation called "Bringing a region back to life: The UNDP response to Chernobyl".

Partnership with Maria Sharapova, advocacy and a wareness.

Negotiations were initiated in 2006 with tennis star Maria Sharapova regarding her becoming a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador with a special focus on Chernobyl. UNDP's efforts in tackling the developmental challenges of Chernobyl and forward-looking solutions were highly appreciated by Ms. Sharapova and her team, as well as UNDP's coordinating role among the UN agencies on Chernobyl. As result, Maria Sharapova has agreed both to take on the role of UNDP Goodwill Ambassador and to partner with RBEC in Chernobyl recovery efforts. The issue has particular relevance to Ms. Sharapova because her family has roots in Gomel, Belarus.

The official nomination of Ms. Sharapova as UNDP GWA took place on 14 February 2007 at UNDP Headquarters in New York. "UNDP is very proud to welcome Ms. Sharapova as our Goodwill Ambassador", said Ad Melkert, UNDP's Associate Administrator and UN's Under-Secretary General. "She is a role model for young people who face challenging conditions in life. She is already building on her success as a top athlete to create concrete opportunities for disadvantaged young people to improve their lives".

At the ceremony, Sharapova announced a \$100,000 contribution to eight youth-oriented projects in rural communities in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine that still suffer the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. UNDP has already taken the lead in implementing these initiatives, and work in partnership with local and regional authorities, community organisations and youth groups. Though they have a variety of specific objectives, the projects share a common focus on youth, and an overarching intent to support a return to normalcy and prosperity for the people and communities most affected by Chernobyl. In addition to the US\$100,000 donated by the Sharapova Foundation, the local communities and authorities will contribute US\$84,000 in co-funding, bringing the total value of the projects to US \$184,000.

In the Gomel region of Belarus, the project will enable children from the city of Chechersk to help spruce up public spaces, planting shrubbery and tending flower beds. Communications facilities at the Chechersk Central Rayon Hospital will also be renovated and upgraded, and a newly established “Fairytale Room” will provide therapy to children in the form of interactive games, mini-circuses and other healing and inspirational activities. In the Bragin region, the Foundation will support the opening of a number of music schools in isolated rural areas. A series of concerts, lectures and workshops will focus on developing children’s creative abilities.

In the Bryansk region of the Russian Federation, the Foundation will support the construction of a new sports field and wooden structure, equipped with modern appliances, for the Novocamp summer camp. The project will also support an international Children’s Art Festival at Novocamp and a series of workshops for young teachers and information- and communications-technology trainers.

In Ukraine, a network of youth centres will be established to bring computer knowledge and skills to rural teenagers. The centre in the Zhytomyr region will provide computer literacy training, ensure access to information and communications technology (ICT), and empower young people to implement and contribute to socio-economic recovery efforts in their communities. The ICT centre in the Chernihiv region will provide local youth with information on healthy lifestyles and offer training on web-site design and Internet use. The centre in the Kyiv region will be equipped with modern sports facilities, and recreational and educational services to boost the physical and mental wellbeing of local children and teenagers.

Through these projects, the Maria Sharapova Foundation and UNDP will help young people overcome “Chernobyl victim syndrome,” take greater control over their lives and lay the foundations for future success. A range of activities is under discussion as ways in which Ms. Sharapova might draw attention to the needs of Chernobyl communities and serve as a role model for young people in affected areas, particularly on such relevant topics as healthy lifestyles and community self-reliance. Ms. Sharapova is planning to visit the Chernobyl-affected region and UNDP project sites in mid-2008.

In September 2007 Maria Sharapova was photographed for the advertisement "Team against Poverty" with the NBA star LeBron James. In early 2008 the advertisement will be placed in numerous media outlets and will include a paragraph on Chernobyl recovery.

The Office of Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl prepared an article on “UNDP and Chernobyl Recovery” which was published by the World Information Transfer (a non-profit NGO in General Consultative Status with the UN) in its “World Ecology Report”. The article was featured in two issues of the publication in the spring and fall of 2007. It put in the spotlight some important results of UNDP’s new developmental approach to Chernobyl and showcased concrete success stories from the affected communities in Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine.

On 11 December 2007 a UNICEF-led Photo-Exhibition “Chernobyl Seen by Children” was opened in the UN Secretariat building. The opening statements were delivered by the Ambassadors to the UN from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine as well as UNDP and UNICEF representatives. The statement on behalf of UNDP was delivered by Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu, UNDP Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director of UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS.

Programme development and resource mobilization.

A full-fledged project proposal from UNDP Belarus was approved for funding by the UN Human Security Trust Fund. This proposal (for \$1.5 million in funding) takes an integrated approach in following up on Chernobyl Forum recommendations by addressing the issues of safe agricultural production by small private farms, promoting the rebuilding of community structures, advocating healthy lifestyles and improving access to and quality of primary healthcare services while specifically targeting high-risk populations, and providing practical information and advice to various community groups on living in conditions of continuous low-dose radiation exposure. Also in Belarus, the European Union has earmarked €2.8 million for a project aimed at improving living conditions in Chernobyl-affected areas.

Progress has been made in the proposed project to create an International Chernobyl Research and Information Network (ICRIN). A concept note was approved for funding from the UN Human Security Trust Fund early in 2007, and UNDP was requested to lead the drafting of a full-fledged proposal. Working together with IAEA, WHO and UNICEF, the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl has prepared a \$2.5 million inter-agency proposal for submission to the UNTFHS. The partner agencies are currently working out its final details for submission to the donor. The project will bring accurate, digestible and useful information to Chernobyl-affected communities through trustworthy local sources.

Projects in the field are already building a foundation for future ICRIN efforts. UNDP Belarus strives to ensure that the population's information needs are taken into account and addressed in all project activities implemented in Chernobyl-affected territories. UNDP Ukraine has established a network for information provision to affected communities. A similar network of district information centres is being established in Russia.

Environment and Security (ENVSEC) is a European inter-agency initiative that helps European countries identify and address situations where environmental problems may aggravate inter-state or intra-state tensions, or where environmental cooperation can help build bridges between parties to conflicts and tensions. Attention is also paid to situations where security policies and measures may have environmental consequences. ENVSEC's assessment of environment-security issues in Eastern Europe began in 2005. Among other national and regional concerns, Chernobyl emerged as a unique case of major cross-border and local impact with yet not fully resolved environmental consequences. The lack of detailed knowledge about radiological conditions in the near-border southern part of Belarus now administered as the Polesie State Radiation and Ecological Reserve drew ENVSEC's attention. To help Belarus obtain comprehensive information about radioactive contamination of the area and the radio-ecological consequences of its movement across borders, an ENVSEC-facilitated project is being developed in the framework of NATO's Science for Peace and Security programme. The project is expected to start in early 2008.

Sub-regional cooperation on Chernobyl.

The UNDP Office of Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl has worked to enhance sub-regional cooperation, particularly among UNDP Chernobyl teams in the field. Sub-regional working groups have been created to share ideas and build synergies in three priority areas: information provision, policy change, and community development. A sub-regional conference of all UNDP Chernobyl teams was held on 16-18 January 2007 in Yalta, Ukraine. It focused on achievements along the main priority areas of Chernobyl sub-regional programming, partnerships and resource mobilization efforts, synergies in Chernobyl recovery efforts as well as

best practices replication, and information circulation and knowledge management. The team also strategized for the future and undertook a field visit to UNDP/Ukraine Crimea Integration and Development Programme.

Cross-border cooperation on Chernobyl was the topic of a UNDP presentation delivered at an international conference on local approaches to development that was co-organized by UNDP and the European Association of Regions in Marseille, France in March 2007. The presentation focused on UNDP's ongoing work to build partnerships between Polish and Ukrainian local authorities aimed at promoting local self-governance in Chernobyl-affected areas of Ukraine. The presentation also elaborated on how these new partnerships and cross-border linkages have re-energized community-based recovery efforts in Chernobyl-affected communities of Ukraine and how Polish models have been transferred and implemented in Ukrainian localities.

Finalizing the transfer of UN-wide responsibility on Chernobyl from UN-OCHA to UNDP.

In 2007 the final elements of the transfer of responsibility on Chernobyl from UN-OCHA to UNDP have been completed. In particular, all UN files on Chernobyl have been transferred from UN-OCHA to UNDP and properly archived at UNDP/RBEC. Also, the UN Chernobyl Trust Fund was finally transferred to UNDP.

Looking into the future

Looking ahead, UNDP will continue working with Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine on implementing the new General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl aimed at bringing normalcy and prosperity to people in Chernobyl-affected regions. To make this aim a reality, what these areas need most is sustainable social and economic development: new jobs, fresh investment and the restoration of a sense of community self-reliance.

Designation of the third decade after Chernobyl as a "Decade of Sustainable Development" of the affected regions and drafting of a UN Action Plan for Chernobyl recovery to 2016 will be the top priority in early 2008. The working group will present the Plan's draft for consideration of the Inter-Agency Task Force in April 2008. The plan will be finalized later in the year.

A sub-regional conference of UNDP/RBEC and UNDP Chernobyl teams from Belarus, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine Country Offices will take place between 23-24 January 2008 in the Russian Federation.

Maria Sharapova's visit to UNDP project sites in Chernobyl-affected regions will take place in mid-2008.

A UN Inter-Agency Task Force meeting on Chernobyl will be held in April 2008. A Quadripartite Coordination Committee meeting will also be held later in 2008.

Providing scientifically sound information for Chernobyl-affected communities will remain a top priority. The \$2.4 million ICRIN full-fledged proposal will be finalized with the implementing agencies (UNICEF, IAEA and WHO) and submitted for funding to the UNTFHS in early 2008.

Commemorative events will be organized at UN Headquarters in New York in April 2008 to mark the 22nd anniversary of the Chernobyl accident.

A presentation will be delivered by the Office of UN Coordination of International Cooperation on Chernobyl at the annual international conference on Health and Environment organized by the World Information Transfer in April 2008. The focus of the forthcoming conference will be on issues related to Chernobyl-related post-traumatic syndrome among the affected population.

UNDP will continue developing sub-regional Chernobyl programming in four priority areas: community-driven development projects; policy advice; information provision; and giving the issue a high profile at UN Headquarters. In all four priority areas, UNDP will work on drawing experiences from the COs. In the framework of cross-border cooperation it will continue to promote synergies and share good practices.