

**DDG-NS STATEMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
“CHERNOBYL: LOOKING BACK TO GO
FORWARDS”**

6–7 September 2005 2003, ACV, Vienna

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In his opening speech, the Director General Dr ElBaradei expressed his deep thanks to all the participants of the Chernobyl Forum for their active cooperation that made this undertaking a success. I would like to add my thanks, particularly to the World Health Organization, whose constructive work in assessing the Chernobyl-related health effects especially attracting public interest was crucially important. We are also grateful to our UNDP colleagues who complemented the IAEA and WHO technical analyses of the Chernobyl accident environmental and health consequences with analysis of its social and economic consequences and practical recommendations in this sensitive area. Without consideration of humanitarian aspects of this multi-facet problem, the Forum’s report would not be an integrated, comprehensive and useful document for a broad audience.

The Forum aims to disseminate its findings and recommendations widely through UN organizations and the mass media. All of you received today the Forum's main document entitled: "Chernobyl's Legacy" that presents health and environmental impacts of the accident as well as its social and economic impacts as specifically prepared by UNDP experts. This brief report is based on two detailed technical reports on health and environmental issues, in total about 400 pages of unique consolidated scientific information, and the aforementioned UN report Strategy for Recovery.

In total, the documentation is quite comprehensive. At the request of the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the Forum has included very practical recommendations for further actions. A press campaign organized by public information experts from the IAEA, WHO and UNDP is covering the release of the Forum reports and this Conference.

During the last two years two expert groups — "Environment", coordinated by the IAEA, and "Health", coordinated by WHO — did an excellent job reviewing the most updated published information on their respective Chernobyl consequences. Each group consisted of highly

qualified experts from all over the world, including the three most affected countries. During the two-year operation, eleven meetings of expert groups were held. Their work was very productive and intensive in light of the large volume of information they had to process. More detailed information on findings and recommendations of those two expert groups can be found in the technical reports available now as working materials.

In all cases the scientists from the UN organisations, the international community, and the three most affected countries have been able to reach consensus in the preparation of their respective draft documents. The reports were approved by the Forum in April 2005 and represent the common position of the eight UN organizations and the three most affected countries regarding the environmental and health consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The recommended actions are also the result of consensus within the UN system.

I would like to express special thanks to participants of the expert group “Environment” coordinated by the Agency that prepared a very comprehensive technical report entitled: “Environmental Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident and Their Remediation: Twenty Years of Experience”. In several

months, just prior to 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident, the Agency will publish the edited technical report of about 250 pages in the Agency's regular Radiological Assessment Reports Series. The Chair of this expert group, Dr Lynn Anspaugh from the Utah State University, played a crucial role in preparation and editing of this report. I would like to thank him especially on behalf of the Agency and all the Chernobyl Forum.

The IAEA, as a specialised nuclear-related technical UN agency, has been involved in the mitigation of the Chernobyl accident consequences since early May 1986 when former Director General Hans Blix had visited Chernobyl in order to observe the physical damage and to discuss further actions. The IAEA took on many projects related to technical assistance, technical co-operation and research — with several immediate and longer term goals: first, to mitigate the accident's radiological, environmental and health consequences; second, to improve the overall safety of other RBMK reactors; and third, to understand and disseminate globally those lessons that could be learned from the Chernobyl experience. The projects executed between 1986 and 2005 covered the full range of topics: radiation, waste and

nuclear safety; monitoring human exposure; environmental restoration of contaminated land; treatment of people living in the affected areas; and development of special measures to reduce exposure levels.

The largest project took place in 1990. Over a two year period, the Agency coordinated the efforts of some 200 international experts over a two year period to complete an independent assessment of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Many missions to the three most affected countries were conducted and many meetings were held.

The Agency has also organized or supported numerous international meetings to foster information exchange and to promote further assessment of the accident's radiological consequences.

The Agency continues its ongoing activities regarding the mitigation of the accident's radiological consequences as part of the UN strategy "Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident — A Strategy for Recovery" launched in 2002. Further IAEA commitment in continued Chernobyl-related activities, mainly in nuclear and radiation safety fields, may involve the following areas:

- Safety of Shelter decommissioning,
- Safety of radioactive waste management in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone,
- Safety of remediation of contaminated land, especially in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone,
- Radiation safety of general public residing in contaminated areas,
- Environmental monitoring and monitoring of human exposure in contaminated areas, and
- Safety of operating and new nuclear power plants.

The Agency will not be directly involved in the technological aspects of Shelter decommissioning and radioactive waste management in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, since these issues are strongly supported by the European Commission through EBRD. However, application of the Agency's international safety standards could contribute to the radiation safety of both the general public and personnel involved in these operations. Let me describe in more detail our current and possible future cooperation with the three most affected countries, primarily through the Agency's technical cooperation programme.

Regarding the safety of Shelter decommissioning, the Agency and the Ukrainian Regulatory Body are already cooperating on this in the frame of a current national technical cooperation project. The project is focused on safe management of residual

radioactivity contained in damaged Chernobyl Unit 4. While Shelter decommissioning is a long-term process, more cooperation between the Agency and Ukraine might be foreseen. One of the topical issues for consideration is provision of radiation safety for workers participating in construction of the New Safe Confinement in specific occupational conditions.

Concerning the safety of radioactive waste management in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, as you will hear later in the Conference, the Chernobyl Forum recommended that “development of an integrated radioactive waste management programme for the Shelter, the Chernobyl NPP site and the Exclusion Zone is needed to ensure application of consistent management approaches, and sufficient facility capacity for all waste types.” This programme should consider a number of waste safety issues, such as assessment of total exposure from the numerous existing storage and disposal facilities, changes of radiation conditions due to construction of modern facilities and subsequent waste transfer to them, and other potential interventions. There is definitely room for further co-operation between the Agency and Ukraine on these waste safety topics. In particular, the Agency possesses relevant safety standards

and modern assessment methodology for various design of near surface waste disposal facilities.

Regarding the safety of remediation of contaminated land, especially in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, the Agency recently issued conceptual Safety Requirements entitled Remediation of Areas Contaminated by Past Activities and Accidents. This document is based on the recent ICRP recommendations and could be used as the methodological basis for Chernobyl remediation. The Agency has substantial experience in the application of its safety approaches to remediation of former uranium and thorium mining and milling as well as at some nuclear weapons test sites; this experience could be useful for Chernobyl-related projects.

Concerning the radiation safety of general public residing in contaminated areas, the Agency cooperates with the three most affected countries in the frame of a regional technical cooperation project that covers both Countermeasure Strategies and Monitoring of Human Exposure in Rural Areas Affected by the Chernobyl Accident. The Agency considers this project an opportunity for the three countries to harmonise their approaches to both countermeasures/remediation and radiation monitoring. As decontamination of settlements now

— twenty years after the fallout — may not be justifiable, the project mainly covers agricultural countermeasures and remediation aiming to reduce internal exposure.

On the subject of radiation monitoring, the Agency recently issued a Safety Guide entitled Environmental and Source Monitoring for Purposes of Radiation Protection that covers chronic exposure conditions such as in the Chernobyl-affected areas in the long term. This guide is now being implemented in the three countries through the regional technical cooperation project. The project includes procurement of deficient monitoring equipment and training of personnel.

Regarding the safety of operating and new nuclear power plants, the IAEA has brought together major nuclear power countries to discuss the Safety of Long Term Operation. Both the Russian Federation and Ukraine, since they have substantial programs for life extension of their NPPs, have been active participants in these discussions. The Russian Federation is also an active exporter of nuclear power plants and the IAEA has a very open and close relationship with the Russian designers and exporters of nuclear power plants in the area of design reviews. Recently, the IAEA performed design

reviews for the Tianwan NPP in China and the Bushehr NPP in Iran.

I have briefly characterised the most promising areas for cooperation between the Agency and Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. These are only illustrative examples; we will be happy to discuss the collaboration priority issues with our counterparts in the three countries. We should also consider the need for additional research on environmental issues as recommended by the Chernobyl Forum in its report and in area of nuclear safety.

Rest assured that the Agency, as part of UN family, will continue to support activities aimed at overcoming the adverse radiological effects of the largest nuclear accident in human history.

I look forward to a successful conference and I expect that the results of your discussions will help shape the Agency's future work in nuclear and radiation safety.

Thank you.