

# The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force Meeting on Chernobyl

23 April 2021

The second virtual Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) meeting on Chernobyl was chaired by Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator and UN Coordinator of the International Cooperation on Chernobyl, and moderated by Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, UNDP Regional Director of the Bureau for Europe and the CIS. The event which this year marked the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, is an annual IATF meeting which reviews progress made on Chernobyl related activities for the past year and provides updates on future work. It was attended by representatives from the government of the three most affected countries and the UN agencies, international organizations and other government representatives. *(Full list of participants attached)*

The details of all the recovery efforts and activities are outlined below while the full statements from all organizations' representatives can be found in the Annexes.

The Administrator welcomed the representatives of governments, agencies, and organizations and thanked them for coming together for the annual event which this year takes on a particular significance as we are marking the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. While reminding us of the hundreds of emergency workers who responded to the accident and the hundreds of thousands of people uprooted from their home in the aftermath, the Administrator stated that the anniversary is an occasion to acknowledge the recovery efforts achieved by the government of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, supported by the international community. It is also an opportunity to take stock of the lessons learned and reflect on the recovery process.

The Administrator noted that the knowledge gained from the tragedy at Chernobyl is helping other people and communities around the world to protect themselves and recover from trauma. He mentioned that the world was able to mitigate the worst impact of Chernobyl by working together and should do the same while facing the Corona virus pandemic, as disasters know no border and require joint effort to address them. The Administrator reminded that since 1986, the United Nations has helped to address the needs of people in the Chernobyl area through emergency and humanitarian aid and by supporting recovery and social economic development still ongoing. The contribution of the UN country teams, specialized UN agencies, civil society organizations, international partners and donors to the concrete outcomes for the people and nature in Chernobyl-affected areas was recognized. Furthermore, in close cooperation with local authorities and sister agencies, and with support from the development partners, UNDP has been leading a transition from emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to a phase of capacity building and sustainable development. Looking forward, an investment platform is being launched to support existing enterprises and create new bankable projects on green economy, sustainable agriculture, and women's entrepreneurship in Belarus; there are plans for UNDP accelerator lab to develop digital solutions and launch a platform aiming at accelerating local innovation.

In conclusion the Administrator thanked everyone who has worked tirelessly to restore hope, alleviate suffering and protect current and future generations in the Chernobyl affected regions.

Ukraine - **H.E. Mr. Roman Abramovsky**, Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, described the circumstances of the Chernobyl disaster which changed the course of Ukrainian history, taught the world an important lesson about nuclear energy, changed the lives of generations and has had a long-term impact of environment. He highlighted efforts by the international community, the governments contributing to the Chernobyl shelter fund, and the EBRD to implement projects at industrial sites and for replenishing funds when needed. With the help of UN institutions and European partners, Ukraine has successfully implementing international projects aimed at restoring the exclusion zone and bringing it back to an environmentally safe state. In cooperation with international community, Ukraine was able to build and put into operation a new and safe structure to confine the remains of reactor 4, thus creating a new stage in nuclear safety in the world. The Minister also mentioned that **work is currently on the way to design storage facilities for the second phase of the vector production complex and that sixteen international assistance projects are being implemented in the exclusion zone** to facilitate the decommissioning of the Chernobyl power plant and improving the radioactive waste management system. Minister Abramovsky **thanked all the international partners for not leaving the country alone to face radiation and to fight the effects of this terrible accident.**

Belarus – **Mr. Dmitry Tkachuk**, Head of International Cooperation Department, Ministry for Emergency Situations, related the impact of the disaster on the affected areas in Belarus and their population. He also indicated that the policy for response for Chernobyl disaster cover the transition from emergency to rehabilitation activities toward the development of social and economic potential of the region. Mr. Tkachuk mentioned the **adoption of the new state program for overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster for 2021-2025 with funding of about €1b.** Four relevant programmes of the Union State have been implemented, and the fifth one is under implementation from 2019 with the total value of about \$67m. The proposal by Belarus to organize a UN decade for rehabilitation and sustainable development of the affected regions was also adopted. He also **expressed the appreciation of the republic of Belarus for the international support in overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster which he stated to be a common problem which needs to be resolved collectively.**

Russian Federation – **Mr. Dmitry Chumakov**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Mission to the United Nations mentioned that **the commemoration of the thirty fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is a milestone that will never be forgotten in his country.** He expressed his appreciation for the work of UNDP in the affected region and also thanked the Administrator for his effort and the role the Inter-Agency Task force (IATF) and his colleagues in dealing with this issue. Mr. Chumakov also stated that Russia and Belarus are constantly making efforts to protect population, rehabilitate contaminated lands and gradually return them to normal state through implementation of joint programs under the Union state. The document “Priority Directions and Priorities for the further Development of Union State 2018-2022” includes a section on environmental nuclear radiation safety on overcoming the consequences of disaster which provides for the implementation of green policies. Joint measures for comprehensive medical care and rehabilitation of citizens of the two countries are also being implemented. Mr. Chumakov concluded by expressing his appreciation for the opportunity he was given to make this statement and indicated that he looks forward to receiving an update from the UNCT and UN agencies engaged in Chernobyl cooperation.

**Ms. Joanna Kazana**, UN Resident Coordinator in Ukraine, on behalf of UN Country Team presented a few statistics describing a picture of the situation continuing thirty-five years after the accident, the health, social, economic and psychological consequences which explain the UN commitment and continued engagement in support of the national efforts. She highlighted activities of agencies such as UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, IMO, WHO, UNFPA complementing the leading role of Government. Looking forward, Ms. Kazana **believes that the long-term recovery efforts around the Chernobyl must be linked to the sustainable development agenda, Sustainable Development Goals**, vision agreed with the government of Belarus and included in the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 and in the agencies' country programme document. She also stated that the **UN is marking the anniversary of Chernobyl with the full commitment and resolve to continue to innovate and assist the communities on the ground.**

**Ms. Alexandra Solovieva**, UNDP Resident Representative - UNDP continues to play the coordination and integration role working in close partnership with the UN system to support Chernobyl transition to longer term sustainable development. Ms. Solovieva expressed gratitude for the leadership of national counterparts and the support of key donors. She **presented the new investment platform which is a tool for inclusive and green development aiming to attract investors through the SDGs.** She **mentioned that the newly launched accelerator lab is building a digital solution and also invited all partners for cooperation on this platform.**

**Ms. Dafina Gercheva**, UNDP Resident Representative on behalf of UNCT Ukraine stated that **the anniversary is an opportunity to take stock of lessons learned, reflect on the recovery process and appreciate the heroic efforts of first responders who sacrificed their health and in some cases their lives to save others.** She **mentioned the linkage between the long-term recovery efforts and the SDGs.** Ms. Gercheva highlighted the similarities in some aspects between the response to COVID-19 and the response to the nuclear accident. She noted that UN broad base support to the region covers socio economic development work, risk management, healthcare provision as well as knowledge management and policy advice. Ms. Gercheva reminded that the transformation of the Chernobyl impacted region remains a long-term challenge and a huge undertaking that can only be accomplished with collective actions by all partners. The UN family in Ukraine remains committed to full recovery and sustainable development of Chernobyl affected regions.

**Mr. Werner Obermeyer**, Director of the WHO Office at the United Nations stated that the 35 years of recovery efforts that followed Chernobyl nuclear accident, have taught the global community invaluable lessons of resistance, self-reliance, community engagement, and humanity. He **noted the similarities that can clearly be seen between certain aspects of the response to the pandemic and the nuclear accident.** Mr. Obermeyer also indicated that in terms of supporting of Chernobyl health effects research, **WHO continues working with its collaborating centers in the Russian Federation and Ukraine** which are leading the long-term follow-up studies on the affected populations and Chernobyl clean-up workers. **He announced that in commemoration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident WHO is holding a special webinar which will focus on the lessons of mitigation of the largest health-related impact of the accident – psychosocial and mental health consequences,** which are closely related to the socio-economic factors, community engagement, and risk communication strategies.”

**Ms. Katherina Deufrains**, Programme Management Officer for Ukraine, IAEA **reminded that IAEA played a central role in coordinating international response, including assistance to reduce the impact of the disaster and mitigate its consequences.** For the past three decades, **IAEA has provided over 17.1 million EUR in assistance** through national and regional projects. Ms. Deufrain elaborated on IAEA technical cooperation activities on national and sub-regional levels in area of radioactive waste management, human resource management, improvement remediation of the environment. She also recalled that **IAEA has been instrumental in establishing a pilot system for the collection, preservation and transfer of relevant information** and indicated that a relevant dedicated website is currently under development. To conclude, Ms. Deufrains **reiterate IAEA's commitment to continuing its assistance and support on Chernobyl related issues in the future.**

**Mr. Gerd Dercon**, Head of Soil and Water Management and Crop Nutrition Laboratory, Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Technique in Food Agriculture **informed that the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre is providing support and technical inputs in the areas covered by its mandate concerning food and production** in agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector. With regard to radioactivity in agriculture **the activities include information on remediation of radioactive contamination in agriculture, normative standards and guidance.** Furthermore, Mr. Dercon **indicated that FAO is continuing to work in five major areas**, namely, policy advice and practical support; information exchange and maintaining expertise on remediation; information management; norms and guidance and support and coordination of research and development activities, related to radioactivity in food and agriculture.

**Ms. Borislava Batandjieva-Metcalf**, Secretary, United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, (UNSCEAR) related the scientific work UNSCEAR has done in its 65 years and how its assessments provide independent scientific foundation for UN agencies and governments to formulate safety standards and programmes for protection against ionizing radiation. She **reported on the conclusion of the Scientific Committee's assessment** of the radiation exposures and health effects of workers and public after the Chernobyl accident in 1986 and the **significant national and international efforts that have been undertaken to draw important lessons** to enhance emergency planning and preparedness, safety and mitigating measures to reduce risks from future accidents worldwide. Ms. Batandjieva-Metcalf **gave assurances that** despite the difficult situation due to COVID pandemic, **UNSCEAR continues to follow up reliable new scientific data on public exposure and is committed to disseminate widely the Committee's deliberations.**

**Mr. Mahir Aliyev**, Regional Coordinator, Europe Office, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) used the opportunity to recall that along with the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl accident, we are commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear accident in Fukushima. He also reminded us that **this year starts the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration** announced by the UN SG. Mr. Aliyev stated that **the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is an important knowledge hub which is valuable for the entire world.** He concluded by **appealing to the distinguished representatives of the three Chernobyl-affected states to consider developing a joint programme of cooperation on the affected territories.**

**Mr. Jaime Nadal**, UNFPA Representative in Ukraine stated that 35 years after the Chernobyl accident, **it is important to ensure integration and availability of services for the people affected** by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in the three interrelated aspects of sustainable development: demographic, social and health. He provided more detailed information on the activities UNFPA is

carrying out in these areas in Belarus. Furthermore, in keeping with the work of the rest of the UN System, Mr. Nadal **indicated that UNFPA plans to continue deploying special attention to the areas affected in the Chernobyl Accident, in line with the principle of “Leaving no One behind”.**

**H.E. Ms. Mirgul Moldoisaeva**, Permanent Representative of Kyrgyzstan to the UN expressed great appreciation for the coordinator role of the UNDP in the international cooperation on Chernobyl including the work undertaken by the interagency task force. Ms. Moldoisaeva noted that five thousand of the liquidators which help reduce the effects from the disaster were from Kyrgyzstan. The commemoration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster is an opportunity for the survivors to reconnect with their friends and pay tribute to those who have fallen. She also reminded us that while the Chernobyl disaster took place 35<sup>th</sup> year ago, it continues to affect the entire region. The long-term consequences still persist. She also highlighted the issue of radioactive uranium waste located in Kyrgyzstan and other countries in Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan initiated a number of UNGA resolutions on **uranium tailings** urging the international community, including financial institutions and donors, to address the issue, including through providing funding for cleanup activities. These resolutions also contribute to mitigate the consequences of Chernobyl disaster.

**Mr. Maksym Shevchuk**, Deputy Chairman of the State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management highlighted the role of the agency which manages safety and productivity in the Chernobyl zone. **Its focus is on safety and security particularly with the decommissioning of the Chernobyl powerplant.** He described the operations in place including fire management measures, fire prevention and early prevention. Mr. Shevchuk announced that **a science hub has been created to make scientific activities more coordinated and efficient.**

**Mr. Mateusz Sakowicz**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations stated that his country as a neighboring country and a friend of Ukraine has been engaged in providing assistance and in recovery efforts. Together with UNDP and Ukraine, Poland **implemented projects which aim at improving local capacity to promote and sustain entrepreneurship and SMEs development in the affected territories.** The cooperation with UNDP Ukraine is highly valued. Mr. Sakowicz acknowledged that recovering and transforming Chernobyl remains a daunting long-term challenge, a tremendous undertaking to be accomplished only by collective actions by all partners and at all levels. He mentioned that **Ukraine remains the largest recipient of Polish development aid with an aid budget of US\$62m in 2020.** Mr. Sakowicz indicated that **Poland is committed to continue to support the reform process in Ukraine.** Support to the affected population will also remain a key area of engagement.

**Mr. Simon Evans**, Associate Director, Nuclear Safety Department, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) stated that this year has been crucial for EBRD as **the two major projects they have been dealing with for infrastructure and decommissioning are nearing completion.** They are the largest ever international collaboration in nuclear safety. He noted that the international community has been steadfast supporter of the construction of a new Interim Spent Fuel Storage facility which will provide long term and secured facilities for all the fuels from Units 1,2,3. Following request from Ukraine, **the bank has also introduced a new International Chernobyl Cooperation Account to support capabilities to address on-going challenges.** The key objective is to ensure that a comprehensive plan is developed to support long term decommissioning.

**Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger**, UNDP Regional Director of the Bureau for Europe and the CIS thanked the participants of the IATF convened on the occasion of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl accident. She recalled that this meeting was the thirteenth IATF since UNDP took over the role of coordinating international cooperation in Chernobyl and that much progress was attained from the joint work. Ms. Spoljaric Egger mentioned that the concrete outcome would not be possible without UNCTs working together with their institutional and national partners, nor without the work of all UN agencies, civil society, the international partners and donors. She reiterated the continued engagement and support to the governments of Belarus and Ukraine to fill the remaining gaps and fully overcome the consequences of Chernobyl. Ms. Spoljaric Egger announced that the SG will submit to the UNGA next year a report “Strengthening of International Cooperation and Coordination of Effort to Study, Mitigate and Minimize the Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster” on which we will work together to present the challenges and lessons learned for the past three years.

**List of Annexes:**

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## Annex 1.

# The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl

23 April 2021, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m. NY time

<https://undp.zoom.us/j/87475659054?pwd=MjhVazRJSZHZycHdiMUUxTmUra1V3Zz09>

Meeting ID: 874 7565 9054; Passcode: 585460

## AGENDA

TIME	ITEM	DETAILS
08:30-08:35	Welcome and opening remarks by the Chair	<b>Achim Steiner</b> , UNDP Administrator, UN Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl
08:35-08:55	Statements by the Governments of the three most affected countries	<b>Mirjana Spoljaric Egger</b> , UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS and moderator of the event, invites government representatives to deliver statements:  <b>Ukraine - Roman Abramovsky</b> , Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources  <b>Belarus - Dmitry Tkachuk</b> , Head of International Cooperation Department, Ministry for Emergency Situations  <b>Russian Federation - Dmitry Chumakov</b> , Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations
08:55-09:10	Updates from UNCTs	RC in Belarus – <b>Joanna Kazana</b>  UNDP RR in Belarus – <b>Alexandra Solovieva</b>  UNDP RR in Ukraine will speak on behalf of UNCT – <b>Dafina Gercheva</b>

09:10 - 09:35	Updates from UN Agencies	<p><b>World Health Organization (WHO)</b> – <b>Werner Obermeyer</b>, Director of the WHO Office at the United Nations</p> <p><b>International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)</b> – <b>Katherina Deufrains</b>, Programme Management Officer, Division for Europe, Department of Technical Cooperation</p> <p><b>Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Technique in Food Agriculture</b> – <b>Gerd Dercon</b>, Head of Soil and Water Management and Crop Nutrition Laboratory</p> <p><b>United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)</b> – <b>Borislava Batandjieva-Metcalf</b>, Secretary</p> <p><b>UN Environment Programme (UNEP)</b> – <b>Mahir Aliyev</b>, Regional Coordinator, Europe Office</p> <p><b>United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)</b> – <b>Jaime Nadal</b>, UNFPA Representative in Ukraine</p>
09:35- 09:55	Updates and remarks from country representatives , IFIs and international organizations	<p><b>Kyrgyzstan</b> – <b>Mirgul Moldoisaeva</b>, Permanent Representative to the United Nations</p> <p><b>Ukraine</b> – <b>Maksym Shevchuk</b>, Deputy Chairman, State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management</p> <p><b>Poland</b> – <b>Mateusz Sakowicz</b>, Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations</p> <p><b>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)</b> – <b>Simon Evans</b>, Associate Director, Nuclear Safety Department</p>
09:50 - 10:00	Closing	<p><b>Mirjana Spoljaric Egger</b>, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS</p>

## Annex 2.

### List of Participants

Country/Organization	Name	Title
<b>Speakers</b>		
EBRD	Simon Evans	Associate Director, Nuclear Safety Department
IAEA	Katherina Deufrains	Programme Management Officer, Division for Europe, Department of Technical Cooperation
Ukraine	Roman Abramovsky	Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources
Belarus, Ministry for Emergency Situations	Dmitry Tkachuk	Head of International Cooperation Department
Mission of Kyrgyzstan to the UN	Mirgul Moldoisaeva	Permanent Representative
Mission of Poland to the UN	Mateusz Sakowicz	Deputy Permanent Representative
Mission of the Russian Federation to the UN	Dmitry Chumakov	Deputy Permanent Representative
State Agency of Ukraine on Exclusion Zone Management	Maksym Shevchuk	Deputy Chairman
Joint FAO/IAEA	Gerd Dercon	Head of Soil and Water Management and Crop Nutrition Laboratory
UNSCEAR	Borislava Batandjieva-Metcalf	Secretary
UNEP	Mahir Aliyev	Regional Coordinator, Europe Office
UNFPA	Jaime Nadal	Representative in Ukraine
UNCT Belarus	Joanna Kazana	Resident Coordinator
UNDP	Achim Steiner	UN Coordinator of International Cooperation in Chernobyl
UNDP	Mirjana Spoljaric Egger	Regional Director, RBEC
UNDP Belarus	Alexandra Solovieva	Resident Representative
UNDP Ukraine	Dafina Gercheva	Resident Representative
WHO	Werner Obermeyer	Director of the WHO Office at the UN
<b>Other participants</b>		
DCO	Rosemary Kalapurakal	Deputy Director
DCO	Michael Schaadt	Regional Liaison Officer, Europe and Central Asia
FAO	Qu Liang	Director

FAO/IAEA	Carl Blackburn	Irradiation and Food/Radiological Safety Specialist
International Agency for Research on Cancer	Evgenia Ostroumova	Researcher
IFRC Delegation to the UN	Liana Ghukasyan	Senior Humanitarian Affairs Delegate
Mission of Belarus to the UN	Artsiom Tozik	Deputy Permanent Representative
Mission of Belarus to the UN	Alena Kavaleuskaya	Counsellor
Mission of Japan to the UN	Hiroko Amano	First Secretary
Mission of Kyrgyzstan to the UN	Meder Utebaev	Counsellor
Mission of Pakistan to the UN	Gul Qaiser Sarwani	First Secretary
Mission of Poland to the UN	Joanna Lalak	First Secretary
Mission of Ukraine to the UN	Sergiy Kyslytsya	Permanent Representative
Mission of Ukraine to the UN	Iryna Yarosh	Counsellor (Economic Affairs)
Mission of Ukraine to the UN	Denys Ludchak	Third Secretary
Mission of the United Kingdom to the UN	Ben Roberts	Senior Policy Adviser
UNDP – Belarus	Armen Martirosyan	Deputy Resident Representative
UNDP Belarus	Yauheni Kastiukevich	Executive Associate
UNDP Ukraine	Manal Fouani	Deputy Resident Representative
UNECE	Olena Miskun	Representative in Ukraine
UNICEF	Tanja Radocaj	Representative in Belarus
UNV	Kyoko Yokosuka	Deputy Executive Coordinator
WHO	Masoud Dara	Regional Director's Special Representative to Belarus
WHO	Valiantsin Rusovich	Public Health Officer
World Bank	Alisa Akutsina	Operations Analyst
Laboratory of Radiation Safety Practical Centre of Hygien, Mink, Belarus	Alena Nikalayenka	Head
Belarussian State Medical University	Alexander Stojarov	Department Professor
Republican Scientific and Practical Centre of Hygiene	Natallia Kacharhina	Junior Researcher
RSPCH Minsk	Viktoryia Kliaus	
	Christine Durbak	(no affiliation or title provided)
	Mariya Fartotskaya	(no affiliation or title provided)
	Inna Fironova	(no affiliation or title provided)
	Katia Popova	(no affiliation or title provided)
	Larisa Rozdyalouskaya	(no affiliation or title provided)
	Natallia Saroko	(no affiliation or title provided)

### **Annex 3. Statements**

#### **Statement of Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator and UN Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues and friends,

Welcome to the second virtual Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl. Joining us today are representatives of the Republic of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine – the countries most affected by the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Let me also welcome the UN Resident Coordinators and UNDP Resident Representatives in Minsk and Kyiv, DCO Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, representatives from IAEA, UNSCEAR, FAO, UNEP, UNFPA, UNV, UNICEF, WHO, and representatives from EBRD and the World Bank.

On 26 April, we will mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. We remember the hundreds of emergency workers who responded to the accident, and more than 350,000 people uprooted from their homes in its aftermath. We stand in solidarity with the millions who have been traumatized by lingering fears about their health and livelihoods.

The anniversary is an occasion to acknowledge the tremendous recovery efforts achieved by the Governments of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, supported by the international community. The anniversary also offers an opportunity to take stock of lessons learned and reflect on the recovery process.

The Chernobyl disaster brought the international community together to support the enormous efforts of local, regional, and national authorities. Knowledge gained from the tragedy at Chernobyl is helping other countries and communities around the world to protect themselves and to recover from trauma, including during the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear emergency of 2011.

The world mitigated the worst impacts of Chernobyl by working together. The coronavirus pandemic demands the same. Then, as now, we were dealing with an invisible enemy, trying to figure out what particles that we could not see might do. What was true then still seems true today – disasters know no borders and require joined-up efforts to address them.

#### UNDP's support

Excellencies, colleagues,

Since 1986, the United Nations has helped to address the needs of people in the areas surrounding Chernobyl, first through emergency and humanitarian aid, and then by supporting recovery and social and economic development, which still continues.

Concrete outcomes for the people and nature in the Chernobyl-affected areas would not be possible without our UN Country Teams, specialized UN agencies, civil society and international partners and donors.

For more than a decade, with support from the development partners and in close cooperation with local authorities and sister agencies, UNDP has been leading a transition from the emergency relief and humanitarian assistance to capacity building and sustainable development. UNDP has incorporated support provided to the Chernobyl-affected regions into its regular development programming in Belarus and Ukraine.

UNDP's work on remediation falls under a broader framework on risk reduction – one of the hallmarks of UNDP's activities globally – and specifically on climate and environmental risks, technological disasters and strengthening of national and local capacities in addressing and preventing the occurrence of these risks.

For example, in Belarus, UNDP helps to protect health and environment, and promote efficient and inclusive environmental management through elimination of retained Persistent Organic Pollutants legacies and development of capacity to manage them sustainably.

In Ukraine, the Information Center "Chernobyl", opened by UNDP with GEF support, is raising awareness about the results of the regular environment and radiation monitoring in the Exclusion Zone and beyond.

#### Looking forward

To further support local development in the Chernobyl-affected districts, UNDP in Belarus is launching an investment platform to support existing enterprises and create new bankable projects in such areas as green economy, organic agriculture, and women entrepreneurship. UNDP Accelerator Lab plans to develop a digital solution to automate the processes of collecting and assessing project proposals under the platform. Launch of such a platform aims at accelerating local innovation and points of resilience and growth.

UNDP is discussing opportunities for collaboration with Polesie State University and Polesie State Radioecological Reserve on their groundbreaking research on disaster recovery and rehabilitation which is recognized in Belarus and beyond.

In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone who has worked tirelessly on a mission to restore hope, alleviate suffering, and protect current and future generations in the Chernobyl-affected regions.

**Statement by Mr.Dmitry Chumakov  
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Mission to the UN  
at the IATF on Chernobyl meeting**

23 April 2021

Madame Moderator,

Dear Mr. Achim Steiner,

Excellences,

Dear Colleagues,

This year meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Chernobyl marks 35 years since the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe happened. This tragic milestone is deeply rooted in the history of our country, and let me assure you it will never be forgotten.

We deeply appreciate the continuous work and supervision of the UNDP on Chernobyl dossier. And thank you, Mr. Steiner, for all efforts in strengthening the role of IATF in this process.

Madame Moderator,

In order to overcome the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, Russia and Belarus are constantly making efforts to protect the population, rehabilitate contaminated lands and gradually return them to a normal state, including through the implementation of joint programs and activities under the Union State. The relevant scientific and technical program was adopted one of the first within the framework of the Union State. In total, since 1998, four large-scale Union projects have been implemented, aimed at ensuring the safety of life and activities of citizens of the two States in the affected territories. These documents reflect and supplement the main directions of the state policy of Russia in this area.

Currently, the fifth Joint Action Program (for the years 2019-2022) is being implemented at the expense of the budget of the Union State (nearly 13 mln US dollars). The goal is to create conditions for the safe life of the population in radioactively contaminated areas, improve the systems of radiation safety of the population and agricultural production, create conditions for the return of radioactively contaminated areas to normal life. For this purpose, a complex of joint activities, research, development, technological work is being implemented. It is envisaged to develop new approaches to technologies aimed at reducing the level of radionuclides in agricultural products, reducing the risks of transboundary transfer of radionuclides in emergency situations and increasing the efficiency of their elimination. Inspections of resettled (alienated) territories will be carried out for the possibility of their return to economic circulation, joint measures for integrated radioecological monitoring of territories exposed to radioactive contamination. These works will be carried out in the Gomel and Mogilev regions of Belarus and in the Bryansk region of Russia.

Within the framework of the document "Priority directions and priorities for the further development of the Union State for 2018-2022." also included a section on environmental, nuclear, radiation safety and overcoming the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which provides for the implementation of an agreed policy in the field of environmental safety and environmental protection, ozone layer protection, hydrometeorology, combating climate change, monitoring the state and pollution of the environment.

In addition, joint measures for comprehensive medical care and rehabilitation of citizens of the two countries are also being implemented, in particular, treatment and rehabilitation of children from the areas most affected by the Chernobyl disaster. In 2020, these activities were canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions, but this practice will resume after the sanitary and epidemiological situation normalizes.

Thank you very much, Madame Moderator, for giving us the floor and we are looking forward to receiving an update from the UN country teams and UN agencies engaged in Chernobyl cooperation. This information is of high interest to us.

## Statement by Ms. Joanna Kazana, UN Resident Coordinator in Belarus

1. Thank you, Mirjana.
2. Excellencies, Administrator, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen
3. It is my pleasure to take part in this annual IATF representing the UN Country Team in Belarus
4. I want to acknowledge the participation of the members of the UN Country Team – representatives of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and the team of the World Bank in Belarus.
5. It is my pleasure to participate in the annual Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl.
6. Before I speak of the UN work in affected areas, let me just highlight a few numbers:

In Belarus, **more than 1 million people** live on the territory of **21 rayons most affected by the Chernobyl accident**

7. 235 billion USD is the estimated value of the health, social and economic losses suffered in Belarus over the last 35 years due to the accident
8. As of today, most of the **contaminated settlements and facilities**, the list of which included 2,200 entities are still there. Only 144 such settlements or facilities were taken off the list in 35 years.
9. The UN Country Team in Belarus is already implementing diverse activities that benefit the most-affected areas focusing on community-based development, health, infrastructure, policy advice, environmental security:
  - UNDP works on environment protection and economic development in Chernobyl affected rayons by fostering sustainable and innovative local development capacities and improving the quality of life and self-realization of citizens, both in urban and rural areas.
  - World Bank invests in the most affected regions through operations in the sectors of water and sanitation, forestry, biomass district heating, residential energy efficiency, general and higher education, and the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 infection.

- UNICEF improves the quality of life in Child and Adolescent Friendly Cities through the development of self-government, robust monitoring of situation with the realization of child rights and promotion of inclusive education.
- IOM supports countertrafficking efforts and works on integrated management of border between Belarus and Ukraine, including in the affected regions.
- WHO is oriented towards addressing the broader public health issues within the post-Chernobyl agenda.
- UNFPA promotes healthy lifestyle among youth and supports the work of Red Cross volunteers in all oblasts of Belarus.
- UNHCR supports the economic and social rehabilitation of refugees and stateless persons through temporary residence points in Brest and Homiel in cooperation with the local authorities.
- UN Environment Programme implements a project in Ukraine aimed at expanding the current use of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone in close collaboration with the Poleskiy Radiological Reserve of Belarus.

10. I would like to highlight some of the prominent UN initiatives implemented in the Chernobyl-affected rayons of Belarus: provision of direct access to finance for SMEs; establishment of business incubators; development of “Green Schools” educational programmes; promotion of maternal and child health; piloting of environmental initiatives, including air quality and radiation monitoring; restoration and sustainable management of forest and wetland ecosystems; ensuring residential energy efficiency; demarcation of the Belarus-Ukraine border in the contaminated area; improvement of the National Disaster Risk Management Strategy in Belarus for 2019-2030, treatment and prevention of COVID-19 in the Chernobyl affected rayons and finally a launch of the Chernobyl Investment Platform.

11. UN agencies undertake annual field visits to the Chernobyl affected areas and always acknowledge that people in those areas still face the consequences of the disaster and carry the social, economic and health related burden of overcoming those. The economic growth among the affected districts is very uneven. Each district requires the development of a unique strategy for socio-economic development.

12. Looking ahead, long-term recovery efforts around Chernobyl must be linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. This vision is reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 as well as in the agency programme documents (UNDP CPD) and resonates with the National Strategy of Sustainable Development 2035 and other national programme documents. The forward-looking Chernobyl Investment Platform presented by UNDP should ensure the transition from small scale donor funded local initiatives to large scale development projects that require better planning, innovation and implementation of previously underestimated issues such as green economy, organic agriculture, circular economy, women entrepreneurship, etc.

13. We hope that the coordination effort on part of both the national authorities and UN will not only boost the development of the Chernobyl affected areas but also strengthen their resilience in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the COVID-19 outbreak bears some direct resemblances with the Chernobyl disaster. Similar to Chernobyl and Fukushima, COVID-19 is also making a tremendous impact on mental and emotional health of the affected populations. In addition, transition and return to

normality after the ongoing pandemic will need to use decision-making processes based on a firm evidence base.

14. Some important lessons can be drawn from the history of Chernobyl and applied to the current situation. Things that were missed back then, should not be neglected now. Firstly, the challenge COVID-19 has to be met with multi-pronged response on all fronts: health, economy and social welfare. Secondly, people should be well-informed and put in a position to protect themselves. Thirdly, the response should go beyond the immediate relief; the mitigation measures, especially for the most vulnerable, should be planned and implemented immediately, leaving no one behind.
  
15. With that, we are fully committed to continuing and expanding our work with the Government of Belarus on revitalizing the affected areas, mobilizing necessary resources and addressing the most pressing issues, old and new, in the context of sustainable development strategies and programmes.
  
16. Like the Chernobyl accident changed forever the lives of millions of people 35 years ago, now we see our lives and lifestyles affected forever by COVID-19 pandemic. Learning from the Chernobyl response is key. Ensuring transparency, providing information and support to communities to be able to withstand the challenges, to grow and create conditions for prosperity of the future generations, these are the lasting principles that help to leave no one behind.

## **Statement by Ms. Alexandra Solovieva, UNDP Resident Representative in Belarus**

Dear Achim, Mirjana, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

UNDP in Belarus continues to play the coordination and integration role working in close partnership with the UN system to support Chernobyl transition to longer-term sustainable development.

In the past 5 years 25 initiatives were implemented in 21 most affected areas. They resulted in the development of local entrepreneurship and businesses, especially among women and youth, prevention of non-communicable diseases, development of organic farming and ecotourism, STEM education, ecosystem restoration and disaster reduction. We are grateful for the leadership of national counterparts, Ministry for Emergency Situations and MFA, and support of key donors such as GEF, EU, Russia, Poland, cooperation with Japan, Italy, NGOs and other partners.

The Chernobyl affected territories have proven their resilience, but they need additional sources of development. In March this year UNDP and the National SDG Coordinator presented the Chernobyl Investment Platform. It is a tool for inclusive and green development, aiming to attract investors to the SDGs. We hope that it will bring together the efforts of different stakeholders - UN agencies, government, civil society and the private sector. And create opportunities for bankable projects, financing for development, public-private partnerships, employment and social entrepreneurship in the regions. The newly launched UNDP Accelerator Lab in Belarus is building a digital solution.

We invite all partners for cooperation on this platform.

**Statement by Ms. Dafina Gercheva, UNDP Resident Representative in Ukraine on behalf of UNCT**

Excellencies, Distinguished participants, dear colleagues, Ambassadors, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, Multilateral and Bilateral Agencies, Distinguished Representatives of Governments,

I am honoured to represent the UN Country Team in Ukraine in this UN-wide coordination meeting on Chernobyl.

On Monday, 26 of April 2021, we will mark the 35 years since the worst man-made nuclear disaster in the history of nuclear energy. The accident's radiological and non-radiological consequences affected directly and indirectly the lives of millions of people in Europe. This anniversary offers an opportunity to take stock of lessons learned, reflect on the recovery process, and appreciate once again the heroic efforts of the first responders who rushed to the damaged reactor and sacrificed their health, and in many cases their lives, to save others.

The 35 years of recovery efforts that followed the Chernobyl nuclear accident have taught the global community invaluable lessons of resistance, self-reliance, community engagement, and humanity.

Looking ahead, long-term recovery efforts around Chernobyl should continue to be linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda's promise to leave no one behind applies above all to those caught up in crises around the world; those who have struggled for years to overcome trauma and fears about their health and livelihoods; and those who continue to demonstrate their resilience as they walk the road to recovery and development. The UN Inter-

Agency Task Force on Chernobyl that meets every year on the date of the Chernobyl anniversary, calls upon consolidated global efforts towards Chernobyl recovery and continued efforts to mitigate the health and socio-economic consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Today, when the world is fighting the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is impossible not to notice the similarities in certain aspects of response to COVID19 to the response to a nuclear accident. The interventions such as identifying affected persons, triage, decontamination measures, hospitals surge capacity, public sheltering, communicating risks, use of social media, countering disinformation and social stigmatization of affected people, also would apply to chemical and radiological hazards. In addition, like the Chernobyl aftermath, recovering forward better and greener and returning to normality after the ongoing pandemic requires strong political will and evidence-based decision-making.

The UN's broad-based support to the region covers socio-economic development work, risk management, healthcare provision, work to reduce radiation exposure, as well as knowledge management and policy advice. In the interests of time, allow me to highlight just a few examples:

**UNICEF** continues to address the health needs of affected children, by focusing on advocating for healthy lifestyle and reproductive, maternal and child health services.

The **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** continues to support the implementation of a project on decommissioning and radioactive waste management at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

**UNDP** continues to support community mobilization and inclusive local development through innovative solutions to increase energy efficiency in public and residential buildings; support SMEs; promote gender equality and human rights; strengthen social inclusion and social cohesion.

**WHO** continues collaboration with the National Academy of Medical Sciences of Ukraine and its different organizations that provide health care for Chernobyl-affected population and Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant workers – and hosts the Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network.

Colleagues, over the years, we have learnt key lessons and identified important areas that we need to continue to take forward:

Firstly, we need to pursue a holistic and systemic approach in addressing social, economic, health and environmental challenges stemming from the catastrophe, and this requires breaking down the sectoral silos and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Secondly, fostering cooperation, promoting dialogue, and working alongside communities to overcome the long-lasting consequences of Chernobyl. Leveraging the power of the United Nations' strong community-based approaches, we are building a platform for dialogue between the affected communities, local government, and other stakeholders. This becomes even more critical, as Ukraine is implementing its decentralization reform.

Thirdly, the Exclusion Zone needs special attention to better manage its natural resources and preserve its fragile biodiversity. Last year the Government of Ukraine launched a new initiative to set up the Chernobyl Renewable Energy Hub. The idea is to use the infrastructure available in Chernobyl to attract investments into solar and wind energy in the Chernobyl region.

Lastly, we, as the international community alongside the national governments should continue to advocate for the improved and changed perception and stigma that surrounds Chernobyl and its affected areas. We should continue supporting sustainable development in the recovering regions, focusing on entrepreneurships, tourism and transition to green economy.

As we move forward into the future, and until completely safe alternatives to nuclear energy are available, we should do everything we can to reduce energy consumption, improve the efficiency of energy transmission to minimize the amount that is wasted, and pursue with vigour the development and use of green alternatives.

In 2019 President Zelenskyy issued a Presidential Decree aimed to transform the Exclusion Zone into one of the growth points of Ukraine, including creating a "green corridor" for tourists, new tourist routes and waterways. This also can create exciting opportunities.

Colleagues, the transformation of the Chernobyl-impacted region remains a long-term challenge. It is a huge undertaking which will only be accomplished with collective actions by all partners and at all levels. The United Nations family here in Ukraine remains firmly committed to full recovery and sustainable development of Chernobyl affected regions.

Thank you.

**Statement by Mr. Werner Obermeyer of the World Health Organization at the meeting of UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl**  
**23 April 2022**

The 35 years of recovery efforts that followed Chernobyl nuclear accident, have taught the global community invaluable lessons of resistance, self-reliance, community engagement, and humanity.

Long-term recovery efforts around Chernobyl must be linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda's promise to leave no one behind applies above all to those caught up in crises around the world; those who have struggled for years to overcome trauma and fears about their health and livelihoods; and those who continue to demonstrate their resilience as they walk the road to recovery and development."

As we mark the 35<sup>th</sup> commemoration, I wish to pay special tribute to the heroic efforts of the first responders who rushed to the damaged reactor on 26 April 1986 and sacrificed their health, and in many cases their lives, to save others.

Today, when WHO is leading the world in fighting the global COVID-19 pandemic, similarities can clearly be seen between certain aspects of the response to COVID-19 and to a nuclear accident. Interventions, such as identifying affected persons/screening, triage, contamination and decontamination measures, hospitals surge capacity, public sheltering, communicating risks, use of social media, infodemic, managing rumors and social stigmatization of affected people, also apply to radiological hazards. In addition, like the Chernobyl aftermath, transition and return to normality after the ongoing pandemic will need to use a decision-making process based on a firm evidence base.

Similar to Chernobyl consequences, COVID-19 is affecting the psychological and emotional wellbeing of the affected populations coping with anxiety, stress, fatigue, and social isolation. To date, psychological and mental health impact of Chernobyl, also called a non-direct health impact, is considered to be the largest in terms of number of affected persons. To address the need for expanding the scope of the radiation emergency preparedness and response and take into account the interventions aiming at mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS), WHO developed a new framework for managing MHPSS in case of a radiological and nuclear accidents that was published in Nov 2020<sup>1</sup>. WHO is collaborating with the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency towards implementation of the MHPSS Framework during preparedness phase through development of practical tools in support of emergency planners and decision-makers.

In terms of supporting of Chernobyl health effects research, WHO continues working with its collaborating centers in the Russian Federation and Ukraine which are leading the long-term follow-up studies on the affected populations and Chernobyl clean-up workers. In addition to the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) that includes Chernobyl studies in its official portfolio, including the following directions:

- Study on factors of genetic susceptibility to thyroid cancer in people exposed to radio-iodines in childhood and adolescence in Belarus;
- An ecological study on incidence of hematological malignancies assessing the rates over time and in relation to bone marrow dose in the most contaminated areas of Belarus and Ukraine;

- Continue the efforts to launch a multidisciplinary research on health status and radiation-related cancer risks of clean-up workers, and residents of contaminated territories to address existing research gap.

In commemoration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event, WHO is holding a special webinar<sup>221</sup> organized jointly with the WHO Collaborating Center for Radiation Emergency Medicine – National Research Center for Radiation Medicine (NRCRM) in Ukraine under the title of “Chernobyl at 35 – Lessons for Recovery after Radiation Emergencies”. The webinar will focus on the lessons for mitigation of the largest health-related impact of the accident – psychosocial and mental health consequences, which are closely related to the socio-economic factors, community engagement, and risk communication strategies.”

**Statement by Ms. Katherina Deufrains, Programme Management Officer for Ukraine, TCEU, IAEA**

IATF Meeting, 23 April 2021

Dear Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the IAEA allow me to thank you for the opportunity to briefly share with you information on the support the IAEA has and continues to provide to the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Following the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) played a central role in coordinating international response, including assistance to reduce the impact of the disaster and mitigate its consequences.

In the three and a half decades since that fateful day in April, the IAEA has provided over 17.1 million EUR in assistance through national and regional projects that help reduce the impact of the accident on many levels.

On a sub-regional level, IAEA technical cooperation activities in collaboration with Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine resulted in the harmonization of national concepts, documents and decision support tools for the rehabilitation and transition to conventional life conditions of affected areas in these three countries. Approaches to radiation protection of the public were also harmonized.

Overall, these efforts support the long-term management of contaminated terrestrial and freshwater environments of the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident. National strategies for long-term remediation based on best practices and lessons learned have been developed together with programmes to improve remediation of the environment. In parallel, the IAEA also supports the improvement of managerial skills of relevant stakeholders through provision of trainings.

The IAEA has also been instrumental in establishing a pilot system for the collection, preservation and transfer of relevant information, emphasizing the importance of information sharing using online resources with up-to-date information on remediation and management of the affected areas. A relevant dedicated website is currently under development.

On a national level, through technical cooperation projects, the IAEA has supported Ukraine for the past 35 years. Expert assistance and training have been provided for decommissioning planning and design, leading to the final shut down and preservation stage of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The radioactive waste management system and infrastructure, including radioactive waste of the shelter, was enhanced, and human resource management at the plant was improved.

At present, an IAEA project supports Ukraine on decommissioning and radioactive waste management. This project focuses on improving the technical capabilities, efficiency and safety of work conducted in the framework of decommissioning and radioactive waste management at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant site. This project further contributes to the establishment of an integrated decommissioning and radioactive waste management system, allowing safe management of all types and categories of waste.

Through national technical cooperation projects, the IAEA has supported Belarus in their forest monitoring programme. Capacities for optimal forest management were enhanced through radiological monitoring. Decreasing radiation risks from contaminated forests, enabled gradual use of forests for economic activity.

More recently, a national project in Belarus contributed to controlling the impact of fires on the public and the environment in the Belarussian site of the Exclusion Zone and adjacent territories. It supported the timely and accurate dissemination of reliable information on radiological consequences of forest fires both for fire extinguishing teams as well as the general population in the nearby territories of the exclusion and resettlement zones.

In the health sector, the IAEA supported the improvement of radiotherapy services to treat cancer with the introduction of modern techniques in radiotherapy for oncological patients.

Over the past 35 years, IAEA projects for Belarus and Ukraine strengthened human resource capacities in these two countries through the training of more than 420 professionals in the area of remediation and recovery, radiological monitoring, and health.

Rehabilitation and environmental remediation following the Chernobyl accident will continue to be an important focus of our work. The IAEA General Conference resolutions, over the past years, have continually requested the Secretariat to continue, within the framework of the technical cooperation programme, to render assistance and support to the areas most affected by the Chernobyl accident.

I would like to conclude my remarks by highlighting that the IAEA remains committed to continuing its assistance and support on Chernobyl related issues in the future.

Thank you very much for your attention.

## Remarks by Mr. Gerd Dercon on behalf of the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre

Dear UN Coordinator Steiner, Your Excellencies, --- Dear Colleagues

First, thank you on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization and of the joint FAO and IAEA Centre for making time to hear our report today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, there are several collaborative initiatives where the FAO, through the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre, is providing support and technical inputs in the areas covered by its mandate concerning food and production in agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

TURNING - Specifically to radioactivity in agriculture, Activities of the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture include:

Information on remediation of radioactive contamination in agriculture

– Part of this work aims to encourage and support an international network of experts and therefore maintain expertise, should it be required in future.

In October, a symposium will be held on the latest developments with regard to the remediation of radioactive contamination in agriculture. This symposium will build on the Chernobyl experience and the experience gained in Japan. Reducing radioactivity in the agricultural environment, in food and in agricultural production is a key activity in an emergency. Experts from Chernobyl

affected countries will participate and help to ensure that the focus of the symposium remains on providing valuable information to agricultural departments world-wide.

As regards research and development on remediation in agriculture

– At the last IATF, we provided information on a new international project on the Remediation of Radioactivity in Agriculture<sup>1</sup>. This five-year initiative has an emphasis on the optimization of remediation efforts, including and drawing on the long-term experience of the Chernobyl affected areas, particularly with radiocaesium.

- Research Institutions from Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are part of this international project. New state-of-the art management and decision support systems for nuclear emergencies affecting food and agriculture are being developed, including artificial intelligence methods. Analytical methods are being developed to better understand the behaviour of radionuclides in different soils.

- The experience of Chernobyl-affected areas is further being capitalized by providing guidelines and other publications. For example, a set of new guidelines have been published. These guidelines for sampling, analysis and modelling technologies for large-scale nuclear emergencies affecting

food and agriculture were produced in close collaboration with experts from the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

1 Remediation of Radioactive Contaminated Agricultural Land  
<https://www.iaea.org/projects/crp/d15019>

- At the end of this year the participants of this international project will meet in Japan or virtually online to discuss research results and plan further activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the area of Normative standards and guidance -

– The FAO is working in partnership with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organization to develop guidelines to support Member Countries and help authorities implement normative standards on radioactivity in food. This initiative is ongoing and seeks to produce guidance for food authorities and radiation safety organizations on both natural and human-made radionuclides in food. There are robust standards in relation to nuclear emergency preparedness and response. HOWEVER, more work is needed for “non-emergency” and “long-after-an-emergency” situations. A technical approach to considering natural radionuclides in food has already been developed. The next phase is addressing human-made radionuclides. Experts from Chernobyl affected countries have assisted with these developments and the work builds on their considerable expertise as well as the literature from Chernobyl affected countries. We are also working with the international food standards committees of the Codex Alimentarius Commission to ensure that any future guidance can be included in food standards in the most efficient way.

FINALLY, Ladies and Gentlemen

In summary - the FAO is continuing to work in five major areas

1. Policy advice and practical support – mainly through the Joint FAO/IAEA Programme
2. Information Exchange and maintaining expertise on remediation
3. Information Management – development of decision support tools for managing radioactive contamination - building on experience
4. Norms and Guidance – maintaining food and agriculture standards
5. Support and coordination of research and development activities – related to radioactivity in food and agriculture.

UN Coordinator Steiner, Your Excellencies

Once again thank you

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your attention.

## **Statement by Ms. Borislava Batandjieva-Metcalf, Secretary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation**

Your Excellences, Ladies and gentlemen, Dear colleagues,

In its 65 years of scientific work, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, has undertaken broad reviews of the sources and levels of ionizing radiation, as well as the effects (including risks) on human health and the environment. Its assessments provide an independent scientific foundation for United Nations agencies and governments to formulate safety standards and programmes for protection against ionizing radiation.

The Scientific Committee has been involved from early stage in assessing radiation exposures and health effects of workers and public after the Chernobyl accident in 1986. Three major UNSCEAR Reports in 1988, 2000 and 2008; and one White Paper published in 2018, together with the latest Fukushima report launched last month had addressed this accident<sup>1</sup>.

The Scientific Committee concluded that of the 600 emergency and 530,000 recovery workers who were exposed in the first year after the accident, 134 received high doses of radiation that resulted in acute radiation syndrome, and of these, there were 28 deaths.

Apart from the significant increase in thyroid cancer incidence among those exposed at a young age, and some indication of an increased leukaemia and cataract incidence among the workers, there is no clearly demonstrated increase in the incidence of solid cancers or leukaemia due to radiation in the exposed populations. Therefore, the vast majority of the public does not need to fear of serious health consequences due to the radiation from the Chernobyl accident.

The conclusions of the Committee from this tragic event have helped the three most affected countries and the international community to have a better understanding of the estimated levels and effects to public, workers and environment, as well as future areas of research. Significant national and international efforts have been undertaken to draw important lessons from this terrible event, to enhance emergency planning and preparedness, safety and mitigating measures to reduce risks from future accidents worldwide.

Please allow me to inform you that despite the difficult situation due to COVID pandemic, the UNSCEAR continues to follow up reliable new scientific data on public exposure in its ongoing evaluation scheduled for completion in 2024 and is committed to disseminate widely the Committee's deliberations.

Mr. Steiner and Madam moderator, thank you once again for your invitation to this important event and all participants for your attention.

## **Statement by Mr. Mahir Aliyev, Regional Coordinator, Europ Office, UNEP**

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this year's IATF meeting on Chernobyl. I am not going to speak specifically on the activities that UNEP carries out in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, as those were covered by the Resident Coordinator in Ukraine on behalf of the entire UN Country Team. I rather would like to use this opportunity to recall that, by a sad irony of things, along with the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl accident we are commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear accident in Fukushima. Another fact that I wanted to remind us about is that this year starts the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration announced by the UN Secretary General. These facts are important in the context of the knowledge transfer that I wanted to talk about.

Today, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is an important knowledge hub which accumulates 35 years of scientific research and observation. This knowledge is valuable for the entire world. The Fukushima experience already showed how valuable that knowledge was, when the experience of the post-nuclear-release response accumulated in Chernobyl was made available for the liquidators in Japan.

The wealth of accumulated knowledge in Chernobyl does not only include the radioactive waste management or a related field, it also refers to the ability of Nature to heal itself and take back control of the ecosystem when humans retreat. Over the past 35 years, nature has been blooming in the Exclusion Zone, turning it into a unique nature conservation and study ground. The Biosphere Reserve which is established in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone of Ukraine and the Poleskiy Radiological Reserve of Belarus, along with relevant research institutions in the Russian Federation possess unique knowledge on nature's rehabilitation potential in the post-nuclear-release world which needs to be accumulated, synthesized and put at the disposal of the entire world.

I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the distinguished representatives of the three Chernobyl-affected states to consider developing a joint programme of cooperation on the Chernobyl-affected territories to synchronize approaches and put together efforts to develop a transboundary protected territory which would be largest in Europe.

Thank you

## Statement by Mr. Jaime Nadal, UNFPA Representative in Ukraine

Thank you Mr. Chair

Distinguished Delegates:

**35 years after** the Chernobyl accident, I cannot but make a reference to three **interrelated aspects of sustainable development that were, one way or another, affected by the accident: demographic, social and health related aspects.** Because they are all interconnected, it is important to ensure **integration and availability of services, particularly those** in areas that were affected by the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Due to **demographic characteristics of the affected regions, especially in the districts with relatively low population density** and with remote population settlements, which tend to be relatively distant from service delivery points, vulnerable groups (**youth, older persons, low-income households**) may face **additional challenges in accessing quality healthcare and other social services.**

For instance, in the case of Belarus, building on the **measures taken after the Chernobyl disaster in Mahilioŭ and Homiel' regions, substantial efforts** have already been made to improve that access. More recently, the development and implementation of **new technological solutions, such as online counselling for pregnant women, or the use of self-diagnostics** tools to raise awareness and **improve adherence to** healthy lifestyles and to treatment, has resulted in a significant **increase in the effectiveness of health promotion interventions and in the effectiveness of the health care system.** A proof of that, is that Belarus displays one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the World, in spite of the potential negative long-lasting consequences of the accident. To build on this experience is one of the objectives of the current UNFPA current country programme in Belarus.

When it comes to broader health issues, the **long-term effects of exposure to ionizing radiation still need to be further studied.** Therefore it is essential to maintain the ongoing **monitoring and collection of data on health, including on sexual and reproductive health. Organized screening and early detection programs for cancer** are extremely effective, especially for certain types of cancer,

such as **breast and cervical cancer**, where timely detection and treatment largely improve the quality of life and survival rates.

## Regarding social services,

UNFPA provided opportunities for specialists of **territorial centers for social services, NGOs, -including the Belarusian Red Cross Society- and the Belarusian Association for Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities**, including the ones working in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident, to build their competencies in providing **psychosocial support to vulnerable groups during COVID-19 outbreak** (the elderly and lonely, families raising children with disabilities, survivors of gender-based and domestic violence) by organizing **online events**, including trainings, organizing a platform for experience exchange among specialists and for community volunteers , and providing methodologies of work in **easy to read language**.

### ***Support UNFPA provided to the regions affected by Chernobyl include:***

- ***19 state-run territorial centers of social service provision, located in the districts affected by Chernobyl, received support from UNFPA:***
- ***Personal Protection Equipment for ensuring continuous on site protection services for survivors of domestic violence and counselling of persons with disabilities and older persons;***
- ***42 local branches of CSOs (Red Cross and BelAPDiMI), located in the districts affected by Chernobyl for managing community volunteers supporting persons in need.***
- ***More than 460 volunteers working in the field in Chernobyl affected areas received practical and methodological support from UNFPA. Volunteers delivered food and hygienic items to the older people, provided psycho-social support to older people, socially isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and organized and maintained 12 community points for young people.***

In sync with the work of the rest of the UN System, UNFPA plans to continue deploying special attention to the areas affected by the Chernobyl Accident, in line with the principle of “Leaving no One Behind”.

Thank you

**Statement by Ms. Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Assistant Administrator, Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS**

I want to thank you for your participation in today's meeting marking the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl accident.

This was the 13<sup>th</sup> IATF since UNDP took over the role of coordinating international cooperation on Chernobyl.

Our joint work is paying off. The concrete outcomes for the people and nature in the Chernobyl-affected areas would not be possible without the UN Country Teams, specialized UN agencies, civil society and the international partners and donors. We all continue to engage and support the governments of Belarus and Ukraine to fill the remaining gaps and fully overcome the consequences of Chernobyl.

Both Chernobyl and COVID-19 are complex emergencies that had substantial socio-economic and health implications. Addressing these challenges and making additional investments to reduce economic and societal vulnerabilities in the face of COVID-19 is critical. A multidimensional approach offers the greatest possibility for a transformational change towards stronger resilience. That is why we will make full use of what we have learned to help countries to better prevent and manage future crises.

Next year, the UN Secretary-General will submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session a report entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster." We will work on the report together to present the results, challenges and lessons learned from the past three years.

As we conclude our meeting, I would like to wish a very good day to the participants from New York and a pleasant evening to our colleagues in Europe.

Many thanks to the IT specialist and colleagues who made the technology work in various geographic locations of our gathering today.

**Annex 4.**  
**EBRC Presentation**