



Б Е Л А Р У С Ь

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**Meeting of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl
New York, April 3, 2017**

**Statement
by Valentin Rybakov
Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus**

First of all, I wish to extend my gratitude to UNDP Administrator Helen Clark and her dedicated staff for the continued support to international community's efforts to overcome consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and for convening this important meeting today.

The legacy of Chernobyl is of particular significance for Belarus. Madame Clark, Belarus is grateful to you for your firm stance, humanity and support in drawing the international community's attention and resources in order to tackle challenges emerged after the nuclear disaster.

We also value substantial efforts that are being undertaken by the UNDP Office in Belarus to secure international technical assistance and to implement projects and programmes in the Chernobyl-related regions.

Belarus never tried to shift responsibility for the recovery of the affected regions onto anybody else. What we were really hoping for was concerned and honest engagement. We in Belarus admire those noble individuals, governments and international organisations that have remained compassionate and focused on the plight of the victims of Chernobyl over the past 31 years.

We had a quite productive last year in terms of the international cooperation on Chernobyl with a number of high-level and expert meetings and the international conference in Minsk to define the vision for post-2016 international cooperation on Chernobyl.

All this events created a basis for the adoption of **the new UN General Assembly resolution** that recognises the persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster and **empowers the United Nations system to undertake meaningful steps** aimed at achieving the sustainable development goals in the Chernobyl-affected regions and communities. With the greatest respect and gratitude we recall each of the 60 partner countries who co-sponsored the GA resolution on Chernobyl last year.

Achieving SDGs in the affected regions through partnerships, innovations and investments seems a sensible and **topical idea to form the core of the post-2016 period.**

Belarus is counting on the **strong leadership and coordination functions of the UNDP and IATF** in implementing that.

Belarus regards the following as **priorities for the sustainable development** of the affected region:

- tackling pressing socioeconomic development problems through investment, innovation, the creation of new job;
- improving radiation protection and providing long-term environmental and health monitoring of the affected regions and communities;
- introducing advanced technologies into agricultural production and forestry to minimize radionuclide intake;
- enhancing networking around specialized national scientific institutions to study long-term consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, as it is stipulated in the resolution.

Belarus hopes for support of these approaches from the United Nations agencies and Member States.

From Japan, Germany, Norway, France, China, Korea we note a significant and sustainable demand for our knowledge and experience related to permissible doses, zoning, people's psychological rehabilitation etc. We note with satisfaction a recent **Japanese-Belarusian initiative** that led to the establishment of a new children's rehabilitation and wellness center in Japan, modelled after the one was build earlier in Belarus.

We commend international efforts to **codify and institutionalize the experience** gained within the international Chernobyl cooperation. The **IAEA** data-base of best practices devoted to cost-effective countermeasures in agriculture and forestry as well as the **UNDP** "Knowledge Product "Recovery from Chernobyl – Experiences and Lessons Learnt" are in demand in Belarus.

Since 1988 Belarus possesses a unique research facility in the middle of the Exclusion Zone – the **State Radiation and Ecology Reserve "Polessie"**. In our view, the evaluation of the barrier function of this Reserve, the natural recovery processes and justification of possible additional protection measures should be an important complex task of national and international research and applications now and in the future. The already obtained research results show a high promise of such endeavors.

In this regard we intend to establish an **International Research Centre for Study of Long-Term Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster in this Reserve**. We invite all UN member-states, the United Nations specialized institutions, state, public and business entities, foreign nationals to participate in the establishment and activities of the Center. At the same time I would like to acknowledge the interest of the Japanese Side to this initiative.

Belarus highly values the continued efforts of the **UNDP and the IAEA** aimed at implementing of the specific Chernobyl-related projects on studying and mitigating of the consequences of the Disaster. In this regard we will be happy to learn on the prospects of the implementation of the project "Health and Safety of Children and Adults in the Chernobyl-Affected Regions of Belarus" from the UNDP Country Program and the UNDAF for 2016-2020.

There is considerable and untapped potential for cooperation with the Secretariat of the **WHO** regarding maintaining and strengthening of the healthcare systems in the affected regions, long-term medical follow up of exposed populations, medical assistance to the high-risk individuals. The Secretariat of the WHO may consider it appropriate to study within its mandate medical consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe with a view to improve the understanding of low-dose radiation risks for human health and to increase

the effectiveness of medical assistance to individuals residing in the radioactive-contaminated areas.

On April 26, we will commemorate for the first time **the International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day**. Today I would like to announce **events that Belarus is organising in the UN to mark this day**.

We are convening a **round table** entitled "Identifying and Mitigating Long-term Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster: Building the Case for Continued International Cooperation". We would like to offer it as **another occasion to discuss in depth the issues of relevance to the IATF**.

We are also organising a **photo exhibition** "You Are Not Alone: Celebrating the Healing Power of Empathy and Compassion in the Face of the Tragedy". The exhibit aims to highlight the importance of simple things that keep humanity alive – empathy with the suffering of others and willingness to lend a helping hand to those in need. We invite all stakeholders to attend these events. The invitations will be sent in due course by the Permanent Mission of Belarus.

On April 26, 2017 in the WHO Headquarters (Geneva) the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Vladimir Makei will take part in the opening ceremony of the Chernobyl Exhibition arranged by Belarus.

As far as activities in Belarus are concerned – our country plans to organize in Gomel and Minsk three major international scientific conferences devoted to the medical and environmental consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster. Meetings with liquidators, memorial services, visiting of the monuments, ceremonies of laying flowers to the memory of the victims of Chernobyl Disaster also will take place.

We sincerely hope that Intergovernmental Organizations – IATF members and UN Member-States will participate in the thematic events commemorating this significant date.