



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

As Uachtarán na hÉireann, I join with others across the globe who will today mark “**United Nations Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day**”.

On this terrible day, 31 years ago, on April 26th, the world’s worst nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Ukraine occurred. It was a dark day in human history.

This nuclear catastrophe exposed the vulnerability of humanity and the environment, and the lives of millions of people were affected by the fallout from the radioactive cloud that spread across Europe.

The countries in its immediate path, Ukraine, Belarus and Western Russia, have since had to cope with its catastrophic consequences.

Ireland was one of the first countries to respond to the humanitarian crisis by providing support for, and meeting the needs of, thousands of Chernobyl’s victims. Adi Roche’s Chernobyl Children International has become one of the leading advocates for the support of the children who were affected by the Chernobyl disaster across the stricken regions.

Across three generations Chernobyl Children International (CCI) has maintained this pioneering role through the extraordinary work of its tens of thousands of volunteers. In recognition of this incredible magnitude of work and advocacy, CCI has been internationally recognised by the United Nations as the only UN sanctioned NGO working in the Chernobyl region.

Last year Adi Roche passionately addressed the United Nations General Assembly on April 26th – the 30th Anniversary of the disaster – calling on the UN to formally declare April 26th as International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day, to provide a lasting legacy of hope to say to future generations of Chernobyl victims “You are not alone – you are not forgotten”.

And so, despite this dark day in 1986, a beacon of hope has now been lit by the hand of friendship and solidarity throughout the world by Ireland and its many caring volunteers.

This is a day which not only remembers the victims of the disaster, but honours the volunteers who have sacrificed so much in the name of hope and compassion.

The long shadow cast by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is a constant reminder to the world to consider carefully the ongoing impact of nuclear power, to reflect on the lessons of the Chernobyl catastrophe and for all of us to be informed and aware in this nuclear age.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

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