



RESOLUTION OF THE CHORNOBYL+20: REMEMBRANCE FOR THE FUTURE CONFERENCE, APRIL 23-25, 2006, KYIV UKRAINE

Representatives from Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western countries have come together in Kyiv for the conference “Chornobyl + 20: Remembrance for the Future” from April 23-25, 2006. Participants include NGO and think tank representatives, scientists and politicians, and regular people from within and from outside Ukraine. We have come together to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chornobyl catastrophe and to raise attention to three important issues:

First and foremost, we wish to remember those who have died as a result of the explosion at the Chornobyl nuclear power reactor, as well as those who were or continue to be affected by the consequences of the accident. We recognize that those people most affected were those that live in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia as well as the hundreds of thousands of young conscripts drafted in to clean up following the accident (the so called ‘liquidators’).

Twenty years after the catastrophe, the truth about its dimensions, and specifically about the health consequences it has been causing, has still not been fully recognized. A key part of the nuclear industry’s program is to downplay the consequences of Chornobyl. Unforgivably, the International Atomic Energy Agency and World Health Organization have supported the nuclear industry in this effort—their report last September, for example, reported only up to 4,000 possible cancer deaths as a consequence of radiation exposure from the accident. While the full overall health impact of the Chornobyl disaster may never be known, as “The Other Report On Chornobyl (TORCH)” prepared for this conference indicates, at a minimum some 30,000-60,000 fatal cancers can be expected worldwide. More than 6,000 thyroid cancer cases have been diagnosed so far in Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, and more are anticipated. Recent scientific studies are revealing increased incidences of solid cancers, including breast cancer, as well as cardiovascular and ophthalmic effects. These effects have long latency periods of more than 20 years. The general state of health is in decline and contaminated territories show low birth rates, relatively high rates of prenatal losses and infant mortality.

Moreover, the economic consequences of the accident also defy imagination. There is widespread acknowledgement that the economic damage caused by the Chornobyl accident runs to the hundreds of billions of dollars, a cost still being borne primarily by Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, and which 20 years later still negatively affects these economies. Concealing the consequences of Chornobyl and shunning truth and transparency in general, indicates that further steps need to be taken to strengthen democracy in the region.

Secondly, we wish to renew and to strengthen the debate on the risks and inherent problems of nuclear technology. The Chornobyl accident was the largest civilian nuclear catastrophe in the history of humankind and the costliest man-made environmental disaster ever. It caused widespread radioactive contamination across continents affecting millions of lives. We believe the Chornobyl accident must serve as a lesson to humankind as to the ultimately uncontrollable technology that is nuclear power.

This lesson is as important today as it was 20 years ago. As a result of the Chornobyl catastrophe, nuclear power programs around the world were cancelled and so began a long phase-out. However, the nuclear industry has not given up and today it uses fears over the

impact of climate change and the security of energy supply in a final, desperate bid for growth.

Unfortunately, the risk of new Chornobyls still exists. More than 440 nuclear reactors are still in operation across the world—and not one of them is immune from accident. Moreover, as the true extent of the world's addiction to cheap energy becomes clear, the nuclear industry is seeking to continue to operate its reactors for longer and longer, while simultaneously trying to gain more Government subsidies for building more reactors.

One of the largest problems for the nuclear industry remains radioactive waste. Despite more than a half-century of research and exploration, no country has yet found a permanent solution to isolate lethal radioactive waste from the environment for its hazardous life. Presently, the nuclear industry and its international supporters suggest storage of much of the world's radioactive wastes in one or a few regional sites across the world. Despite 92% of its citizens opposing the plan, the prime candidate for such an international dump is Russia. We strongly oppose this attempt to make people of one country responsible for the waste of the whole world and urge the International Atomic Energy Agency to stop lobbying for this plan and instead to ensure each nation remains responsible for its own waste.

Nuclear power creates unacceptable risks to people of all nations, not only because of the dangers from reactors and failure to find a safe mechanism to manage radioactive waste, but also due to the considerable and growing risks from nuclear proliferation and the threat of terrorism. The development of the nuclear power industry leads to the growth of plutonium stockpiles which can be used to produce weapons by nuclear states or terrorist groups. There are weapons-usable materials stockpiled across the world, some of which (for example in Russia) are poorly controlled, subject to theft in storage or during transportation. Meanwhile, each commercial-sized nuclear reactor produces some 250 kilograms of plutonium every year, while “civilian” uranium enrichment facilities can easily be used to produce weapons material in every country with such a program. The further development of the nuclear industry would lead to growing stockpiles across the world, thus further increasing the risks of nuclear proliferation.

Thirdly, we recognize that 20 years after the Chornobyl catastrophe, there are also signs of great hope: alternative energy technology are available and increasingly cost-effective. Nuclear power provides only 4% of the total energy consumed globally and can be replaced with renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency. However, a larger effort is needed to accelerate the development of these resources. The European Union, the G-8, and individual countries need to develop determined, environmentally sound energy policies, redirecting their investments to obtain the economic and environmental benefits of greatly increased energy efficiency and to support development of safe and clean renewable energy resources. This development is also needed to meet the dire reality of the growing climate crisis.

We urge the G-8 during their discussions on “energy security” at their upcoming Summit meeting in Russia to invest in environmentally-friendly technologies instead of dangerous and unnecessary nuclear power. A coordinated global effort to attain a sustainable energy reality in the 21st century will lead to greater energy independence for all nations, greater democracy, and a cleaner, safer, more prosperous world. That is the world we, with this conference, seek to promote and create.

We call on the current and the upcoming G8 presidencies of Russia and Germany to take initiative for the worldwide promotion of renewable energy and energy efficiency instead of contemplating about a future role of nuclear power for an increase in security of energy supply. Also we call on the G8 to—in cooperation with the Ukrainian government and the EBRD—speed up the process for the implementation of the new Chornobyl shelter project as well as to facilitate progress in the field of other unresolved and dangerous nuclear waste issues at the Chornobyl site.

We call on the International Financial Institutions as well as on Export Credit Agencies to follow existing or where necessary to establish new lending policies which exclude loan financing of the completion and/or construction of nuclear power plants.

We call on the European Union to reflect in its energy strategy the fact that no other accident has affected the people and the territory of the European Union as severely as the Chornobyl catastrophe. The Euratom treaty should be changed to the EuRenew treaty.

We call on the United Nations to find measures to find ways to improve the health situation and social situation of people affected by the Chornobyl situation in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia and people from other countries working as "liquidators" for the clean-up of the Chornobyl site after the disaster.

We call on the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in their 2006-2007 energy debates and policy negotiations to address issues of phasing out subsidies to the nuclear industries, which hamper the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency; and develop financing strategy for IFIs for redirecting their funds to sustainable energy including micro-financing opportunities. The UN should create an International Sustainable Energy Agency with the mission of promoting and developing renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

We call on the government of Ukraine to acknowledge the full dimensions of the Chornobyl disaster and to act in respect for the victims of Chornobyl. This includes withdrawing plans for the construction of new nuclear power plants and to phase-out nuclear power in Ukraine. Since Ukraine has the most energy intensive GDP in Europe and one of the most intensive in the world, the use of the enormous potential of energy efficiency has to be promoted as a matter of urgency and national significance. We support all democratic forces in Belarus, the country which has suffered and is suffering more than any other country from Chornobyl. Democracy is an irreplaceable component of environmental protection and sustainable development. Plans and programmes of the authoritarian Belarussian regime for resettlement into the most contaminated areas in Belarus should be met with extreme skepticism.

We are calling on the government of Iran not only to stick to its official position not to develop nuclear weapons, but also to give up its nuclear commercial and closed fuel cycle programme. Although Iran does have the legal right to develop a commercial nuclear programme, it would be wiser not to ignore the lessons of Chornobyl and to go for a direct technological transition from fossil to renewable energy sources leaving out the dangerous and uneconomic nuclear period in Iran. At the same time we call on all governments of the international community to find a peaceful way out of the "Iran crisis," to fully comply to their disarmament obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to phase-out nuclear power.

We call on the U.S. and India to reject their proposed nuclear cooperation agreement that both threatens the Non-Proliferation Treaty and would result in the construction of unnecessary new nuclear reactors.

We call on all nations and peoples to implement the lessons of Chornobyl and to reject the construction of all new nuclear reactors everywhere across the globe.

Chornobyl is about the suffering of millions of people, but Chornobyl today is also about peoples' ability to learn hurtful lessons. Let us learn the lessons of Chornobyl and let us contribute to ending the nuclear age.