

**United Nations General Assembly
Sixtieth session**

Agenda item 73:

"Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance"

14 November 2005, New York

**Statement by
His Excellency Vladimir Tsalko**

**Chairman of the Committee on the Problems
of the Consequences of the Chernobyl Disaster
of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus**

On behalf of the co-sponsors I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution of the United Nations General Assembly "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". The draft is contained in the document A/60/L.19.

In comparison with the previous documents of the General Assembly on the issue more than a half of provisions of the draft are new. The draft reflects the dynamism of the international Chernobyl cooperation and a considerable number of events that took place in this field during the last two years. It also reflects the essential element – the beginning of a new stage in the development of international interaction on Chernobyl issues. The key element of this stage is not the emergency humanitarian assistance but the comprehensive rehabilitation of the contaminated areas, including the renewal of socio-economic activity in these regions with a view to creating safe living conditions for people in the area.

This new United Nations strategy was discussed at the international conference in Vienna this September in the framework of the Chernobyl Forum. The draft resolution reflects our agreements. Many of its provisions are directed at the implementation of the recommendations of the main report of the Chernobyl Forum on the legacy of Chernobyl. First of all, I would like to note the importance of the specialized medical, ecological, social and economic research of the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster.

The draft aims to strengthen the United Nations coordination mechanism of the international post-Chernobyl cooperation as well as to increase the role of the UN Coordinator on Chernobyl in this mechanism. We are convinced that Mr. Kemal Derviş, recently appointed to the high position of the UNDP Administrator, will successfully implement the agreed approaches and plans on this important matter.

The draft resolution also expresses the support for the initiatives of the three affected countries - the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine – to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. One of these initiatives is to convene a special meeting of the General Assembly in this hall in April 2006. We propose to convene it not to speak once again about our

post-Chernobyl problems, but mostly for the purpose of discussing and coordinating our further joint steps to improve the living conditions of millions of people, especially children, on the contaminated territories.

We are grateful to all states which contributed so much to the improvement of this draft. It is ready for consideration. We express our hope that it will be adopted by consensus as it was the case in the previous years.

In my national capacity I would like to touch upon the problems discussed by the General Assembly today. For Belarus which as a result of the Chernobyl disaster took 70 per cent of the total amount of radioactive fall-out the problem of Chernobyl is the most topical. Almost twenty years after the disaster the whole range of the post-Chernobyl problems continues to be a heavy burden on the shoulders of the people of Belarus. Twenty one per cent of the country's territory is contaminated with long-living radioactive nuclides. The population in this area continues to be subject to chronic internal and external irradiation because of the long-living radioactive nuclides present in the environment. The economy of these areas, especially agriculture and forestry, is in a dire situation. Safe production technologies are needed. Our experts have been working hard in this sphere for a considerable period of time. They have managed to develop a number of technologies that give an opportunity to produce on such lands the products which meet non-contamination standards. We are ready to share this precious experience with other states.

The Republic of Belarus has already spent US\$ 17 billion to deal with the whole range of the post-Chernobyl problems, including the resettlement of 137 thousand people. Two billion US dollars are planned to be allocated for the implementation of the next state program for 2006-2010. However, the funding provided by the state can not fully cover the economic damage inflicted by the disaster. The experts estimate the total value of this damage at US\$ 235 billion.

This is a disaster, the magnitude of the consequences of which go far beyond the economic capacities of one state and even of a group of states. This is why it is so important to establish constructive long-term international cooperation with the United Nations in its centre as a connecting and coordinating link. While doing this it is necessary to take into account the priority needs of the affected states. Otherwise, international interaction will lose its efficiency and financial resources will be spent without adequate result.

We appreciate significant attention which the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund pay to the post-Chernobyl problems of Belarus in their draft country programme documents for the next five years. We consider it as a promise that the new United Nations strategy on Chernobyl will be successfully implemented in our country. Governmental agencies of the Republic of Belarus are ready to engage in active cooperation with the United Nations agencies and organisations on the Chernobyl issues. We call upon the donor countries to render the required financial assistance to implement these country programmes successfully.

The International Conference "Twenty Years after Chernobyl: Strategy for Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions" to be held in

Minsk on 19 - 21 April, 2006 is aimed at implementing the new United Nations strategy. We invite all interested states and international organisations to take an active part in preparation and the proceedings of this important forum. Its goal is to work out and coordinate joint measures of the governments of the affected states and of the international community on the comprehensive rehabilitation of the contaminated areas in the next decade. In other words, we deal with the problem of the economic survival of these regions.

Considering the Chernobyl theme in the context of economic recovery and sustainable development we should not forget about long-lasting health and ecological consequences of the disaster. We are grateful to the donor countries and international organisations which provide the necessary assistance to study and overcome these consequences. Specifically, it concerns the early stage diagnostics and detection of oncological and cardiovascular diseases, especially among children. I would like to note that today Belarus has enough of resources and possibilities for recuperation of children and teenagers in the country. What we really need most is the modern medical equipment. We ask our partners to pay a special attention to this issue.

As all nations we, Belarusians, are extremely concerned about large scale and more frequent natural disasters in various parts of the world. The disaster-stricken countries are the friendly states with which Belarus has long-standing and close relations. The Chernobyl problem helps us to perceive most acutely the dire situation of our friends. This is why Belarus is among the co-sponsors of the draft resolutions on overcoming the consequences of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean and the consequences of the earthquake in Pakistan.

These disasters, in our opinion, prompt two main conclusions for the future.

Firstly, it is expedient to undertake - at all levels - decisive measures to implement fully the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. A special attention should be given to the establishment of international early warning and threat reduction systems for natural calamities.

Secondly, it is necessary in the shortest possible time to increase the United Nations finance ability to respond to the occurring emergency humanitarian situations. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of Mr. Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, on the creation of a new upgraded UN Central Emergency Response Fund. Realisation of this initiative will give the United Nations an opportunity to promptly render assistance to the extent needed to the countries suffering from humanitarian crises. It will also help to increase financing for rehabilitation measures to overcome the long-term consequences of large scale natural calamities and technological disasters of several decades ago.