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PRESS RELEASE

20th Anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster: From Tragedy to Recovery

April the 26, 2006 marks the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the worst man-caused catastrophe. Its consequences affected many countries, but most of all they affected Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Almost a quarter of Belarusian territory where every fifth Belarusian resides was contaminated with radiation. Belarus took 70 percent of the Chernobyl nuclear fallout. The overall damage of the Chernobyl disaster amounted to 32 annual budgets of Belarus.

The government's efforts in overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster are aimed at ensuring safety and health protection of 1.5 million people who still live in the affected areas. This includes about 100 thousand people who participated in deactivation activities and containment of the aftermath of the tragedy.

Belarus has already spent over US\$ 17 billion to settle the post-Chernobyl problems. Three Chernobyl programmes have already been implemented. New legislation was elaborated to deal with all aspects of the Chernobyl mitigation activities. It includes the Laws of the Republic of Belarus "On the social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster", "On the legal regime of areas impacted by the radioactive contamination from the Chernobyl disaster" and "On the radiation safety of the population".

Since the tragedy around 137 thousand citizens from the most affected areas have been resettled. Over 66 thousand apartments were built for these people. Schools for more than 45 thousand students, kindergarten and nursery facilities for over 18 thousand children, outpatient units for more than 21 thousand visits per shift, and hospitals for serving almost 5 thousand people were built in Belarus for those who suffered the most. Several gas pipe lines were laid and over 13 thousand houses were supplied with natural gas. Belarus succeeded in producing uncontaminated food and ensuring social protection for all people who suffered from the tragedy.

Belarus maintains a comprehensive monitoring and research network to study the effect of radiation on environment nationwide. Annually over 1 million Belarusians get a comprehensive medical check-up.

Belarus takes an active part in developing international Chernobyl cooperation in the framework of the United Nations. A key element of this cooperation is the UN General Assembly resolutions on Chernobyl. At the 60th UN session 69 Member States cosponsored the resolution "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and

minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster". It was the largest number of cosponsors in more than a decade.

Special research fora under the UN auspices contribute effectively to the international Chernobyl cooperation. They study development of the affected areas and propose what actions the international community may undertake to address efficiently the post-Chernobyl issues.

From 19 to 21 of April 2006 Belarus hosted International Conference entitled "Chernobyl 20 Years Later: Strategy for Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions". The Conference gathered more than 500 representatives of the UN system agencies, about 200 research institutes and NGOs from 45 countries. Jan Eliasson, the President of the UN General Assembly, sent a message to the Conference. Among those who addressed the Conference were Mr. Melkert, the UN Under-Secretary-General and the UNDP Associate Administrator, Mr. Gautam, the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, and other representatives of international organizations. A part of the Conference was held in the Gomel region which was hit the hardest by the disaster.

The Conference supported the initiative of Belarus to proclaim the United Nations Decade for Recovery and Sustainable Development of the Affected Regions (2006-2016). The Conference called for enlargement of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and stated that Belarus should be represented in the Committee.

Chernobyl will be commemorated in the UN Headquarters. On 28 April 2006 General Assembly will hold a special meeting to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. After the special meeting the Permanent Representatives of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine will open a photo exhibition "20th Anniversary of Chernobyl: From Tragedy to Recovery" in the UN building. The photo exhibition will present over 70 pictures of Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian and American photographers.

Belarus was among those who initiated the GA special meeting and other events in the UN Headquarters to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster. Their primary purpose is to remind international community about the lessons of the Chernobyl catastrophe and encourage further efforts aimed at mitigating the consequences of the disaster.

New York, 24 April 2006