Постоянное Представительство Российской Федерации при Организации Объединённых Наций
Phone: (212) 861-49-00
Fax: (212) 628-02-52

Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

136 E 67th Street
New York, NY 10021

Unofficial translation
Check against delivery

S T A T E M E N T

by

Mr. Igor Shcherbak

Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

at the special commemorative meeting of the 60-th Session of the General Assembly on agenda item 73 (c) "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster"

28 April 2006

Mr. President,

26 April, 2006 marked the 20th anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which became the worst technological catastrophe of the twentieth century in terms of its scope and complexity.

The heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States gathered in the Russian city of Kazan on August 2005 and launched an appeal to the peoples of the CIS countries and to the world community on this tragic date.

The statement specifies that in the aftermath of the accident, millions of people were shocked by the calamity, which they were difficult to comprehend and against which they could not protect themselves. Many families lost their homes and livelihoods and were forced to change their familiar surroundings and way of life.

The scope of the disaster might have been beyond measure, had it not been for the courage and selflessness of hundreds of thousands of disaster relief workers at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. Risking their lives and health, they fulfilled their duty and protected people from the harmful effects and further spread of radiation.

Despite the large-scale emergency response measures aimed at addressing and mitigating the consequences of the catastrophe taken both immediately following it and in subsequent years, the Chernobyl nuclear power plant continues to be a potential source of danger in the centre of Europe. Minimizing this threat in the near future on the basis of new technologies is in everyone's interest. There is therefore a need to muster the scientific, technical and financial capacity of the entire international community.

The comprehensive radiation clean-up and economic and social rehabilitation of the affected areas are issues of great importance in addressing the consequences of this terrible disaster at the present stage.

In the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, over 59 thousand square kimlometers of fourteen regions of Russia were contaminated. 3 million Russian people lived in these territories. The most contaminated regions in Russia at present day are Bryanskaya, Tulskaya, Orlovskaya and Kaluzhskaya oblasts.

More than 200 thousand Russian nationals took part in the emergency relief operation in the aftermath of the disaster.

The affected regions are currently experiencing particularly difficult conditions caused by the destruction of the ecological infrastructure, the flight of labour resources and demographic problems. The state of the environment after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station restricts the living conditions of the population. Of particular concern is the state of health of both the inhabitants of the affected areas and the disaster relief workers.

A key element of the Chernobyl mitigation policy of the Russian Government is consistent integration of the radiation factor into all activities in order to fully rehabilitate the affected territories. The financial cost of those efforts by our country exceeded 5 billion US dollars over the last few years. This work is now focused on social development, psychological rehabilitation of the population and establishing a solid foundation for economic revival of the affected territories.

In this context, a number of programs are being implemented in Russia at federal level. In 2002-2005, more than 35,000 square meters of housing, a number of schools and pre-school institutions for more than 2,500 children overall and clinics for 930 patients per day have been commissioned. More than 205 kilometers of gas and water pipelines were constructed.

The Russian recovery strategy places special emphasis on informing the population about the problems of overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. For these purposes, in particular, a Russo-Belarusian information center has been working

since 2004 on the basis of the Nuclear Safety Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In the framework of the program to preserve and restore soil fertility of arable lands before 2010 measures will be taken to put into use 20,000 hectares of agricultural land affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. President,

The scientific validity of the recovery strategy is important for successfully overcoming the aftermaths of the catastrophe. We appreciate the fact that our own experience in this field is consistent with conclusions of the major scientific conferences. I am referring, in the first place, to the findings of the UN Chernobyl Forum, held under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna last September. It is obvious that its recommendations are very useful for us. However, I would like to emphasize that the verification of and agreeing upon scientific research findings will not lose its relevance in the future.

International cooperation on Chernobyl with all its implications has remained for us quite topical for all these years. We have noticed the attention of the international community to this matter through the development of scientific contacts, assistance we were provided with in the field of health, support to our efforts to rehabilitate the agriculture, and promotion of the information exchange network. In this field, we have always been attaching great importance to the catalytic and coordinating role to the United Nations. We view the consensual adoption of the General Assembly resolution on Chernobyl in November last year and an unprecedented number of its co-sponsors – 69 – as an expression of solidarity by the international community with the efforts of the affected countries and its readiness to continue to draw special attention to the Chernobyl issue at the international level.

I would like to stress another dimension of the international cooperation in this field, which is of great importance from our point of view. I am speaking about the strengthening of response capacity to the technological disasters and, in particular, to those associated with radioactive accidents. In the context of new challenges and threats our civilization is facing, such a kind of cooperation is on agenda as never before. The experience of the Ministry for Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation and its readiness to explore the international cooperation in this field is well known.

We are expressing our appreciation to the leadership of the UNDP assuming the coordinator functions on Chernobyl since 2004 for its contribution into the strengthening of international cooperation in this field aimed at a noble goal of turning better the life of population in the affected territories. We are also thankful to other organizations, in particular, humanitarian ones who worked hand in hand with us all these years.

Thank you.