

MEETING OF THE QUADRIpartite CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL
ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON CHERNOBYL

DELIVERED BY
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Madame Chair,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Red Cross Societies of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine have provided humanitarian assistance to the populations affected by the Chernobyl accident since 1990. As we all know, the specific characteristics of the accident require long term and sustained humanitarian assistance. Our programmes are planned to continue till the year 2006.

In our view, these activities must continue, for several reasons. Chief among these is a concern for the health and psycho-social welfare of the tens of thousands of children - and people who were children at the time of the accident. Their traumas, severe as they were, have not improved in the aftermath of the financial crisis the countries concerned experience last year. On the contrary, the socio-economic deterioration has seriously aggravated the situation.

Another reason for continuing the work is the experience and knowledge we, and other actors, are gaining. Events in Japan and Korea in the last few months have shown that nuclear accidents can happen again. We are not convinced the international community is, yet, fully equipped to cope with the humanitarian consequences of such accidents. In addition we - all of us - are aware of many areas which are, or are in danger of, being contaminated. We need this experience and knowledge in ensuring an adequate level of preparedness.

The activities undertaken by the International Federation are closely co-ordinated with those of the UN system ensuring that costs are kept at an absolute minimum, there is no overlap between agencies. The operations are among the best documented. In our conversations with our partners among governments and agencies we receive only positive feedback and encouragement, but the support we are receiving is declining, rapidly, and approaching the point at which we must consider seriously whether we can continue, even in the short term.

These developments take place in a context in which the international community has been making major efforts to assist the countries concerned in securing the physical safety of the Chernobyl plant, and finding ways of replacing the lost power generating capacity. The International Federation, amongst others, understands the high importance of these interventions, and welcomes the efforts being made.

We cannot help, however, noticing the disproportionate allocation of resources between the technical and economic interventions, and the humanitarian. If the costs of the technical and economic interventions are estimated at approximately a billion USD, the humanitarian action of all the agencies involved represent 5 %.

The Chernobyl programmes of the International Federation, the Red Cross Societies concerned, and the United Nations have been pared down, streamlined, co-ordinated and made more efficient over the years. We are convinced that the programmes deliver real benefits to the populations concerned and with strongly urge continued support.

Finally, Madam Chair, we should like to express our appreciation of the excellent relations and co-operation we have enjoyed with the UN system and OCHA under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Sergio Vieira de Mello, and we look forward to continue this constructive approach in the future.