

26-27 April 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,  
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,  
on the occasion of the 15th Anniversary of Chernobyl Nuclear  
Disaster**

On this occasion of the 15th anniversary of Chernobyl disaster the international community commemorates the explosion of the nuclear power plant, which was finally closed less than six months ago, in December 2000. By far the worst disaster in the history of nuclear power, the accident had many dimensions and consequences. It resulted not only in severe environmental and health impacts, but also in social, psychological, and economic emergencies.

Total effects of the accident may still not be known, even 15 years after the event. Follow-up surveys on the long-term effects of the magnitude of Chernobyl require formidable financial and human resources. Therefore pooling of expertise through cooperation is essential. The role of the UN in assisting the international community through its agencies has been an important one in provision of safe agricultural land, on mitigating the psychological effects of the accident and in many other aspects. Fifteen years after Chernobyl, we realize that more needs to be done.

Looking at the future, beyond this anniversary, we should prioritize our actions in researching, monitoring and securing the safety of older nuclear plants currently in operation. For the future of our global village, we should be able to answer its call for stringent disaster-prevention measures, and functioning emergency crisis management systems, where radioactive materials are being, or will be, processed. Regulations on illicit trafficking of hazardous materials, and securing the safety of nuclear material transport are also of high importance.

Close to Earth Day celebrations on 22 April, we recognize the lessons of Chernobyl. Therefore, it is my sincere hope that the international community will succeed in its efforts in preventing similar accidents from happening again - anywhere in the world.