

**Statement Attributable to the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General
on the 22nd Anniversary of the Chernobyl Disaster**

The 26th of April marks the 22nd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. On this occasion, the United Nations honours the emergency workers who laboured heroically at the damaged reactor; the hundreds of thousands who were evacuated from surrounding areas with little hope of return; and the millions living in contaminated areas who have long feared for their health. The accident had a huge impact on the region, and its consequences linger even today.

We can take heart, however, in the growing confidence that communities affected by the Chernobyl accident now have the chance and, increasingly, the means, to lead a normal life. This hopeful message was clear in the findings of the 2005 UN Chernobyl Forum. It was reiterated in the 2007 report by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, and in the General Assembly's 2007 resolution on Chernobyl.

To pursue these hopeful prospects, the General Assembly has proclaimed 2006-2016 a "decade of recovery and sustainable development" for the affected regions. The UN Chernobyl Action Plan, to be adopted this year, will provide coordinated support to implement the Decade, with a focus on social and economic development -- including investment and job creation -- and the promotion of healthy lifestyles and community self-reliance.

To carry this message of hope, the Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nations Development Programme, Maria Sharapova, will visit the region this summer.

The UN will do all it can during the "decade of recovery" to support efforts towards the region's full renewal. The Secretary-General calls upon the international community to sustain its generosity in supporting the recovery of Chernobyl-affected areas.

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