

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 191 (2006)¹ on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters

1. Twenty years ago, on 26 April 1986, the terrible tragedy at Chernobyl nuclear power station shook the world. The accident at Chernobyl in 1986 was the worst in the history of the world nuclear industry and a major radiological accident.

2. This accident sounded the alarm for the whole world and highlighted the problems relating to the management of civil nuclear energy, the dissemination of information and the responsibilities underlying decisions concerning the construction and operation of nuclear power stations.

3. Twenty years later, the areas of Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation affected by the disaster are still suffering the consequences: radioactivity, health problems and social and economic difficulties, not to mention the serious psychological problems affecting the population and the staff of the emergency services.

4. The Congress decided to mark the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster by holding a conference entitled “Chernobyl 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters” in Slavutych, a new town built approximately 50 kilometres from Chernobyl to re-accommodate the employees of the nuclear power station and their families.

5. The participants in this conference addressed the Slavutych Appeal, in which they set out the five basic principles that must be applied in the field of nuclear safety, to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

6. The Congress welcomes the outcome of this conference, which was organised by its Committee on Sustainable Development, in co-operation with the City of Slavutych, and fully supports this initiative.

7. Having regard to the above, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a. endorse the Slavutych Appeal and the “Slavutych” Principles;

b. forward the Slavutych Appeal to the member states of the Council of Europe, asking them to apply the principles in their nuclear safety activities and policies;

c. resolve to stimulate, in line with the Slavutych Appeal and Slavutych Principles, the exchange of knowledge and experience in specific areas of disaster management, such

as risk- and crisis-communication, information systems and evacuation programmes developed in European interregional programmes such as ESCAPE, AWARE and Chain of Safety;

d. address this appeal to the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement so that the Slavutych Principles can serve as guidelines for the agreement’s activities and can be forwarded to the signatory states, particularly with a view to the next ministerial session (Marrakech, Morocco, 31 October 2006), which will specifically discuss the role of local and regional authorities in preventing and managing disasters.

Appendix

The Slavutych Appeal launched by the International Conference “Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters”

Slavutych (Ukraine), 2-4 March 2006

We,

The participants in the International Conference “Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters”, local and regional elected representatives, parliamentarians and representatives of governments, international and non-governmental organisations and experts,

Meeting in Slavutych on the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster,

Resolve to adopt an appeal, which will be forwarded to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and to other interested organisations.

Here in Slavutych, some 50 kilometres from Chernobyl and twenty years after the worst technological disaster in the history of humankind, we feel the need to solemnly reassert five basic principles, which we will henceforth refer to as “the Slavutych Principles” and which should serve as guidelines for the public authorities in areas relating to nuclear safety.

We hope that the Congress will draw on the appeal we are adopting as a basis for its work and that it will agree that it should be the subject of a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Slavutych Principles:

1. The central role of governments

Owing to the complex and dangerous processes involved, the nuclear industry is, by nature, a government responsibility, particularly where major energy technology problems, the location of nuclear power stations and safety issues are concerned.

Governments cannot delegate their key responsibilities in this area. Global management of nuclear safety on a world scale cannot be envisaged unless nuclear safety is already co-ordinated by the national authorities in conjunction with

the international community. Moreover, only national authorities can raise the resources required for essential education and scientific research, which are the first steps that should be taken in any long-term prevention policy.

2. The essential role of local and regional authorities

Local and regional authorities, which occupy a frontline position and most closely represent the populations directly concerned, have a decisive role to play in conjunction with central government in involving citizens and protecting local communities.

3. Neighbourhood solidarity

The Chernobyl disaster has shown that nuclear accidents know no local, national or international borders.

Nuclear safety cannot therefore be limited by national political or administrative constraints. It requires genuine neighbourhood solidarity and cross-border co-operation which makes all the territories concerned, irrespective of the state to which they belong, equal partners.

4. Transparency and information

There must be broad, ongoing access to information. International organisations, governments, nuclear operators and station managers have a duty to provide honest and detailed information to the populations of the territories concerned, neighbouring populations and the international community. This obligation must apply both in normal times and in times of crisis.

5. Involvement and consultation of the populations concerned

The populations directly concerned must be involved and consulted, in accordance with each country's own procedures and including all forms of direct consultation, both at national level, with regard to major technological choices and in particular the choice of nuclear energy, and at local level, with regard to sites, the safety measures taken and the closing down of sites.

This involvement is necessary to establish a safety culture, which is the only effective shield against these massive

risks and an essential prerequisite for the implementation of global safety plans.

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It is also important that local and regional authorities which have already experienced, or have been confronted with, the risk of a disaster should be able to share that experience. They therefore call on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union to give the necessary priority to these problems in their work. The "European Forum on Local and Regional Disaster Management", which was launched during the Slavutych Conference, can play an important role in this respect.

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The conference wishes not only to assert the "Slavutych Principles" but also to pay tribute to the Ukrainian Government and the local and regional authorities of this country, which for the past twenty years have been coping with the tragic consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. We also welcome the fact that the international community has made considerable efforts to help the countries affected by the disaster.

We encourage all those concerned to ensure that the new containment building for nuclear reactor 4 is constructed in accordance with current international ecological requirements. We believe that technical and financial support is essential to help these local and regional authorities close this dark chapter in the industrial history of the world, and personally undertake to pursue these aims.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 31 May 2006, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG (13) 9, draft recommendation presented by G. Doganoglu (Turkey, L, EPP/CD) and W. Van Gelder (Netherlands, R, EPP/CD), rapporteurs).