

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 215 (2006)¹ on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters

1. The date of 26 April 2006 marked the 20th anniversary of the unprecedented catastrophe in the history of mankind which took place at the Chernobyl nuclear power station.
2. The consequences of the Chernobyl disaster have long been a subject of speculation and the issue is a no less topical subject today, which is why the Congress decided to hold a conference on “Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters” in Slavutych in Ukraine, from 2 to 4 March 2006.
3. Prior to the accident, the Chernobyl workers and their families lived in the town of Pripyat, near the power station. Pripyat is now a ghost town and its former inhabitants, who were evacuated in 1986, now live in Slavutych, a new town situated some 50 kilometres from Chernobyl. The Congress would like to thank the Mayor of Slavutych, Volodymyr Udovychenko, for offering to hold this conference in his town and providing the opportunity to discuss the role of local and regional authorities in dealing with such disasters.
4. The Congress welcomes the results of the conference, and particularly endorses the Slavutych Appeal.
5. The Congress notes with satisfaction the launching of the European Forum on Disaster Management for Local and Regional Authorities, as a network for the exchange of know-how between territorial authorities.
6. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities of the member states of the Council of Europe to :
 - a. put into practice in their actions and policies the principles presented in the Slavutych Appeal;
 - b. disseminate the Slavutych Appeal among their partners involved with actions for preventing and managing disasters.
7. The Congress also transmits the Slavutych Appeal to the national and international associations of local and regional authorities, inviting them to diffuse it widely.

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 20 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 resolution presented by G Doganoglu (Turkey, L, EPP/CD) and W. Van Gelder (Netherlands, R, EPP/CD), rapporteurs).