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NEW NEA STUDIES MARK TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT

The OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) will mark twenty years since the Chernobyl accident with the publication of two new studies:

- *Stakeholders and Radiological Protection: Lessons from Chernobyl Twenty Years After* demonstrates the importance of local involvement in addressing the needs of affected populations to reduce their radiation dose.
- *International Nuclear Law in the Post-Chernobyl Period* is a compendium of articles on international nuclear law initiatives since Chernobyl.

The Chernobyl reactor accident was the worst in the history of commercial nuclear power plant operation and contaminated large territories in the former Soviet Union and Europe. Twenty years later, its consequences continue to affect the daily lives of people in Europe, particularly those in Belarus, the Ukraine and Russia. Addressing the public's impression of helplessness in the face of the complexity of problems at hand, the centralised and directive approach to consequence management, which had been adopted during the emergency phase of the accident, was later complemented with broader measures aimed to improve living conditions.

The new NEA report highlights the importance of involving local stakeholders in the long-term, post-recovery phase. The intervening twenty years of rehabilitation has shown that the active engagement of radiation protection professionals with the affected people has helped to effectively improve the living conditions in the contaminated territories. Integrating radiation protection measures into the daily lives of farmers and parents has allowed them to manage both their own radiation exposures and those of their families. They are empowered through involvement in local decision processes. As a result, they regain a sense of control over their lives. The experience could also help in planning the response to other large-scale disasters, such as might result from an industrial accident or a natural catastrophe, or to address the smaller-scale but socially significant consequences of a deliberate terrorist act.

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The accident also heightened the awareness of the need to improve the international legal regime governing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Within six months, two conventions on early notification and assistance in the event of a nuclear accident had been adopted by nearly one hundred countries. In 1994, a convention designed to achieve and maintain a high-level of nuclear safety worldwide was adopted. A convention on the safety of spent fuel and radioactive waste management followed in 1997. The existing international regimes governing the liability and compensation for nuclear damage were significantly reinforced and a new global regime was created.

The two reports fit within the NEA's overall active engagement to address the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, which include: nuclear safety; emergency preparedness and crisis management; and long-term rehabilitation activities.

Press briefing:

A presentation of these two reports will be made on **Wednesday 11 April at NEA headquarters** in Issy-les-Moulineaux (near Paris), France. Because of security arrangements in place at the NEA, pre-inscription for this briefing is required. The briefing begins at 9:00 a.m. (see www.nea.fr/html/general/press/ for registration details).

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The full text of both reports will be available on the NEA website from 11 April.

The **NEA** consists of 28 OECD member countries. The mission of the NEA is to assist its member countries in maintaining and further developing, through international co-operation, the scientific, technological and legal bases required for a safe, environmentally friendly and economical use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The NEA also provides authoritative assessments and forges common understandings on key issues, as input to government decisions on nuclear energy policy and to broader OECD policy analyses in areas such as energy and sustainable development. It is a non-partisan, unbiased source of information, data and analyses, drawing on one of the best international networks of technical experts.