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Official Records

President: Mr. Bozkir (Turkey)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 73 (continued)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(d) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

The President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 73 to hold a special commemorative meeting in observance of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, pursuant to resolution 74/114 of 16 December 2019.

Thirty-five years ago, tragedy struck the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Although years have gone by, the legacy of the Chernobyl disaster persists. We remember those who lost their lives as a result of the accident and those whose lives changed forever.

As human beings, we instinctively run away from danger. Today, I am thinking of the firefighters who fought that instinct and walked into danger in order to protect the world. They did not do what was easy; they did what was right. In doing the right thing, they made the ultimate sacrifice and will not be forgotten. In the shadow of the tragedy, recovery workers rallied to respond as local villages and towns were left empty. The trauma of evacuation left its mark on the lives of many in the surrounding areas. Families fled their homes,

their daily routine disrupted forever more, to face a new reality of unemployment and poverty. Thousands of children were affected by debilitating health issues, including thyroid cancer, and the course of their future was irreparably altered.

We think of those who reside today in the affected areas of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Their resilience is a testament to the power of humanity. I commend the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine for working to protect people from the effects of radiation, mitigate the effects of the accident and build a better future for the communities affected. In addition, I applaud the United Nations Development Programme, which played a critical role in coordinating United Nations activities in the aftermath of the disaster. This solemn anniversary reminds us that we must continue to build resilience and to be prepared for unexpected challenges in order to create a safer future for all. The world has not and will not forget the disaster of Chernobyl.

In accordance with rule 70 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I now give the floor to Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, to make a statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Ms. Ribeiro Viotti: I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this General Assembly event to mark the anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and to remember the emergency workers who responded to the accident and the hundreds of thousands of people

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affected in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation. I will now read a message from the Secretary-General.

“Today we mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on 26 April 1986, one of the most serious nuclear accidents in history. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected by radiation. Some 350,000 were forced to leave their homes in severely contaminated areas, with a deeply traumatic and lasting impact on their lives. Their suffering must not be forgotten.

“This anniversary is an occasion to recognize the recovery efforts led by the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine and the work of the scientists who sifted through the evidence to provide important analysis that has informed emergency planning and reduced risks.

“Since 1986, the United Nations has helped to address the needs of people in the areas surrounding Chernobyl, first through emergency and humanitarian aid and then by supporting recovery and social and economic development through the United Nations country teams working with civil society, international partners and donors. Our joint efforts have enjoyed some success. The number of small and medium-sized businesses operating in areas directly affected by the disaster has risen from 2,000 in 2002 to 37,000 today. Thousands of local residents, community leaders and doctors have been trained in dealing with health risks and promoting healthy lifestyles.

“The Chernobyl disaster was contained by Governments working with academics, civil society and others for the common good. It holds important lessons for today’s efforts to respond to the coronavirus disease pandemic. Disasters know no borders, but together we can work to prevent and contain them, support all those in need and build a strong recovery.”

I would only like to add that this anniversary reminds us of the importance of ensuring nuclear safety, preventing disasters, minimizing risks of all kinds and protecting the most vulnerable. Prevention is central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is essential to the mission of the United Nations to support safe, stable and peaceful societies everywhere.

The President: I thank the Chef de Cabinet for her statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus to make a statement.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour of reading a statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Vladimir Makei.

“Today the international community marks International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day, proclaimed by the United Nations.

“It has been 35 years since the moment when the ancient Slavic word *chernobyl* ceased to be associated only with the name of a herb and a small town in the Poles’ye region. Since 26 April 1986, the word *chernobyl* has conveyed pain and anxiety and been involuntarily identified with an accident at a nuclear power plant and its consequences and the beginning of a new era in human history, the post-Chernobyl era.

“For Belarus, the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which released a considerable amount of radioactive substances into the surrounding environment, contaminated thousands of square kilometres of land, changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and did billions of dollars in damage to our country’s economy. About 35 per cent of the fallout of radioactive caesium from Chernobyl on the European continent was in our territory, so the consequences of Chernobyl for Belarus have been deemed a national environmental disaster. There is probably not a single family in Belarus that has not been affected, directly or indirectly, by the harmful impact of the Chernobyl disaster. There is not a single person who does not know what a terrible price we have paid for that tragedy.

“Since we became a sovereign State, much has been done to overcome the legacy of Chernobyl. As of 2021, the country has implemented five Government programmes totalling \$19.3 billion. Our State policy priority today is to further reduce the risk of adverse effects on the health of the population living in the territories affected, especially children; to maintain protective measures in the areas of agriculture, forestry and water management; and to promote the recovery and sustainable socioeconomic development

of regions while strictly upholding radiation safety requirements.

“Belarus has worked consistently to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, and we are happy to note the contributions of the international community, including the United Nations system, to the recovery and development of the affected regions. Resolution 74/114, initiated by Belarus and entitled “Persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster”, which the Assembly adopted unanimously at its seventy-fourth session, recognizes the importance of continuing international cooperation on Chernobyl under the auspices of the United Nations. The United Nations Development Programme, as the coordinator of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl, is particularly important to that cooperation. We look forward to the continued leadership of the United Nations in bringing together the international community and United Nations agencies, strengthening strategic partnerships and attracting innovation and investment for the sustainable socioeconomic development of the affected territories.

“In the 35 years since Chernobyl, Belarus has accumulated unique knowledge and experience in dealing with the medical, social and economic consequences of the disaster. We have shared that knowledge and experience with our partners and intend to actively support international cooperation in this area.

“We held an international conference on Chernobyl issues in Minsk on 20 April that provided an opportunity for all the parties involved in the recovery efforts to determine the work that is currently needed to fulfil the socioeconomic potential and the prospects for sustainable development of the areas affected. In particular, the participants discussed issues relating to the establishment of an investment platform for the regions of Belarus affected by the accident, designed to bring investors together and ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the most vulnerable areas. I am confident that the Minsk conference will further contribute to resolving the post-Chernobyl problems, which have no expiry date.

“We call on all interested partners to participate actively in the international cooperation on Chernobyl in order to help implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the affected regions and to overcome the long-term consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic. This will complement our national efforts and the positive results achieved in the environmental, social and economic restoration of the territories so that no one is left behind.”

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Chumakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Assembly for convening today’s commemorative event, dedicated to one of the most tragic events in the history of our country.

Thirty-five years ago today, it is no exaggeration to say that not only the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics but the entire world was confronted by a tragedy on an unprecedented scale. The explosion on the night of 26 April 1986 at unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant caught absolutely everyone unawares. The accident became one of the largest human-made disasters of the last century, and the work of repairing its consequences is still going on.

We believe firmly that had it not been for the selflessness and courage of the first responders, the numbers of victims would have been incomparably greater. It was those heroes, ordinary people with no experience of similar disasters, who took on the entire burden of the fight against an unknown, invisible enemy. We are indebted to them, and we deeply honour the memory of all who died and feel for their loved ones.

No, the world is not immune to a repeat of that event. Tragedies happen nowadays too. In that connection, it becomes crucial to learn the lessons and to provide for the safety of nuclear facilities and much-needed medical progress. Significant resources are being allocated to those ends, and the specialized international scientific community is working tirelessly on them. The Chernobyl accident brought about significant changes in nuclear scientific thinking. Nuclear technology has improved, strengthening confidence in the industry. As a result, nuclear power plants are now operating in almost every region. After all, nuclear power is still the most cost-effective and the safest way to generate electricity, as long as rules and standards are followed.

We see in all this the unifying force of the tragic legacy of the Chernobyl disaster. It offers a chance to leave behind confrontational rhetoric, since the disaster was a shared tragedy for all the people of the former Soviet Union, and not only for them. We also welcome the work of the United Nations agencies, coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme, that through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl cooperate with the relevant Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian authorities to implement Chernobyl-related projects.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): On the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe, we remember with respect and admiration those who lost their lives or suffered in the emergency and recovery operations. The Chernobyl accident taught the international community an important lesson and made us think more deeply about the risks of nuclear energy. Never before had the world suffered a human-made disaster of such magnitude. It has changed the lives of generations and has had a long-term impact on the environment.

On behalf of Ukraine, I would like to thank our partners for not leaving my country to its own devices in the face of a terrible enemy — radiation. Ukraine has been working with international organizations ever since to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe by implementing projects aimed at achieving the sustained recovery and development of the districts affected and mitigating the disaster's long-term social, economic and environmental effects. We are grateful to the international community for the solidarity and comprehensive assistance that have been provided in the framework of the memorandum of understanding on closing the Chernobyl nuclear power plant by the year 2000 signed in Ottawa in 1995 by Ukraine, the Group of Seven countries and the European Commission. In strict fulfilment of its international obligations, Ukraine finally shut down the Chernobyl plant in 2000. We appreciate the contribution of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as a separate donor and administrator of international community funds.

The work of overcoming the impact of the Chernobyl catastrophe has become a remarkable example of international solidarity. Consolidated efforts and constructive cooperation with the international

donor community have yielded significant success. In particular, the construction projects for a new safe confinement over the shelter object and interim storage facility for nuclear fuel from the Chernobyl plant have already been completed. The confinement is designed to isolate the radioactive substances from the destroyed fourth reactor from the environment for at least 100 years. Its creation marked a new stage in ensuring nuclear safety in the world. However, the new safe confinement is not the end of the history of the Chernobyl disaster. It is only the beginning of the crucial stage of transforming the shelter into an environmentally safe system. That is why it is critical to keep the issue of post-Chernobyl recovery high on the international agenda.

Along with its story of courage and global unity, Chernobyl has been a story of disinformation efforts. The Soviet authorities tried desperately to hide the truth from their own people and other countries. The May Day parade was held in Kyiv just a few days after the deadly explosion, with radiation that was 150 times higher than acceptable levels. It was Sweden, not the Soviet Union, that first alerted the world to Chernobyl. Early detection by the Forsmark plant played an important role in forcing the Soviet authorities to come clean about the disaster. Against the backdrop of today's challenges in the information arena, it is a powerful reminder that disinformation, just like radiation, is an invisible killer.

The many lessons learned from the Chernobyl nuclear accident have helped to inform global efforts to address other disasters. The focus of the international community has moved away from emergency response measures to include prevention, preparedness, recovery and rehabilitation. It is essential to give the human dimension of preparedness for and recovery from nuclear emergencies a strong voice at the international level and to incorporate that knowledge and experience into development programming worldwide.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Chernobyl recovery efforts are closely linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are fully aligned with Ukraine's national plans for its sustainable development. We firmly believe that goal-oriented international cooperation will result in long-term solutions to the complex problems triggered by the disaster.

The President: I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation for the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Congo, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Balé (Congo): I am speaking in my capacity as Chair of the Group of African States.

On 26 April 1986, Chernobyl experienced the worst nuclear accident in history. Thirty-five years after the disaster, we stand together to reaffirm our commitment never to forget the women, men and children affected by radioactive contamination.

Today's commemoration is significant for Africa because it reminds us of the moment when the world united in solidarity to come to the aid of the three countries worst affected by the Chernobyl disaster. With the help of donor countries, those countries — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — have worked to mitigate the consequences of the disaster, and the African region has supported those efforts and expressed solidarity with the affected populations. The disaster had grave humanitarian, environmental, social and economic consequences. It cast a radioactive plume across a swathe of North-Eastern Europe, and its effects are still being felt in the region and around the world. Its long-term effects are extensive and will unfortunately continue to pose challenges for many future generations in the form of severe health and environmental problems.

More than three decades after the Chernobyl disaster, this anniversary once again offers an opportunity to take stock of lessons learned, reflect on the recovery process and remember the heroism of the first responders who rushed to the damaged reactor on 26 April 1986 and sacrificed their health and, in many cases, their lives to save others. On this very day of commemoration, let us renew our deep appreciation for their heroic efforts.

The tragedy of Chernobyl will always be linked with nuclear safety. Indeed, the accident led to a new awareness of safety issues and to major improvements in the regulation of nuclear plants around the world. International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day will therefore be considered as dedicated to raising

awareness of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the risks of nuclear energy in general. The Chernobyl disaster also brought the international community together to support the enormous efforts of the local, regional and national authorities. I especially commend the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine for their joint work.

This is a day that offers a unified, global message of hope for the past, present and future generations who have been and will continue to be directly affected by Chernobyl. On this sombre occasion of the observance of International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day, let us resolve to bring hope and a better future to the people who have lived too long under the dark shadow of this disaster.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

On this day, 35 years ago, the world witnessed a disastrous nuclear accident at Chernobyl that had grave humanitarian, environmental and economic consequences and whose effects are still being felt to this day. The Asia-Pacific Group would like to take this opportunity to honour the memory of the victims of that tragic accident, remember the men and women who continue to suffer from the radioactive fallout of the Chernobyl catastrophe and pay tribute to the heroic actions of all the first responders who risked their lives to protect the population from the harmful effects of the accident.

This occasion provides an opportunity to look back at all the progress achieved over those 35 years in dealing with the persistent harmful fallout of the Chernobyl disaster. While much has been achieved, we are aware that much more remains to be done to promote the recovery of the affected region, with a need to focus on sustainable development. When discussing the progress that has been made on recovery, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the efforts of the Governments of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, the three countries most affected by Chernobyl, to protect their populations from the negative effects of radiation and to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. We continue to stress the importance of international support for the response to the Chernobyl disaster, especially under the auspices of

the United Nations, which, as referenced in resolution 74/114, can contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Finally, the tragedy of Chernobyl serves to remind us that nuclear accidents transcend borders, while the response of the international community in the aftermath of the incident shows us what can be achieved when we are all united. Following the disaster, the international community rallied behind those affected and has provided continued support for the reconstruction and development of the affected region over the years. We must now continue to work together to ensure and strengthen nuclear safety in order to prevent similar nuclear accidents in future.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Jinga (Romania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States on the occasion of the commemoration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

This was a devastating tragedy that brought immense human suffering and environmental, social and economic damage, and we should all remember and learn from it in order to prevent such a terrible disaster from occurring ever again. In that regard, we welcomed the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 71/125, entitled "Persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster", which designated 26 April as International Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day, to be observed every year in order to raise awareness of Chernobyl's long-term consequences.

Today we pay tribute to the memory of all of the victims—those who lost their lives during the explosion, those who heroically gave their lives while striving to contain the effects of the explosion in its immediate aftermath and those who subsequently suffered from diseases caused by the effects of atomic radiation and pollution. We also acknowledge with appreciation the role that the United Nations has been playing, helping primarily through emergency and humanitarian aid, then by supporting recovery and social and economic development and coordinating multilateral assistance to mitigate the long-term consequences of the disaster at the community, national, regional and global levels.

The Chernobyl tragedy brought the international community together, not only in supporting the recovery efforts but also in sounding the alarm on nuclear safety. One of the most important lessons of Chernobyl is that all countries have to comply with international nuclear safety standards and security and environmental requirements and assume responsibility for the safety of their own peoples and those around the world. It is worth stressing here the efforts and work of the International Atomic Energy Agency in promoting a sustainable global nuclear safety and security framework through international cooperation with its member States and in mitigating the effects of the Chernobyl disaster over many years.

An equally important lesson for all States is how vital it is to ensure prompt and transparent communication of all relevant nuclear security and safety information in accordance with national legislation and international obligations. That is the most reliable and efficient way to prevent similar disasters from happening, because the cost of mistakes is too high for humankind to pay again. On the occasion of this solemn thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, let us reflect on the tragedy, remember all the loss and pain, build on the lessons learned and commit to never again allowing this to happen.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Skoknic Tapia (Chile): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC).

As we commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries would like to express its appreciation for the report of the Secretary-General on the persistent legacy of the Chernobyl disaster (A/74/461). We believe that it addresses the main concerns around the incident's continuing repercussions. The Group welcomes the report and in particular its recommendation that relevant United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) programmes, as well as other United Nations initiatives, prioritize communities affected by the disaster while adopting an integrated development strategy that goes hand in hand with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise to leave no one behind. The report also highlights the fact that the regions affected

by the nuclear disaster have invested in education, health and social-services infrastructure and have prioritized economic development and employment opportunities. GRULAC commends those efforts and encourages the provision of continuing assistance to the people in the regions affected. One of the report's central messages relates to the ongoing United Nations assistance efforts, especially those of UNDP, in the regions affected by the Chernobyl disaster. It notes initiatives to engage in inclusive and efficient environmental management, promote employment opportunities and raise awareness of radiological contamination in the affected territories, as well as energy efficiency projects that promote low-carbon technologies and capacity-building solutions for local communities.

GRULAC recognizes that the World Health Organization (WHO) has been contributing to the Chernobyl recovery efforts for three decades. We can be sure that today, in the face of the evolving coronavirus disease pandemic, WHO continues to care for the inhabitants of those regions. We also want to highlight the contributions of UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

We agree with the Secretary-General's report on the importance of applying the lessons learned from the Chernobyl nuclear accident and continuing to raise the international community's awareness about prevention, preparedness, recovery and rehabilitation measures. We note that the Chernobyl experience is reflected in the content of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which recommends the development, maintenance and strengthening of people-centred, multi-hazard and multisectoral forecasting and early-warning systems.

In conclusion, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries would like to recall its region's contribution to nuclear non-proliferation through the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, a legal instrument that created the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone, and what is more, in a region as densely populated as Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, at the second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana on 29 January 2014, Latin America and the Caribbean were proclaimed a zone of peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, who will speak

on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Ms. Brandt (Netherlands): On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, I have the solemn honour to say a few words in remembrance of those who lost their lives or livelihoods and those whose lives were permanently scarred by the most severe nuclear accident in history.

On Saturday, 26 April 1986, a safety test led to a disastrous, uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction at Chernobyl nuclear power plant near the town of Pripyat, in what was then the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Efforts to conceal the truth about the scope of the tragedy came at the expense of people's lives, making the aftermath of the nuclear explosion even worse, and a reminder of the importance of truth and the need to fight disinformation.

The human cost of the disaster remains high. We remember those killed in the immediate aftermath, those who suffered, and in many cases died, from the long-term consequences and those who risked their lives in order to rescue others. The terrible catastrophe affected hundreds of thousands of lives, and its effects are still felt today. Thirty-five years after the disaster, we are still having to deal with the disaster's serious long-term consequences, and the communities and territories affected still have urgent needs resulting from it. Women and children in parts of present-day Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation have been particularly affected.

As an international community, we will continue to recognize the plight of those affected by the explosion at Chernobyl. Since 2004, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has served as the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl, made up of the relevant international agencies under the leadership of UNDP and the three affected countries, constitutes an important coordination mechanism for international cooperation.

Finally, after 10 years of construction, and thanks to the efforts of many countries and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the new safe confinement has been successfully installed, making it possible for the people in the Chernobyl area to finally begin a new chapter.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Mr. Kennedy (United States of America): Today is the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, a tragedy that demonstrated the Soviet Union's disregard for nuclear safety and the safety of its own citizens. I want to particularly recognize the representatives of Ukraine and Belarus, whose people were most seriously affected by the disaster.

We gather here today to commemorate the great, selfless, personal bravery and incredible dedication of the emergency workers who were the first to move to contain the disaster on that fateful day in Chernobyl, 26 April 1986. Those heroes struggled valiantly to contain the nuclear fallout and mitigate the catastrophe. They knew that the struggle would certainly result in their own deaths. Their sacrifice is a powerful call for us to remember. It is a powerful call for Chernobyl not to be forgotten. We remember those who have suffered the long-term effects of the accident, and recall those who were resettled from their homes, notably the people of the towns of Pripyat and Chernobyl, homes to which they will never return.

In remembrance of this sacrifice, the international community, including the United States, has come together in solidarity to work to return the site of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster to an environmentally safe and stable condition. Joining together in support of the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, founded in 1997, 45 countries and institutions contributed nearly \$2 billion that was used to make the site safe and construct the new safe containment. This unique structure, said to be the largest movable structure in history, now stands over unit 4 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. In the cooperative effort to ecologically and safely secure the site of the disaster, the work of the Government of Ukraine deserves special recognition. While there is still work to be done, including the removal of radioactive rubble, the new safe containment is a notable milestone for the international community and an accomplishment of international solidarity. It is also a memorial to the dead and the heroes of Chernobyl. May we never forget.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mrs. Guerra Tamayo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thirty-five years ago, the terrible nuclear accident at Chernobyl affected the lives of thousands of people,

particularly in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, and for the first time tested the response of the international community to such a catastrophe. Chernobyl is a name linked to a tragedy of lives that were lost or changed forever and to international cooperation — one of the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations — in this case to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected by the nuclear disaster.

Cuba is deeply honoured to have been among the first countries to respond to the request for international assistance and to have contributed to the response to the disaster and its consequences for many years. Cuba was the only country to set up a free, large-scale comprehensive health programme to care for children affected by the Chernobyl accident. Of the more than 25,000 people treated in Cuba between 1990 and 2011, 21,340 were children, many of whom had had their hopes dashed, had been denied treatment in other parts of the world or had come from institutions for children without family support. We are therefore very pleased to note that most of the children with cancer or blood diseases who were treated in Cuba through the programme are now in perfect health.

The programme for the treatment of children affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe is one more example of our humanitarian and internationalist policies, based on the principle of sharing what we have, not of giving what is left over. The programme was maintained even in our economy's worst years in the 1990s, and despite the criminal economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States. The children of Tarará, as we affectionately call in Cuba the thousands of boys and girls who were treated at that summer resort for students, will always have a friend in our people. We also want to reiterate to the peoples and the Governments of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia our unwavering solidarity and support in confronting the consequences of the disaster.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in this special commemorative meeting in observance of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 73?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.