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Dr. Margaret Chan  
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SCHWEIZ

Berlin, 10. May 2011

Dear Dr. Chan,

I am writing to you on behalf of the German affiliate of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and as co-author of the enclosed report "Health Effects of Chernobyl". This report was first published in 2006 for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. While we were in the process of updating it for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant took place that is still continuing to this day.

IPPNW Germany urges you to consider the data we have collated in this report from very many studies on the health effects of Chernobyl, the most recent being the New York Academy of Sciences Report from Alexey Yablokov, Vassily and Alexey Nesterenko "Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment". The starkest picture that emerges when one looks at all this research is of the very great suffering of the liquidators and the people of the region, especially the children. The number of fatalities is often treated as the main issue resulting from the catastrophe and is debated with the most controversy. In our eyes, however, it is the morbidity and the changes in the genome that should be central to the discussion on the effects of the disaster, because of the consequences of these illnesses which sometimes cause life-long suffering while the changes in the genome will last for generations.

I ask you to read and consider the following extract from a speech given by Valentina Smolnikova at the IPPNW Congress in Berlin on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2011, a paediatrician who treated many children from the exclusion zone, including those born from embryos that were exposed to radiation while in the womb:

"In the time following [the disaster] there were many children born with deformations and illnesses: with amputated limbs, missing fingers, fingers grown together, hypocephalus, cleft gums and lips, blind, with cerebral palsy, spinal cord hernias, heart defects. But not one of the mothers rejected these children. Chernobyl stole their joy in childhood, the happiness of their youth, and made the lives of parents and those close to them difficult. But in their place evolved goodness in the hearts of the people, the mothers."

Dr. Smolnikova describes only one aspect of the suffering that Chernobyl caused. There are many others, detailed in our report.

As with every other preventable disease, WHO should be researching into and trying to rid the world of the cause. Ionising radiation is a cause of disease, that we know. Any radiation in excess

of that which is natural or that which may be necessary for medical treatment must, in our considered medical opinion, be prevented.

Instead, the WHO is bound by an agreement to the IAEA, which has the promotion of nuclear energy as its primary objective. We believe that the interpretation of this agreement has led to WHO becoming implicit in the minimisation of the health effects of ionising radiation and particular the health effects of Chernobyl. Moreover, the limits presently being used for radiation exposure are not based on unbiased health research but are currently provided by the ICRP. This organisation is accountable to noone but itself. Unlike WHO it is not a UN organisation and there is no guarantee that its membership is unbiased. Many of its members have held positions in national atomic energy commissions or the IAEA.

There needs to be far more truly independent research on the connection between certain diseases and exposition to both high and low doses of radiation. We believe that it is the task of WHO to provide neutral information based on independent research, so that reliable global guidelines on ionising radiation can be developed. It is not enough to rely on what the IAEA, ICRP or UNSCEAR provide in the way of information, as none of these organisations have the attainment of the highest possible level of health as their primary objective and are biased. For instance, the latest UNSCEAR report completely neglects to mention that 53% of the radiation contaminated Europe outside the former Soviet Union, not including the three most affected countries of the region. Nor does it mention the tens of thousands of liquidators who have already died due to the catastrophe.

The WHO needs to be the leading authority on ionising radiation as a cause of disease and to direct and coordinate health work on this issue. It should be dictating to IAEA what kinds of nuclear technology are regarded as medically necessary, whereby the risks are considered (because of their benefits to health) to be acceptable, when used according to set guidelines. These guidelines should be set by WHO and not by ICRP.

We ask you to begin taking back the authority on this issue by revisiting the health effects of Chernobyl and looking at the data in our report. You might consider setting up a study group to look into previously published work in the context of the Chernobyl Forum with the purpose of comparing the data and the conclusions of our report. We would be interested in the results of such a study.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. med. Angelika Claussen  
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (German section)