



UN Day of Commemoration for Chernobyl Disaster
New York, 26 April 2019

Message from Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney

As Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade I am pleased to have this opportunity to offer Ireland's support today as the world marks "United Nations Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day".

33 years since the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, our thoughts remain with the people of Belarus and Ukraine as we recall the tragic loss of life and horrific long-term consequences caused by the disaster.

It is imperative that the world's community does not allow the tragedy in Chernobyl to become a thing of the past in the public consciousness. With over a fifth of Belarus' landmass continuing to suffer from contamination and over 5.5 million people from across Belarus, Western Russia and Ukraine directly living in contaminated zones, today's United Nations Chernobyl Disaster Remembrance Day is crucial to ensuring that the place of Chernobyl remains on the international agenda. Indeed, the awareness and visibility of Chernobyl that will result from the planned television series is also very much welcomed.

As one of the first countries in responding to this humanitarian tragedy, the Government and people of Ireland have maintained their steadfast support to the people, and in particular the children, of Belarus.

Over the last three decades Adi Roche and her organisation, Chernobyl Children International (CCI), recognised as the only UN sanctioned NGO working in Chernobyl, have worked tirelessly in Belarus making a significant humanitarian impact. This unwavering support has seen the building of the very special friendship that exists between the Irish and Belarussian people today.

Having travelled to Belarus, I have personally borne witness to the tragic effects of this nuclear disaster. Yet, even in the midst of tragedy, I witnessed the great resolve and resilience of the Belarussian and Ukrainian people in coping in the aftermath. It is this resolve and resilience that acts as a very fitting tribute to all of those people who lost their lives so tragically 33 years ago.

I can assure you that the people of Ireland will continue to remember and support those impacted most by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. So, on this day of remembrance, I would like to reiterate Ireland's message that the hearts and homes of Ireland remain open to children of Chernobyl in the years to come.



Simon Coveney T.D.

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade