



FOREIGN MINISTER LLOYD AXWORTHY ADDRESSES HOUSE OF COMMONS

April 26, 1996... "Today is the 10th anniversary of the disaster of the Chernobyl nuclear station. On behalf of all Canadians I express anew our profound sympathy and condolences for the survivors of this tragic accident, for those who lost family and friends, for those who lost health and peace of mind and for those who lost their homes and their livelihoods.

We want to pay particular tribute to the courage, commitment and competence of the many Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians and others who took determined and effective action to contend with the costs and impact of the accident, often at the risk of their own lives. Many of course have since perished.

Chernobyl symbolizes the necessity for the operators of nuclear reactors worldwide to put safety first. We must all learn the lessons of Chernobyl so that such a tragedy never reoccurs.

The Moscow Nuclear Summit contributed to this goal by highlighting the absolute priority of the safe use of nuclear energy, and by strengthening international cooperation in security and safety issues.



Both the Canadian government and the Canadian private sector have provided assistance through many channels to the victims of the accident. We have committed some \$32 million to projects aimed at relieving the suffering caused by the accident and to nuclear safety projects aimed at ensuring that such an accident will not happen again.

Canadians have shown their solidarity with the citizens of the affected areas in many different ways: from inviting to their homes young people living in areas exposed to radiation to participating in projects setting up systems to monitor the environment in the radiation fallout area.

Canada has been particularly active in the G-7 to enable Ukraine to meet its energy needs while closing the Chernobyl nuclear station and discontinuing its lingering dangers. As the chair of the G-7 last year, we led the successful negotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding on the closure of Chernobyl signed with Ukraine in Ottawa last December by the Deputy Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was also active at last week's Moscow Summit in reaffirming the mutual commitment to the implementation of this agreement.

Our decision to organize and host the Winnipeg conference on Ukraine's economic transition has served as a catalyst for the subsequent efforts of leading industrialized nations to come to the assistance of Ukraine.

We intend to continue our political and economic cooperation with Ukraine in nuclear safety and energy sector development and other vital fields both bilaterally and multilaterally. We will work to help Ukraine lend meaning to its precious new independence and to win a better life for its people. That is the best way to help the victims and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives.

Today, on the 10th anniversary of the disaster at Chernobyl, I speak on behalf of all Canadians in expressing our support and friendship for the people of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus who have all suffered the consequences of this accident. Let us keep working together to ensure that a similar tragedy never happens again."

UKRAINIAN CANADIAN CONGRESS PRESIDENT OLEH ROMANIW ON PARLIAMENT HILL

"Ten years ago today, a tragedy occurred at the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl, Ukraine. It was a disaster whose ramifications are being felt today by tens of thousands of people in Ukraine and other neighbouring states and, in all probability, has changed the lives of an entire generation. This was a disaster of human technology tinkering irresponsibly with forces it could not fully control. This was a disaster of a communist ideology taking shortcuts and reckless chances. This was a disaster of contempt for the lives and rights of innocent men, women and children. This was a disaster which need not have happened.

Five years after the explosion at Chernobyl's reactor No. 4, Ukraine became an independent state as the seemingly indestructible Soviet monolith collapsed. This infant democracy - beset with the problems and expenses of implementing a new political, economic and social order from the ground up - was also burdened with the costs of dealing with the Chernobyl catastrophe.



UCC President Oleh Romaniw addresses crowd gathered on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for the Chernobyl commemorations.

It must be recognized that Chernobyl was, and continues to be, more than just a Ukrainian tragedy. It was a tragedy of global proportions. As such, dealing with it requires a global solution. This is a fact that has been recognized by the Government of Canada. As a Canadian of Ukrainian descent, I am proud to say that Canada has been in the forefront of providing Ukraine with the type of assistance it requires. Much more, however, needs to be done. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress, as the official representative of the Ukrainian community in Canada, has worked closely with the Canadian government in the past on the provision of assistance programs to Ukraine. To this day, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress forcefully lobbies the government to assist Ukraine with the Chernobyl aftermath.

The time for pointing fingers of blame for what occurred ten years ago has passed. That is not to say that the people of Ukraine and other nations should exonerate those responsible for this tragedy, because they will not forget the deaths and the human suffering this has created. What we should focus on now, however, is what has Chernobyl taught us.

For decades, all of us have heard experts talk about the shrinking globe. They were referring to the explosion in instant telecommunications and transportation which enabled people from distant corners of the globe to connect in a way that was unimaginable not that long ago. With today's global economy, all nations and all peoples are connected like never before. Scarcely anything occurs today that does not impact someone thousands of kilometres away. We cannot afford being islands unto ourselves. More and more, we must realize that we are our brother's keeper."