



IndependentWHO
c/o Eric Peytremann
54 rue Ernest Bloch
CH-1207 Geneva

Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva 27

1 December 2010

Subject: Follow-up of WHO proposal of scientific forum to IndependentWHO

Dear Dr Chan,

Since 2 July 2009, when we met with your representatives,¹ IndependentWHO has written twice and telephoned once² to request that a meeting be organized to follow up the WHO proposal of a scientific forum of experts on the health consequences of Chernobyl.

The proposal of a forum between experts - one group to be identified by IndependentWHO and one group to be identified by the WHO - was made at this meeting by your representatives and was strongly endorsed by IndependentWHO, as a constructive measure likely to contribute to the resolution of the scientific controversy over the extent of morbidity and mortality resulting from the Chernobyl accident.

The urgent need for such a forum is confirmed today with the publication by the New York Academy of Sciences of a book entitled: *Chernobyl: consequences of the catastrophe for people and the environment* by Professors A. Yablokov and V. Nesterenko and Dr A. Nesterenko.³ This book represents the most complete and the most up-to-date collection of evidence from independent scientific sources all over the world, on the health and environmental consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The new book makes available huge amounts of evidence from independent studies undertaken in the affected countries, unique and valuable data that contribute significantly to the world's knowledge base in this critically important area of public health (see review in *Le Monde Diplomatique* attached).

The authors estimate that the number of deaths worldwide due to Chernobyl fallout from 1986 through 2004 was 985,000, a number that has since increased, and that between 112,000 and 125,000 of 830,000 liquidators involved in the clean-up operation, had died by 2005. Thousands of independent studies in Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian Federation, and in many other countries contaminated to varying degrees by radionuclides from Chernobyl, have established that there has been a significant increase in all types of cancer; in diseases of the respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, urogenital, endocrine, immune, lymphoid, and nervous systems; prenatal, perinatal, infant and child mortality; spontaneous abortion; deformities and genetic anomalies; disturbance and retardation of mental development; neuropsychological illness and blindness.

¹ Dr M. Neira, Dr C. Dora, Dr R. Bertollini, Dr Z. Carr, Mr A. Ross.

² Letters: 28 July 2009 and 2 June 2010; telephone call: 2 September 2010.

³ *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1181, Wiley Blackwell, February, 2010 (330 pages, 800 references).

Discrepancies in estimates of morbidity and mortality resulting from the accident are well in excess of the normal scientific margin of uncertainty. Official estimates differ from those of independent researchers by a factor of 100, sometimes even 1,000. These discrepancies can no longer be ignored. They make imperative an independent, transparent and publicly accountable investigation – such as the scientific forum of experts proposed by your representatives 18 months ago.

With this letter, we request a meeting with you as Director-General of the World Health Organization and/or with your senior staff (such as Dr Fukuda, Assistant Director-General, Health Security and Environment) representing the Director-General of the World Health Organization, to discuss our concerns and to advance mutual understanding. We would also like to present to you a copy of the above mentioned book, a gift from the authors, signed by them with a personal message to you.

We propose that a meeting be held no later than the end of March 2011. We look forward to your response proposing a date and a time for the meeting, no later than end December 2010.

Failing this, we will be obliged, with much regret, to conclude that the Director-General of the World Health Organization is unwilling to engage in discussion with civil society and independent scientists in advancing knowledge and understanding of the health consequences of the world's most serious nuclear accident.

We will need to seek support and assistance from Member States, NGOs, the press and the general public in the efforts of concerned citizens to engage the international health authority in discussion of a major public health issue and to contribute to the fulfillment of the WHO's constitutional mandate.⁴

Yours sincerely,

Eric Peytremann
For IndependentWHO

Enclosures: Copy of review published in Le Monde Diplomatique, December 2010, and English translation of original submission to the MD.

Copies:

Anne Marie Worning, Executive Director, Office of the Director-General
Fu Cong, Adviser to the Director-General
Ian Smith, Adviser to the Director-General
Isabelle Nuttall, Executive Officer, Office of the Director General
Andrew Cassels, Director, Office of the Director General
Anarfi Asamoah-Baah, Deputy Director-General:
Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health
Flavia Bustreo, Assistant Director-General, Family and Community Health
Carissa F. Etienne, Assistant Director-General, Health Systems and Services
Keiji Fukuda, Assistant Directors-General, Health Security and Environment
Mohamed Abdi Jama, Assistant Director-General, General Management
Marie-Paule Kieny, Assistant Director-General, Innovation, Information, Evidence and Research
Eric Laroche, Assistant Director-General, Health Action in Crisis
Hiroki Nakatani, Assistant Director-General, HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases
Namita Pradhan, Assistant Director-General, Partnerships and UN Reform.

⁴ To promote and conduct research in the field of health; to provide information, counsel and assistance in the field of health; to assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health. Article 2, n, q and r, Constitution of the World Health Organization, 42nd edition, Geneva 1999.