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Outline communication

from the Commission to the Council

on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The accident that occurred in the nuclear reactor at Chernobyl has shown that the operation of nuclear power plants involves responsibilities of international magnitude. An event that took place more than 1000 km from the nearest Member State has had considerable repercussions on a sizeable proportion of the population of the Community. This demonstrates more clearly than ever that the Community must involve itself in nuclear safety and that suitable action must be taken at Community level.

Although it is still too early to be able to evaluate fully all the consequences of this accident, it is a matter of urgency for the Community to adopt an initial set of internal measures and measures within the framework of its external relations based on the lessons that it can already learn from that accident.

2. The task of the public authorities is first of all to ensure that, where industrial-scale installations in general are concerned, adequate precautions are taken in order to reduce the risk of accidents to a minimum, in particular the risk of accidents capable of affecting the health and safety of the public; secondly, they must take steps to ensure that, if accidents still do occur - which can never be entirely ruled out - proper measures are taken to limit their consequences as far as possible. In the nuclear field, the probability that major accidents

will have consequences at international level is high, since radioactive substances can travel and spread within the atmosphere. Nuclear safety and radiation protection must hence be considered as matters of priority for international cooperation at world level, particularly within the framework of the IAEA. Prospects for such cooperation have improved considerably since the Chernobyl accident. The Community, for its part, must encourage this development as far as possible.

3. Action by the IAEA is not, however, sufficient in itself. The action has to be supplemented by measures at Community level. The Community has acquired a considerable wealth of experience with and knowledge of both nuclear safety and radiation protection, in particular through research conducted in the context of Community programmes.

Even before the Chernobyl accident occurred, the Commission was proposing that this knowledge be exploited to improve the protection of workers, of the public and of the environment against ionizing radiation.

4. In addition to the possibilities for cooperation on a world and Community level, the Community should also explore channels for initiatives to be taken in a wider European context.

5. The emotional reaction of the public in Europe and throughout the world to the Chernobyl accident - which is eloquently reflected in the numerous official comments made at the highest level of responsibility - is evidence of the acute political sensitivity of the present situation and emphasizes the urgency of the action to be taken. Such action is all the more necessary in view of the fact that nuclear power is now an essential component of the Community's energy balance. It accounts for one-third of electricity production and makes it possible to save the equivalent of 100 million tonnes of oil each year. The situation created by the Chernobyl accident therefore calls for particularly careful and thorough consideration.

6. Meeting in Tokyo only several days after the Chernobyl accident, the Heads of State or Government of the seven main industrialized countries and the representatives of the European Community, after affirming that "nuclear energy is and, properly managed, will continue to be an increasingly widely used source of energy" stated in particular:

"We welcome and encourage the work of the IAEA in seeking to improve international cooperation on the safety of nuclear installations, the handling of nuclear accidents and of their consequences and the provision of mutual emergency assistance. Moving forward from the relevant IAEA guidelines, we urge the early elaboration of an international convention committing the parties to report and exchange information in the event of nuclear emergencies or accidents. This should be done with the least possible delay."

7. On behalf of his Government, Mr Tindemans, the Belgian Minister for External Relations, informed Mr Delors, President of the Commission, of the need to consider action in the field of nuclear safety and requested the Commission to make proposals concerning the definition of objective safety criteria which would have to be applied to the design of nuclear power stations. In addition, plans for typical emergencies would have to be drawn up within the Community and should cover ways and means of rapid mutual assistance between Member States. Furthermore, closer cooperation between Member States in relation to measures restricting intra-Community trade was proving to be necessary. Finally, where the provision of information was concerned, the Chernobyl accident had brought to light serious deficiencies which would have to be put right as soon as possible.

8. For his part, Mr Kohl, the German Federal Chancellor, issued an invitation to the Heads of State or Government of countries which possess nuclear power stations or are in the process of constructing them and to the competent international organizations, suggesting that a conference be held for the purpose of examining all measures that should be taken to ensure that nuclear installations are operated with a maximum of safety and that accidental releases of radioactive substances can be prevented. He also expressed the opinion that improvements in these fields are possible and necessary.

9. The Irish Government, moreover, has pointed out to the Commission that, in its view, short- medium- and long-term action should be undertaken with regard to rapid information on, and mutual assistance in the event of, an accident and that:

- the technological safety standards applicable to nuclear power stations within the Community should be more closely scrutinized;

- stricter radiation protection standards should be laid down.

Finally, priority should according to the Irish government, be accorded to setting up a Community inspectorate for nuclear safety and radiation protection.

10. At its meeting on 12 May 1986, the Council of Ministers, after confirming that the Member States had undertaken to communicate to the Commission uniform data concerning the evolution of radioactivity within their territories and the health measures applicable at national level, requested the Commission to prepare as soon as possible proposals for supplementing, on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Euratom Treaty, the basic standards for the protection of public health and to propose to the Council a procedure for coping with such emergency situations in the future. On 30 May, the Council of Ministers reiterated its invitation to the Commission to expand the basic standards to take account of the dangers inherent in the contamination of products.

11. At an informal meeting in Brussels held on 12 May 1986, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs requested, in the light of the abovementioned communication from Mr Tindemans, the Commission to put forward proposals relating to the definition of objective safety criteria for nuclear power stations. It was also agreed that the Commission should put forward proposals for the drawing-up of emergency plans, which, in particular, would have to enable the Member States to provide mutual aid rapidly in the event of a serious nuclear accident. They also

agreed that, within the framework of the IAEA, the Twelve should work towards making the Directives concerning the exchange of information binding, which could be achieved in the form of an international convention.

The Ministers also considered that it would be necessary to determine whether, at the Vienna Conference on the follow-up to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, it would be possible to give greater substance to the provisions of "basket" 2 of the Helsinki Final Act on the environment.

12. At its plenary session last May, the European Parliament passed two resolutions convering all the concerns arising from the Chernobyl accident and requesting, inter alia, that the radioactivity limit values applicable to foodstuffs for human consumption be established uniformly by the Member States at a level which would unquestionably guarantee that such foodstuffs were harmless to human health and that these limit values would be applicable both to foodstuffs produced within the Community and to imported foodstuffs.

Parliament also requested the Member States and the Commission:

- to arrive at a common position with a view to negotiating rapidly international standards which would make it binding to report any accidents immediately to the IAEA;

- to set up effective inspection systems at international level.

It also requested the Commission to report on the circumstances of the accident and on its consequences for public health within the Community and for the environment in the medium and long term.

Finally, it called upon the Member States to adopt common standards for the design, operation and safety of nuclear power stations, the decommissioning of any obsolete power stations, the transport and disposal of nuclear waste and the effective supervision of such operations by the IAEA.

13. On 21 May 1986, the Board of Governors of the IAEA requested that:

- a meeting of experts be held in three months to examine in detail the causes of, and the sequence of events during, the Chernobyl accident;

- groups of experts be set up

  . to transform into international conventions the IAEA guidelines on rapid information and mutual assistance in the event of accidents;

  . to evaluate additional measures to be taken to improve cooperation in the field of nuclear safety, including the improvement of standards;

- an intergovernmental conference be held in order to study all the problems that arise in the field of nuclear safety.

14. In a letter sent on 2 June 1986, Mr Poniatowski, Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on Energy, Research and Technology, informed the President of the Commission of the initial conclusions to be drawn from the Chernobyl accident and from the emergency debate held by the European Parliament. The questions dealt with are weighty and varied. The Commission has not yet been able to examine them thoroughly, but it will do so and reply as soon as possible.

15. In the light of the above, and in the desire to protect workers, the public and the environment, the Commission has started discussions on the action to be taken at Community level to pursue the development of a coherent policy in this field.

Such action, which takes account of the lessons learnt from the Chernobyl accident and the specific nature of the problems encountered, will be taken in the following areas according to an appropriate timetable:

A. Health protection
B. Plant safety and operational safety
C. Emergency procedures
D. International action
E. Research.

Some of the measures described are also intended to make up for deficiencies in the information given to the public, both on a preventive basis and in the event of a crisis. The need for information is making itself felt not only at national level, but also in the European context, where it is necessary in particular to ensure consistency.

The Commission will take any other appropriate action, also in the context of other international organizations, that is likely to contribute to the provision of adequate information to the public.

II. BASIS FOR COMMON ACTION

16. In order to cope with the suddenness of the repercussions of the Chernobyl accident - notably with regard to the functioning of the "common market", and above all in the foodstuffs sector - Community action has been based on the EEC Treaty.

In order to deal with certain aspects of the action to be taken, further use should be made of the provisions of the EEC Treaty and of the secondary legislation deriving therefrom to protect the environment and consumers.

17. However, examination of the means of Community action should be based, primarily on the Euratom Treaty.

The Euratom Treaty was concluded by the founding Heads of State who declared themselves:

"Resolved to create the conditions necessary for the development of a powerful nuclear industry which will provide extensive energy resources, lead to the modernization of technical processes and contribute, through its many other applications, to the prosperity of their peoples."

Article 1 of the Treaty stipulates:

"It shall be the task of the Community to contribute to the raising of the standard of living in the Member States and to the development of relations with the other countries by creating the conditions necessary for the speedy establishment and growth of nuclear industries."

In order to enable the Community to accomplish this task, the Treaty lays down "provisions for the encouragement of progress in the field of nuclear energy" (Title Two).

18. Among these provisions, particular importance is attached to those relating to health and safety (Chapter III), on the grounds that they constitute an essential precondition for the exploitation of this form of energy, whether on an experimental or economic scale.
From the health and safety angle, the characteristic feature of nuclear energy is the emission of ionizing radiations. However, these radiations are also caused by economic and social activities not connected with the production of energy (e.g., radiology). Furthermore, radiation also exists spontaneously in nature.
The environment is subjected - to a certain extent - to ionizing radiations: natural radioactivity (varying from one place to another) and cosmic radiation. It should be borne in mind that in normal operating conditions, the amount of radiation emitted by nuclear facilities constitutes only a few percent of the average level of natural background radiation. This is why institutional provisions relating exclusively to the scientific and industrial exploitation of nuclear energy have not been laid down so much so that Chapter III of the Euratom Treaty deals with the protection of health against all forms of ionizing radiations, irrespective of their sources and origins.

Accordingly, this chapter contains all the provisions necessary to achieve this "Community objective" which, according to Article 2(b), is to "establish uniform safety standards to protect the health of workers and of the general public and ensure that they are applied".

19. As regards the international aspects of the measures to be taken, it should be pointed out that Article 2(h) of the Euratom Treaty stipulates that the Community should establish with other countries and international organizations such relations as will foster progress in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition, an entire chapter of the Treaty (Chapter X) is devoted to international relations.

20. Lastly, should the abovementioned provisions prove inadequate, recourse could be had to Article 203,[1] which is the Euratom equivalent of Article 235 of the EEC Treaty.

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[1] "If action by the Community should prove necessary to attain one of the objectives of the Community and this Treaty has not provided the necessary powers, the Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the Assembly, take the appropriate measures."

III. ACTION AREAS

A. Health protection

21. A thorough assessment must first be made of the extent to which Chapter III of the Euratom Treaty, referred to in point 21 above, is being implemented. This assessment had already begun, on request, long before the Chernobyl accident, in particular within the European Parliament and, on a specific point, by the Luxembourg government, on 20 February 1986.

22. It will first of all be necessary to decide whether or not there is a case for changing the basic standards for protection against the dangers of radiation, which were drawn up in 1959 and have been revised periodically (most recently in 1984) to take account of technical and scientific progress.

23. Leaving aside this basic question, other provisions of Chapter III must also be reviewed:

- the establishment by the Member States of laws, regulations and administrative provisions to ensure compliance with the basic standards and communication to the Commission thereof (Article 33);

- radioactivity-monitoring facilities and communication of data on radioactivity levels (Articles 35 and 36);

- procedures for examining plans for the disposal of radioactive waste (Article 37).

24. In the light of the events immediately following the Chernobyl accident, it is clear that the Commission, in consultation with the Member States, must take the necessary steps to accelerate, standardize and automate the collection of data on radioactivity levels (Article 36) and to exploit and publish regularly the results.

25. The Commission will be transmitting a comprehensive communication on the problems of implementing Chapter III of the Euratom Treaty and on possible solutions by the end of July 1986.

26. Immediately after the accident when radioactivity had been dispersed in the atmosphere, the Community was faced with the problem of contaminated foodstuffs. It was able to take a number of emergency measures with regard to the relevant trade arrangements. No other measures were taken, however, because it proved impossible to reach an agreement. These difficulties indicated the need to establish "tolerance limits for radioactive contamination"[2] in advance of any incident, so as to avoid controversy in the event of an emergency. Such limits would apply equally to all domestic production and imported products.

27. The Commission has already gone some way towards drawing up a proposal aimed at setting tolerance limits for the radioactive contamination of goods. It will draw upon all of the scientific expertise available and will concentrate its efforts on this proposal in order to complete it as quickly as possible and to take full account of the Councils' request, the arrangements deriving from which expire at the end of September 1986.

B. Intrinsic and operating safety of installations

[2] This expression denotes the permissible upper contamination limit. The expression "maximum tolerance" has also been used for this purpose in certain Council documents.

28. From the technological point of view, the safety of an installation depends on its ability to confine radioactivity adequately, whether under accident conditions or during normal operation; the Chernobyl accident has highlighted the problem of safety in nuclear power stations. Other types of installation and/or operation must also be considered, as must packages of radioactive materials (most of which contain the products used in industrial radiography and radiopharmaceuticals) and radioactive-waste repositories.

29. The ultimate objective as regards the intrinsic and operating safety of nuclear installations is to ensure the protection of man and the environment.

This is achieved, on the one hand, by appropriate measures to confine the sources of radiation and, on the other, by ensuring the integrity of the containments.

30. According to the basic standards, protection is based on the principle that all exposure to ionizing radiations must be kept "at a level that is as low as reasonably achievable" (ALARA) and also on the obligation to limit the individual doses sustained by exposed workers and by the population at large.

In practice, exposed workers undergo individual and collective monitoring as a means of objectively assuring that the dose limits have not been exceeded. As far as the general public is concerned, individual monitoring is not possible. (This explains, in part, why the individual dose limits for the public are lower than the dose limits for workers.)

31. In the area of non-nuclear activities and for dangers other than ionizing radiation, limits have also been set for exposure of the population and of the environment to pollutants (concentrations in the air and water).

However, for the purposes of defining emission standards applicable to certain types of industry and specific pollutants, the recent directives[3] have also placed more stress on use of the concept of the best available technology not involving excessive costs.

At present there is no compulsory Community standard limiting radioactive emissions into the air and water.

The Commission is looking into the question of whether the emission standards concept should be applied to nuclear installations, in the knowledge that in any case the basic standards will remain in force. It will inform the Council and Parliament of the outcome and submit proposals, where appropriate.

32. In a nuclear reactor, the fission products generated in the fuel constitute the principal source of ionizing radiations and these must be effectively isolated from the biosphere in all circumstances. The conditions that have to be satisfied by the various elements that contribute to this containment (e.g., the fuel cladding and the primary-circuit envelope) represent the installation safety criteria. Just as the articles of a directive express the intentions of the legislator, so too do these criteria set out the specific safety objectives.

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[3] Directive 84/360/EEC on the combating of air pollution from industrial plants (OJ L 188, 16.7.1984); Directive 76/464/EEC on pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community (OJ L 129, 18.5.1976) and directives derived therefrom (82/176/EEC; 83/513/EEC; 84/156/EEC; 84/491/EEC).

For example, mandatory criteria reflect the need for structures and components to withstand the effects of earthquakes. In this example, one of the criteria relates to determination of the reference earthquakes (which depend on the location of the installation) to be used in evaluating the stresses on structures and components. The application of (that is to say, compliance with) these criteria is based on detailed standards which are to the criteria what implementing regulations are to Directives. In the example given, the design and construction standards stipulate the calculation methods and fabrication methods. The standards used must be approved by the contracting parties and the safety authorities. They can be adapted to technological progress.

33. In each State, the criteria and standards constitute a coherent set of rules. This set of rules varies from one State to another. Such heterogeneity in a regulatory context gives rise to the de facto walling-off of certain national markets, so that the Community has to take steps both to approximate the regulations and to achieve the nuclear "common market".

34. This course of action is beset by serious difficulties arising from the complexity of the problem to be solved, but it can be facilitated by two favourable factors.

The first of these is that the safety criteria, even though they are strict and precise, are essentially of a general nature and in consequence lend themselves to approximation.

The second derives from the fact that the nuclear reactor market tends to centre on light-water reactors (LWRs), to which may be added in the long term liquid-metal-cooled fast reactors (LMFBRs). The light-water reactors are based on a common design and, although they were developed independently in certain Member States, the European models are closely related to one another. It should hence not be an impossible task to approximate the safety criteria for such reactors within the Community with the ultimate objective of harmonizing them. As regards fast reactors,

they are being developed in Europe - on the basis of one and the same concept - through close cooperation between the Member States and firms which are particularly interested. This means that it should be all the easier to lay down criteria and standards jointly.

35. In view of this situation, the Community should accord priority to seeking a consensus among the Member States concerned with regard to the harmonization of safety criteria. Such harmonization would facilitate development of the common market and would at the same time allay public concern. The consensus thus obtained would be formalized at a later stage of the action, which is also important in this context. This course of action in successive stages was adopted in the past in implementation of the Council Resolution of 22 July 1975 on the technological problems of nuclear safety (OJ No C 185, 14.8.1975). In that resolution, the Council, while recognizing the prerogatives and responsibilities of the competent national authorities in this field:

- recognized that the national authorities themselves, the nuclear energy producers and the constructors would be able to benefit from a harmonized approach to safety criteria at Community level;

- stressed that the problems of nuclear safety extend beyond the frontiers not only of Member States, but of the Community as a whole, and that it is incumbent on the Commission to act as a catalyst for initiatives to be taken on a broader international plane;

- agreed to the course of action in stages[4] in respect of the progressive

[4] Listing and comparing the safety requirements and criteria applied; drawing up a balance-sheet of similarities and dissimilarities; formulating recommendations pursuant to the second indent of Article 124 of the Euratom Treaty; where appropriate, submitting to the Council the most suitable draft Community provisions.

harmonization of national safety criteria.

36. Only some of the actions called for in that resolution have so far been taken owing to the complexity of the problems. The Commission expects that the willingness recently shown by the Member States to increase international cooperation will also extend to achieving significant progress in the harmonization of safety criteria.

In July 1986, the Commission will report to the Council and Parliament on the status of application of the Council resolution of 22 July 1975, on the problems involved in the harmonization of safety criteria and on the actions to be taken.

37. Under the basic Euratom standards, the nuclear industry is already required to comply with provisions concerning certain preventive measures designed to reduce accident risks, such as notification of the characteristics of nuclear facilities and of emergency plans. On the other hand, there are no existing Community provisions concerning the prior information of the public.

38. Other industrial activities, particularly those in which certain particularly dangerous substances are or can be used, are also the subject of preventive measures designed to limit the risks of major accidents (Directive 82/501/EEC of 26 June 1982, OJ L 230, 5.8.1982).

These measures require in particular that persons who may be affected by a major accident shall receive adequate advance information concerning the action to be taken in the event of such an accident.

The Commission will examine whether the provisions of the Euratom basic standards which cover these preventive measures are correctly applied and sufficient for the protection and information of the public. It will inform the Council of the results of its activities before the end of 1986.

39. Some of the information gathered by national authorities concerning incidents in nuclear power plants is notified - on a voluntary basis - at international level under the OECD and IAEA Incident Reporting Systems - IRS). This exchange of information is intended to enable the authorities responsible for safety to analyse the events which are of the greatest significance from that standpoint.

In the context of the European Reliability Data System (ERDS), the Commission (JRC) has created a data bank for the storage and analysis of information on incidents occurring in nuclear installations. This bank is intended to increase collective knowledge of the technological aspects of anomalies in such plants. The JRC also acts as an operating agent for the IRS system in the OECD area by storing, processing and analysing

the system information.

The Commission considers that the international exchange and the joint analysis of information on incidents in nuclear installations should be made more effective and that a compulsory Community reporting system should be adopted. The Commission will send the Council a proposal on this matter before the end of 1986.

40. As regards safety in transit, following the accident involving the freighter Mont Louis the Commission studied all the problems involved in the transport of dangerous and toxic substances and wastes, including radioactive materials.

Before the end of 1986, the Commission intends to send the Council a proposal designed to make the application of the provisions of the international agreements on the transport of dangerous substances[5] obligatory with regard to domestic and international transport.

As regards radioactive materials, which constitute a category of dangerous materials, it is planned that they should be subject, for all transport both within and between Member States, to a uniform set of provisions based on the IAEA recommendations "Regulation of the transport of radioactive materials" (Safety collection No 6, 1985 edition).

[5] Road - Economic Commission for Europe, ADR Agreement
Rail - Office of International Rail Transport, RID Regulations
Sea - International Maritime Organization, IMDG Code, etc.
Air - International Civil Aviation Organization, Technical Instructions
Inland Waterways - Central Rhine Commission, ADNR Agreement

41. The Commission also intends to examine the possibility of recommending that the Member States should harmonize certain measures covering the training and information of staff responsible for the transport of radioactive materials.

42. As regards the disposal of radioactive waste, implementation of the Community plan of action 1980-92) is proceeding satisfactorily. It covers the following points:

- continuous analysis of the situation with a view to the adoption of the necessary solutions;

- examination at Community level of measures which could ensure the long-term or permanent storage of radioactive waste under optimum conditions;

- consultation on practices concerning the management of waste, the quality and properties of conditioned waste and the conditions governing the disposal of waste;

- the continuity of Community research and development work during the plan;

- the provision of regular information for the public.

Pursuant to this plan of action, an initial report covering analysis of the existing situation and the prospects for the management of radioactive waste in the Community (COM(83) 262) was sent to the Council in 1983. It is proposed to send an update of this report, which is currently being prepared, to the Council before the end of 1986.

43. Furthermore, as is the case with all types of waste, the disposal of radioactive waste at sea is subject to the provisions of the London Dumping Convention. The Convention prohibits the dumping of certain dangerous wastes, particularly high-activity wastes, and provides for an

authorization system to cover the disposal of other wastes. Although all the Member States, with the exception of Luxembourg, are parties to this Convention, the Commission as such is not.

In recent years, the disposal of radioactive waste at sea has given rise to an extremely heated debate within the framework of the London Dumping Convention and, in practice, this method has not been used for the last three years.

As it has already pointed out in its Communication to the Council concerning new directions in environmental policy (COM(86)76 final, 19.2.1986), the Commission intends to submit proposals before the end of 1986 with a view to the participation of the Community as such in the London Dumping Convention.

C. Emergency procedures

44. The Chernobyl accident has demonstrated the need to exchange information on any radioactive hazards very quickly and, for this purpose, to have available at all times data enabling such information to be sent, received and used. An international Convention will be negotiated and signed - then ratified - under the aegis of the IAEA. This will oblige the contracting parties to report and exchange information in the event of a radioactive alert or accident. This Convention will draw upon an IAEA document entitled: "Guidelines on reportable events, integrated planning and information exchange in a transboundary release of radioactive materials" (INFCIRC/321) which sets out in sufficient detail the measures to be taken in any given instance.

45. Although many of the countries concerned are anxious that the new Convention should be concluded at an early date, the negotiating and above all ratification procedures will take some time.

For rapid action within the Community, an interim system should be set up. At regional level, the time required for implementation should be much shorter. Another aim of this system would be to guarantee in each Community country a single source of verified and authenticated information which would be able to meet the information requirements of the public, consumers and the media and thus avoid discrepancies in both the facts and their interpretation, the effects of which are always adverse.

46. A proposal for a regulation on an interim Community system for the rapid provision of information on nuclear accidents will be sent by the Commission to the Council before the end of July 1986.

47. The Chernobyl accident has also demonstrated the usefulness of an international system of mutual assistance, although this does not preclude the possibility of additional bilateral agreements. An international convention will be negotiated. It will be based on the IAEA document entitled: "Guidelines for mutual emergency assistance arrangements in connection with a nuclear accident or radiological emergency" (INFCIRC/310 of January 1984).

48. However, these guidelines, in contrast to those on rapid information in the event of an accident as referred to in 46 above, do not go into close detail. The Commission therefore feels that, in this area, the Community should not merely anticipate the future international system to be set up, but should be more ambitious and take full advantage

of the firm links already existing between its Member States. Moreover, the very advanced stage of nuclear development reached within the Community should enable it to take the lead in the provision of mutual assistance in emergencies.

49. This is nevertheless a complex field in which the national responsibility certainly outweighs that of the Community.

The Commission therefore intends to conduct a number of consultations before laying a proposal before the Council on the implementation of a Community system for mutual assistance in emergencies. Consequently this proposal cannot be ready before the end of the year.

D. International action

50. Apart from the activities that can justifiably be carried out in the Community both because of its purpose and aims, and because of the speed and effectiveness sought, the appropriate international framework is provided by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which is in the process of strengthening its cooperative links with other international bodies concerned by some of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident (WHO, WMO, UNEP and UNSCEAR).[6]

51. The legal framework for the cooperative and consultative relations between the Community (Euratom) and the IAEA is defined by a general agreement (of 1 December 1975) enabling the Community as such to be represented within the Agency's sectors of activity other than safeguards, where specific cooperation is in force.

[6] World Health Organisation; World Meteorological Organization; United Nations Environment Program; United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiations.

52. Where its spheres of influence are directly or indirectly involved, the Community will have to be a party to the international conventions, the negotiation of which has recently been decided upon by the Board of Governors of the IAEA (see paragraphs 46-51). There is a major precedent in this area. This is the "International Convention on the physical protection of nuclear materials" which was also signed under the aegis of the IAEA.

53. Other topics which might be covered by worldwide arrangements in which the Community and its Member States should be associated, are: third-party liability in the event of a nuclear accident, the Incident Reporting System already referred to in paragraph 39 of this communication, safety criteria and the monitoring of radioactivity, accompanied by the application of uniform standards governing the measurement of radiation levels.

54. Moreover, the Community and its Member States will be involved in the evaluation of the Chernobyl accident within the IAEA. This work is of supreme importance. It will help the Commission when it reports to Parliament on the circumstances surrounding the accident, on its repercussions on public health within the Community and on its medium and long-term effects on the environment.

55. Finally, the Commission will back Chancellor Kohl's initiative regarding the holding of an intergovernmental conference on all matters relating to nuclear safety.

56. The Commission will take all appropriate steps to enable the Community to take part in international discussions on the basis of common positions or negotiating briefs.

57. Alongside the possibilities for Community and worldwide cooperation, the Community must exploit all existing or future frameworks for bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

E. Research

58. Nearly all the measures that have been identified in the foregoing depend to a large extent on knowledge and know-how derived from past and present Community research programmes. Certain specific problems posed by Chernobyl make it necessary to adapt Community research programmes in hand. In particular, greater emphasis will have to be placed on certain research topics (for example, the improvement of risk evaluation methodologies, the study of major accidents and of the ways and means of limiting the consequences thereof, and the further development of certain research projects on radiation protection). The Commission will put forward appropriate proposals at a later stage; the necessary resources will have to be devoted to such action.