

News Release

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CANADA WELCOMES CLOSURE OF CHERNOBYL

Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet today welcomed Ukraine's announcement that the Chernobyl nuclear power station will be closed by the year 2000.

"Canada and its G-7 partners have been working closely with the Ukrainian government to develop a plan for the early closure of Chernobyl. This announcement is a positive step forward," said Mr. Ouellet.

The Minister noted that at last year's G-7 summit in Naples, an Action Plan for Energy Sector Reform in Ukraine was announced to assist that country with its nuclear safety initiatives.

A 3000 megawatt gas-fired power plant in Slavutich, a town situated close to Chernobyl, will help compensate for the loss of power generated by the Chernobyl plant, and will ensure that Ukraine's energy demands are met. A detailed plan on this project will be prepared by the Ukrainian government prior to this year's G-7 Summit, to be held in Halifax, June 15-17.

Mr. Ouellet also encouraged the continuing work of G-7, European Union and Ukrainian officials who are working towards the construction of a new shelter over Chernobyl unit 4 - the site of the devastating 1986 accident - to protect the surrounding environment from further exposure to radiation.

As current chair of the G-7 Nuclear Safety Working Group, Canada will work to ensure that this commitment can be realized.

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