

Action Plan for Energy Sector Reform in Ukraine and identified a further US\$200 million to assist nuclear safety initiatives. A joint Ukraine/G-7 Task

Force is currently under way to discuss its implementation. Its report should be available for the Halifax Summit.

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

The spread of nuclear weapons remains one of the most critical problems facing the world. Canada believes it is imperative that G-7 countries continue to support the efforts to contain nuclear proliferation that began at the 1992 Munich Summit. A number of issues figure on the non-proliferation agenda:

- extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT);
- North Korea's challenge to the non-proliferation system;
- ongoing negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT);
- preventing the theft and smuggling of nuclear materials such as plutonium;
- negotiations for a "cut-off" convention, which would end the production of materials for nuclear weapons purposes.

First and foremost, Canada believes that the international community must work toward getting all countries to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Canada will work for the indefinite extension of the NPT at the 1995 NPT Extension Conference. Ratified by 171 countries, this treaty is the main international instrument for curbing the spread of nuclear weapons.

There have been significant reductions in the nuclear weapons stockpiles of the United States and former Soviet Union during the last year. This should help pave the way for a successful end to the 1995 NPT Extension Conference.

The conclusion of a comprehensive test ban treaty would further help to contain the problem of nuclear proliferation. An extended halt to testing by all nuclear weapons states would serve to keep the ongoing CTBT negotiations in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD) on track. Progress toward "cut-off" convention negotiations in the CD also would help to improve the climate for indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Nuclear theft and smuggling, which pose a serious danger to public health and safety, is a global nuclear proliferation risk. Canada supports international efforts to respond to this danger, including the safe and secure storage of nuclear materials.

A GLOBAL CONCERN

It was an energy crisis that provided the catalyst for the first G-7 meeting in 1975, and an energy-related issue is still high on the group's agenda.

Nuclear power plants generate 17% of the world's electricity. When operated under strict safety codes, these plants help meet power demands in Canada and elsewhere. However, it's a spectacular example of unsafe operation that has the world's leaders concerned.

At 1:22 a.m. on 26 April, 1986, a chain of events began that made a small town in Ukraine a household word around the globe. A group of technicians carelessly turned off the safety systems in the Chernobyl Unit 4 nuclear reactor. Within 36 seconds, the reactor surged out of control. A steam explosion blew the roof off the unit, releasing a cloud of radioactive gases more than a kilometre into the sky. This deadly plume spread radiation across Europe as far away as Italy and Scandinavia. It was a major disaster. Britain's Atomic Energy Authority has estimated that 40 000 people worldwide may die of cancer over the next 70 years because of exposure to radiation from the Chernobyl explosion.

Part of the reason the Chernobyl accident turned into a disaster is the basic design and operating flaws in the older Soviet-designed reactors. Several of these old RBMK and VVER reactors are still at work. They generate much-needed electricity in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. However, they pose dangers not just to the people who live near them, nor even to the continent of Europe, but to the entire world.

An indefinite, unconditional extension of the NPT is the surest way to preserve a climate of stability within which future nuclear disarmament negotiations can go forward. Undermining the NPT would create greater risks and instability. The best guarantee against nuclear adventurism is an indefinite extension of the treaty. Canada works continuously with its G-7 partners and other like-minded countries to conclude successfully the NPT Extension Conference and to stem the illicit trade of nuclear materials.