

NEWS RELEASEFor immediate use**Reaction to Chernobyl Closure Announcement**

Brussels, 7 June 2000: In response to the announcement that the Chernobyl nuclear power station will close on 15 December 2000, the European Atomic Forum (FORATOM), the trade association of the European nuclear industry, issues the following statement:

"The closure announcement will hopefully ease some of the concerns surrounding the safety of nuclear power plants in Central and Eastern Europe. Although Chernobyl was the scene of the world's worst nuclear accident 14 years ago, since then a large amount of Western assistance has flowed into Central and Eastern Europe, in an effort to improve nuclear safety. Considerable progress has been made by the plant operators and regulators involved, but further assistance will be needed. The maintenance of nuclear safety remains of paramount importance world-wide.

"While Ukraine is not an EU accession state, it is – along with other East European countries – heavily dependent on nuclear power. In 1999, almost 44% of Ukraine's electricity was nuclear-generated.

"With the closure date for Chernobyl now set, the international community must now do its utmost to help Ukraine tackle the related problems that lie ahead. In addition to the loss of generating capacity resulting from the Chernobyl closure, there is the threat of large-scale job losses that could easily worsen Ukraine's existing socio-economic problems. Ukraine is fulfilling its pledge to close Chernobyl. Given the pressing need for economic improvement in the region, the international community is under an obligation to help minimise the impact that the Chernobyl closure will have on Ukraine."

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