



Independent WHO

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Dr Margaret Chan

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Origlio, 7 November 2011

Subject: non-publication of the Proceedings of the Conferences on the health consequences of Chernobyl, held in Geneva in 1995 and Kiev in 2001

Dear Dr Chan

The World Health Organization's mandate is to promote health in the world and the International Atomic Energy Agency's mandate is to promote nuclear energy. In light of the problems associated with nuclear reactors, many eminent scientists and public health professionals criticize the 1959 Agreement between these two organizations as an obstacle to serious investigation of the consequences of accidents and dissemination of information about the Chernobyl catastrophe which would allow ongoing damage to be documented and future damage to be avoided.

In spite of this major obstacle to the dissemination of knowledge, independent research has continued over the last 25 years and an impressive quantity of data and new knowledge has accumulated. Much of this was presented and discussed at two important conferences organized by the WHO, in Geneva in 1995 and in Kiev in 2001. The Proceedings of these conferences, the importance of which cannot be understated given the exceptional nature of the catastrophe, were never published, as we testified during our meeting with you on 4 May 2011. You promised that an investigation would be undertaken and that we would be informed of its results in due course.

On 4 July 2011, we received a message from Dr Neira addressed personally to Alison Katz, informing her that the Proceedings of the two conferences had indeed been published. On 22 July 2011, we requested you (by email) to inform us whether this message constituted the results of the promised investigation and was the response of the Director-General to IndependentWHO. You did not reply. In order to ensure that this is not a simple misunderstanding of terms *Proceeding* (*minutes of the discussions of a conference with resolution*) and *abstracts* (*summaries of presentations*) and that open and serious dialogue is the new style of relationship that you hope to establish with us, we repeat with this letter the arguments and evidence that we presented on 4 May which perhaps, have not been sufficiently clear.

If no response to this letter is received by myself and the Coordination of IndependentWHO (see above email addresses), we will consider that Dr Neira's message constitutes your definitive reply.

Arguments and evidence

1. In Autumn 2007, the Department of Radiation of WHO (RAD) replied (via the DG's Office) to The Guardian newspaper, that the Proceedings of the two conferences had both been published. By way of proof of publication of the Proceedings of the Kiev 2001 conference, RAD cited « the special issue of International Journal of Radiation Medicine (2001, Vol. 3, N1-2, ISSN 1562-1154) ».

This is a reference to the volume of ABSTRACTS which I myself bought on the morning of the 4 June 2001, on the first day of the 3rd International Conference « **Health Consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe: results of 15 years of research** », 4 - 8 June 2001, in Kiev. The conference was filmed in its entirety by a Swiss Television team, under my direction. On Thursday 7 June, Mrs. Roxana Garnets (UN Chernobyl Programm), who was chairing the Round Table programmed from 16.45 to 18.00, declared « *We have recorded this discussion. We will include the material from this Round Table in the material of the conference and we will publish it¹* ». The « materials recorded at the conference » constitute the raw material of the promised Proceedings, which have still not seen the light of day. In its reply to the Guardian, unwilling to recognize this shameful fact, RAD attempted to pass off the *Abstracts* as the *Proceedings*, an absurd substitution of terms, as I think you will concede. In the version of events presented by RAD, the Proceedings were sold before the conference?² On 4 July 2011, Dr Neira repeated word for word the terms of the fallacious reply of 2007 in the email message sent to Mrs. Katz. This fact has scandalized and disappointed us. It confirms that the censorship that we are denouncing continues.

2. In relation to censorship, Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, when questioned by Professor Michel Fernex in Kiev, was in no doubt as to the real nature of the proceedings that were promised to 700 participants at the conference which he had organized in November 1995, nor about the reasons for their non-publication. He explained in the clearest terms that the IAEA had not given its agreement because it has a major interest to protect³: the conclusions of its own conference to be held in March 1996 in Vienna, which contrary to that of Dr Nakajima, were to demonstrate that no serious health consequences resulted from the Chernobyl accident.

Here is Dr Hiroshi Nakajima's declaration to Swiss television:

M.Fernex. – Why were the *proceedings* we had ordered not published?

H.Nakajima. – Because it was a conference organized jointly with the IAEA. This was the problem.

M.Fernex. – Is this WHO conference here more free than in Geneva?

H.Nakajima. – Here, I am no more Director General, I am a private person.

W.Tchertkoff. – Don't you think that the link between WHO and IAEA impaired the liberty of WHO?

H.Nakajima. – I was Director General, and I was responsible. But it's mainly my legal department... Because the IAEA reports directly to the Security Council of the UN. And we, all specialized agencies, report to the Economic and Social Development Council. The organization

¹ Cf. « Le crime de Tchernobyl, le goulag nucléaire » p. 574, W.Tchertkoff, Actes Sud, 2006.

² I attach the cover page of this volume which I have in my possession since the morning of the 4 June 2001!

³ « Whenever either organization proposes to initiate a programme or activity on a subject in which the other organization has or may have a substantial interest, the first party shall consult the other with a view to adjusting the matter by mutual agreement ». Article 1, §3. Of the WHO/IAEA Agreement (Res. WHA 12.40, 28 May 1959).

which reports of the Security Council – not hierarchically, we are all equal – but for atomic affairs, military use and peaceful or civil use, they have the authority.

The evidence is clear. Dr Nakajima in no way denies the non-publication of the Conference Proceedings; on the contrary, he provides the explanation that we all know: the real hierarchical relationship between the WHO and the IAEA in nuclear matters, codified by the Convention on Assistance of September 1986. This Convention expropriates *de facto*, from the WHO, its principal functions in health matters in the case of an accident, attributing them to the IAEA. With no competence in health matters, it is the atomic energy agency that acts as directing and coordinating authority “to facilitate prompt assistance in the event of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency to minimize its consequences and to protect life, property and the environment from the effects of radioactive releases.” (Convention on Assistance, art.1, 1; [art. 3](#); [art. 5](#)). The WHO is not mentioned in any of the Articles of the Convention.

If the Proceedings of the Conference had been published as you assert, the ex-Director General would have replied to Professor Fernex five years later: “No no, you are mistaken . . .”

Dear Dr Chan, we are in the domain of irrefutable fact. Hiroshi Nakajima is responsible for his legal interpretation, as you acknowledged during our meeting on 4 May, and you might have acted differently from him – but you cannot deny that he confirms, in his reply, that the Proceedings were never published.

During the meeting with you, we welcomed your various declarations which corrected WHO’s previous position on a number of points. This encouraged us to believe that a serious dialogue could indeed be established between us.

But we cannot take seriously Dr Neira’s attempt to pass off « a selection of 12 articles » published in the Quarterly Journal of Health Statistics of WHO as the Proceedings of the 1995 Conference – an event of immense wealth and historic significance. We know that the Proceedings of a scientific conference are composed of three parts: 1. Summaries of contributions (abstracts), 2. Summaries of discussions held during the conference 3. Recommendations (conclusions) of the conference.

Professor Michel Fernex was present at the 1995 Conference and he described the essentials to us. This is what made us decide to film the “rejoinder” in Kiev; the arguments and the protagonists were the same but they were confronting a much worsened health situation in the contaminated territories.

Extract from Professor Fernex’s report

“In 1995, Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General of WHO, organized an international conference in Geneva from 20 to 23 November, on “***Consequences of Chernobyl and other radiation accidents and their influence on human health***” At this conference, presided by M. Y. Fujita, Governor of the Prefecture of Hiroshima, the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the explosion of a nuclear reactor at Chernobyl were considered as comparable radiological accidents. Important differences were noted between these two kinds of accidents (the three explosions must be termed “accidents” in this *milieu*). The Geneva Conference cannot be referenced⁴, as the Proceedings disappeared or were censored, so it is useful to recall its objectives which were clearly set out in the programme⁵ :

⁴ Health consequences of Chernobyl and other radiological accidents. International Conference organized by the WHO in Geneva, 20-23 November 1995. Proceedings not published.

- * To present the principal results of the first phase of the international program on health effects of Chernobyl accident (IPHECA).
- * To compare the obtained results to the results of similar research, related to the health effects of Chernobyl accident.
- * To improve (and to update) awareness of the type, the total extent and the harm for health of the Chernobyl accident, as known presently and to be foreseen in the future.
- * To make new results of research concerning consequences of other radioactive accidents, available, in order to give more complete information on their health effects.
- * To study the effectiveness of the protective measures undertaken in the area of public health during and after the accidents, and to offer recommendations for the future.
- * To ensure the development and/or to clarify the state of knowledge concerning the consequences of influence of radiation on human health.
- * To provide information on existing or future research within the framework of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR).
- * To earmark the interesting tendencies and changes, which should become an object of steadfast attention of the researchers.

The conference program convinced the health authorities of the most affected countries and 700 doctors and experts to participate. The IAEA mobilized unconditional supporters of the nuclear industry. Thus, contradictory opinions were expressed which made the debate very lively. Representatives of the nuclear lobby attempted to prevent dialogue and Professor S. Yarmonenko of Moscow's Centre for Oncology, with extreme vehemence,⁵ insisted that in the future, organizers of conferences on this subject should exclude any speaker who attempted to discuss the effects of low dose radiation. It appears that this exclusion did indeed become the rule for the international conferences which followed. The presentations, discussions and posters were never published.

The luxurious 519 page document which sets out the facts and figures collected in Phase 1 of the IPHECA pilot project "Health consequences of the Chernobyl accident", confirms that the WHO intervened far too late in Chernobyl, in an accident that a majority of citizens considered an "emergency". For five years, the IAEA appropriated the knowledge, and collaborated with health authorities on the measures to be taken for the population, the concern being to reduce expenditure and discontinue victim compensation.

Not only did the WHO fail to respect its Constitution which stipulates that it intervene in a timely fashion, but it also failed to act as the coordinating and directing authority in all international health matters, as set out in its Constitution. At the meetings where the destiny of populations was to be decided, WHO's expert was Professor Pellerin, unconditional supporter of nuclear power.⁶ Five years after the catastrophe, the WHO was able to start work in "selected" areas, including dental caries in children as one of the priority studies. Hereditary genetic effects, which a WHO expert committee⁷ had previously considered a priority, were "forgotten".

As the presentations made at the Geneva Conference remain unpublished, it is useful to recall the words of certain participants, such as Martin Griffiths, of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the UN, in Geneva. This speaker noted that the truth had not been told to populations and reminded the conference that people were still living in contaminated areas. He requested that

⁵ Programme of the International Conference organized by the WHO in Geneva, from 20-23 November 1995. *Consequences of Chernobyl and other radiation accidents and their influence on human health*. The programme is available from WHO, Geneva. WHO/EHG/1995.

⁶ Belbéoch B. and Belbéoch R. : *Tchernobyl, une catastrophe. Quelques éléments pour un bilan*. Edition Allia, 16 rue Charlemagne, Paris IVE, pp 220. 1993.

⁷ WHO. *Effect of radiation on human heredity*. Report of a Study Group convened by WHO together with Papers presented by various members of the group. WHO, Palais des Nations, Geneva, 1957.

assistance and studies continue, because without money, everything would cease. He noted that 9 million people were affected and that the negative health consequences continued to increase⁸

Dr Chan, you promised us that you would undertake a serious investigation. The most simple, direct and truthful way to do this was to speak to your peer, Dr Hiroshi Nakajima himself. He is the person who was censored. In 2007, I sent him a copy of my book and we invited him to the press conference that we organized in Geneva on 27th June hoping to be able to speak with him in more depth. He sent us a reply via his wife stating that he did not wish to cause you any embarrassment. In the spirit of transparency that you declare you are inaugurating in WHO's relations with the public, perhaps you would consider freeing Dr Nakajima from his sensitivity with regard to yourself.

This is my dedication to Dr Nakajima that I wrote in the copy of the book "The Crime of Chernobyl" that I offered him:

"To Doctor Hiroshi Nakajima, with respect and gratitude for his testimony to the truth; for his research on the impact of an H Bomb on Boston, in which victims are deprived of assistance; for having shown the end of civilization that would result from the nuclear winter and the famine after a limited nuclear war ...

I am grateful for your attempt to study the consequences of Chernobyl in 1995, studies which were censored by the IAEA, which manages and minimizes medical problems in this area in the interests of proliferation of commercial nuclear power."

The testimonies assembled in this book demonstrate the suffering of populations irradiated by the Chernobyl accident. This subject has become a source of permanent disinformation which is a shocking and disturbing state of affairs."

Yours sincerely,

Alison Katz, Bruno Boussagol, Maryvonne David-Jougneau, Paul Roullaud.

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⁸ " La catastrophe de Tchernobyl et la santé " in Chroniques sur la Biélorussie contemporaine – L'Harmattan, 2001.