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CHERNOBYL ANNIVERSARY SEES LAUNCH OF NEW PROJECT ON

ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear explosion, EcoPravo-Kyiv (Ukraine) and ARTICLE 19, the Global Campaign for Free Expression, are pleased to launch the project “Building Local Capacity to Promote Freedom of Information on Environmental Matters in Ukraine” funded by the European Commission.

Twenty years since the disaster, the 30 kilometre zone immediately surrounding the reactor remains one of the most dangerously radioactive places in the world. Beyond this zone, radiation pollution still affects over two million people in Ukraine and its neighbouring countries. They face a wide range of health problems, including high levels of maternal and infant mortality and increasing rates of thyroid cancer. Nuclear power presents only one of several environmental threats to the population of Ukraine, as chemical and metallurgic industries continue to be a major source of air, water and food pollution as well.

In such a climate, public access to reliable and accurate information is paramount. However, the local authorities have limited capacity to maintain environmental safety standards and they do not provide access to official information to its citizens about the environmental and health impact of the Chernobyl disaster, or of other functioning nuclear, chemical and metallurgical plants. As a result, there is still little awareness amongst the Ukrainian population of ongoing environmental hazards which contaminate their food and water supplies and the resulting impact on their health.

This joint project will empower civil society to exercise their right to access to environmental information through both domestic legislation and international standards of freedom of information. It will build the capacity of relevant institutions to act more transparently and disseminate environmental information to the public in Kyiv, Donetsk and Lyiv oblasts. Campaigning and lobbying will be carried out for the improvement of the existing freedom of information regime across Ukraine.

For further information on the project, please contact:

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ARTICLE 19 is an independent non-profit organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression.