



Minor radiation spreads from Japan as UN chief urges stronger nuclear safeguards



1 April 2011 – Radioactive material from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in Japan is gradually spreading into the global atmosphere, but at extremely low concentrations that do not present health hazards, the United Nations reported today, as **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon called for “solid” safeguards for nuclear safety.

“We should take all necessary measures to ensure the highest possible standards for health, the food supply and the environment,” Mr. Ban **told** a news conference in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. “We must also put in place a solid disaster response framework that includes accurate and actionable data,” he added.

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“While I believe nuclear energy will continue to serve as an important energy resource – particularly given the problem of climate change – I strongly encourage States to revisit their national policies and mechanisms on nuclear safety,” said the Secretary-General.

Japanese authorities have meanwhile confirmed that all airports in the country, with the exception of Sendai, which was affected by the massive earthquake and devastating tsunami on 11 March, continue to operate normally for both international and domestic operations, according to UN agencies jointly monitoring the situation.

Continuous monitoring around the airports has confirmed that radiation levels are well within safe limits from a health perspective, according to joint monitoring by the World Health Organization (**WHO**), the International Atomic Energy Agency (**IAEA**), the World Meteorological Organization (**WMO**), the International Maritime Organization (**IMO**), the International Civil Aviation Organization (**ICAO**) and the World Tourism Organization (**UNWTO**).

Authorities in Japan have also confirmed that all international seaports not damaged by the earthquake and tsunami are operating normally and that no health risk has been detected around the ports, based on the results of measurements of radiation levels by local governments, the UN entities said.

Denis Flory, the IAEA Deputy Director-General and head of its Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, told reporters in Vienna that the overall situation at the Fukushima Daiichi plant remains “very serious” with efforts continuing to cool down the damaged reactors in an attempt to prevent a meltdown of the radioactive fuel.

The restrictions on drinking tap water for infants remained in force in two locations in Fukushima prefecture, while radiation analytical data from three prefectures – Chiba, Fukushima, Ibaraki and Tochigi – show that contamination levels of vegetables, fruits, seafood, various meats and unprocessed milk remained above the levels set by the Japanese authorities, according to Mr. Flory.

In Nairobi, Mr. Ban also called for more international assistance for Japan as the country makes its own efforts to emerge from the unprecedented natural disaster that struck on 11 March.

“Let us rededicate ourselves to help the people of Japan who are still bravely recovering from the devastating earthquake and tsunami that killed so many people and displaced so many more,” said the Secretary-General.

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