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From: J B UNWIN  
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THE LESSONS OF CHERNOBYL

As you know, the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) at official level, under my chairmanship, played an active role during the period in which we experienced the maximum impact of the Chernobyl accident. The Department of the Environment took on the lead spokesman and coordination of monitoring role, but the CCU had to fill the gap in coordinating policy and taking day to day operational decisions.

2. Following the final CCU meeting on 21 May draft terms of reference for, and proposed composition of, a CCU Working Group to establish the lessons of Chernobyl and to prepare appropriate new plans for the future were circulated (CCU(86)4). These have now been agreed by Departments and the Working Group - to be known as CCU(LC) - is now formally being set up.

3. The proposals were also endorsed on 4 June by a meeting of Permanent Secretaries, chaired by Sir Robert Armstrong, who will wish to consider the results of the exercise before they are submitted to CCU Ministers.

4. We shall plan to make an interim progress report before the summer recess. But there is a great deal of very complicated ground to cover and I do not anticipate completing the exercise before October. As I have previously commented, one of the main problems in the recent situation was that no contingency plans exist for coping with the effects of a nuclear or comparable accident outside the United Kingdom. A key purpose of the new exercise will be to remedy this.

JUN

J B UNWIN