Extension of Remarks

Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.

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Madam Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Bhopal gas disaster. On December 3rd, 1984, 27 tons of deadly gases spewed out of the Union Carbide plant, forming a cloud of poisonous gas over Bhopal, India. As a result, 8,000 people lost their lives. In total, the deadly effects of this disaster have left 20,000 dead and another 20,000 with chronic illness.

A 2003 study by the highly regarded Journal of the American Medical Association found that children born to parents affected by this disaster still suffer the effects of Union Carbide's poisonous gases. In fact, a Greenpeace report documented the presence of chloroform, lead, mercury and a series of other chemicals in the breast milk of nursing women who live near the factory.

Just this past June, a report by the Bhopal Medical Appeal and the Sambhavna Trust Clinic found that the water in and around Bhopal still contains unsafe levels of carbon tetrachloride and other pollutants, solvents, nickel and other heavy metals. Therefore, it is not surprising that populations in the areas around Bhopal have high rates of birth defects, rapidly rising cancer rates, neurological damage and mental illness.

It is simply unbelievable that Union Carbide refused to acknowledge which chemicals and gases were leaked for fear of legal liability. This left doctors to treat patients with no knowledge of how to proceed or what treatment to use. Union Carbides, use of unsafe and untested technologies led to one of the worst chemical disasters in world history. Rather than acknowledge the devastation they created and fully pay for the damages, Union Carbide decided to walk away.

However, in 2001 Dow Chemical Company, based in the United States, purchased Union Carbide and acquired all of its assets and liabilities. To this day, Dow Chemical refuses to shoulder the liabilities and obligations that it took on when it purchased Union Carbide.

Dow should clean up the factory site, which continues to contaminate the local environment and should go beyond simply providing compensation to the victims. Dow should also fund the necessary medical care and research studies necessary to treat victims and offer them the chance to live fruitful lives not plagued by chemical affects.

I believe that the Indian government has a role to play in ensuring that the survivors of the Bhopal disaster and those that continue to face its deadly effects

receive dignified care. Despite an order from the Supreme Court of India that clean drinking water should be supplied immediately, more than 25,000 people in Bhopal are forced to consume water known to contain dangerous contaminates.

Last year, along with 15 of my colleagues I wrote to Prime Minister Singh to express support for the people of Bhopal and urged him to personally meet with survivor groups to address the long-standing demands for justice. We expressed our hope that the Indian Government would pursue Union Carbide and Dow Chemical for their civil and criminal liabilities in the country.

We argued the victims of the Bhopal tragedy were right and deserving in their request for a commission to execute social, economic and medical rehabilitation, implement an environmental clean-up of the polluted land and provide funding for clean drinking water.

Today, thousands remember the lives lost in Bhopal and protest the current inaction and lack of responsibility associated with the Bhopal disaster. I hope that my colleagues will join me remembering the lives that were needlessly lost because of Union Carbide's negligence and the devastating effects that continue to plague the people of Bhopal.

Although this may be the 25th Anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, people are still dying from the horrible affects of the chemicals that Union Carbide's plant leaked. I remain dedicated to fighting for the rights of the survivors of the Bhopal disaster and ensuring that those in Bhopal today receive the assistance needed to live in a clean and healthy environment.