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Agenda item 47

Effects of atomic radiation

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 4 December 2024

[on the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee) (A/79/420, para. 8)]

79/85. Effects of atomic radiation

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955, by which it established the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and its subsequent resolutions on the subject, in which, inter alia, it requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work,

Concerned about the potentially harmful effects on present and future generations resulting from the levels of radiation to which humankind and the environment are exposed,

Conscious of the continuing need to examine and compile information about the observed levels of exposure to ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on humankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increasing volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Acknowledging the concerns about the radiological consequences of nuclear accidents and other incidents involving ionizing radiation exposure,

Reaffirming the desirability of the Scientific Committee continuing its work, and welcoming the increased commitment of States members of the Committee,

Emphasizing the vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding, as well as efficient management of the work of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to arrange the annual sessions and coordinate the development of documents based on scientific reviews of the exposures to sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment,

Recognizing the increasing importance of the scientific work of the Scientific Committee and the need to carry out unforeseen additional work, such as after nuclear accidents,



Considering that the high quality of the work and the scientific rigour of the Scientific Committee need to be maintained in the future,

Recognizing the importance of disseminating the findings of the Scientific Committee, including to the public, and widely publicizing scientific knowledge about atomic radiation, and recalling in that context principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,¹

Noting the need for the resources of the Scientific Committee to be sufficient, assured and predictable, and recognizing the importance of voluntary contributions, both in kind and to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, to support the work of the Committee,

Recognizing that sufficient staffing of the secretariat is essential to support the work of the Scientific Committee,

Commending the secretariat of the Scientific Committee for its ongoing efforts to ensure the sustainable and effective work of the Committee, and encouraging all States in a position to do so to provide support to the secretariat of the Committee,

Recalling the support expressed by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organization for the Scientific Committee's work in producing the most reliable and comprehensive sources of scientific information about the levels and effects of ionizing radiation, without which safety guidance and safety standards could not be developed and maintained and priorities for research in the areas of sources and effects of ionizing radiation could not be determined,

Recognizing that the current scientific basis provided by the Scientific Committee for the international safety standards is valid,

Recognizing also the importance of keeping aware of any improvement in the understanding of the effects and risks, including at low levels, of exposure to ionizing radiation,

Recognizing further the importance of close cooperation between the Scientific Committee and other relevant international organizations,

Noting the research framework agreement signed with the European Commission in June 2023, the memorandums of understanding signed with the International Commission on Radiological Protection in May 2024 and with the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in June 2024, and the ongoing dialogue with the International Labour Organization,

1. *Commends* the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation for the valuable contribution that it has been making since its inception to wider knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation and for fulfilling its original mandate with scientific authority and independence of judgment;

2. *Reaffirms* the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee;

3. *Re-emphasizes* the need for the Scientific Committee to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report will be able to reflect the latest

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex I.

developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation and thereby provide updated information for dissemination among all States;

4. *Notes with appreciation* the work of the Scientific Committee, takes note of the report on its seventy-first session,² and encourages the Committee, over its coming sessions, to continue to work towards implementing strategies to support its long-term efforts to serve the scientific community, as well as wider audiences;

5. *Welcomes* the decisions on the outlined future programme of work for the period 2025–2029, which will serve to guide the priority areas of the work of the Scientific Committee;

6. *Notes with appreciation* the implementation of the 2022 strategy to improve collection, analysis and dissemination of data on exposure to ionizing radiation aimed at seeking widespread participation in the Scientific Committee's surveys and ensuring that future surveys adapt to changing data sources and use of ionizing radiation across the world;

7. *Welcomes* the extension of the mandate of the ad hoc working group on effects and mechanisms and the ad hoc working group on sources and exposure to assist the Scientific Committee in supporting and monitoring progress in the implementation of its programme of work, to evaluate new scientific developments relevant to the Committee and to monitor the implementation of the updated strategy for data collection;

8. *Supports* the Scientific Committee in continuing to conduct its programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, and welcomes further progress, in particular on its evaluations of epidemiological studies of ionizing radiation and cancer, effects of ionizing radiation on the circulatory system, and effects of ionizing radiation on the nervous system, which are being conducted in close cooperation with other relevant organizations;

9. *Welcomes* the two substantive scientific reports adopted by the Scientific Committee during its seventy-first session, on second primary cancer after radiotherapy and on the evaluation of public exposure to ionizing radiation, and looks forward to the timely publication of the supporting scientific annexes thereto as their outcomes are relied upon by other international organizations;

10. *Also welcomes* the planned initiation of the evaluation of effects of ionizing radiation on the eye in early 2025, subject to the availability of resources;

11. *Requests* the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important activities to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its eightieth session;

12. *Acknowledges* the importance of sharing data with the Scientific Committee as appropriate, and the central role played by the increasing number of National Contact Persons and alternate National Contact Persons in order to coordinate data collection at the country level and to cooperate with technical experts to complete the Committee's questionnaires;

13. *Encourages* National Contact Persons and their alternates to take part in the global surveys of the Scientific Committee and to submit available scientific data on radiation exposure of patients, workers and the general public as appropriate;

14. *Invites* members of the Scientific Committee to introduce alternate National Contact Persons to ensure continuity of engagement by each Member State;

² Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-ninth Session, Supplement No. 46 (A/79/46).

15. *Requests* the secretariat to monitor the timely publication of approved reports and to strive to publish them within 12 months of their approval;

16. *Invites* the Scientific Committee to continue its consultations with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing its future scientific reports, and requests the secretariat to continue to facilitate such consultations;

17. *Welcomes*, in this context, the readiness of Member States to provide the Scientific Committee with relevant information on the levels and effects of ionizing radiation, and invites the Committee to analyse and give due consideration to such information, particularly in the light of its own findings;

18. *Recalls* the strategy of the Scientific Committee to improve data collection, encourages in this regard Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations concerned to provide further relevant data about levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation from various sources, which would greatly help in the preparation of future reports of the Committee to the General Assembly, and encourages the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and other relevant organizations to further collaborate with the secretariat on arrangements for the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on radiation exposures of patients, workers and the general public;

19. *Encourages* the relevant agencies of the United Nations system, and other international bodies, to continue using the Scientific Committee's evaluations for providing the scientific basis for the establishment of international safety standards;

20. *Welcomes* the use and ongoing development by the secretariat of an online platform for collecting data on the exposure of patients, workers and the general public, and urges Member States to take part in the Scientific Committee's planned global survey on medical exposure and to nominate National Contact Persons to facilitate coordination of the collection and submission of data on the ionizing radiation exposure of patients;

21. *Also welcomes* the Scientific Committee's endorsed outreach strategy for the period 2025–2029, focusing on strengthening the Committee's input to the science-policy interface within and outside the extensive United Nations network, enhancing engagement with scientific, diplomatic, academic and professional communities, subject to the availability of resources, and encouraging the involvement of young professionals in the work of the Committee;

22. *Notes* the successful publication online of the United Nations Environment Programme booklet entitled *Radiation: Effects and Sources* in 16 different languages, and encourages the United Nations Environment Programme to update the booklet on the basis of the most recent Scientific Committee reports and annexes thereto, with the goal of publishing the updated booklet in order to mark the seventieth anniversary of the Committee;

23. *Welcomes* the ongoing work of the secretariat to publish the website of the Scientific Committee in the six official languages of the United Nations;

24. *Requests* the United Nations Environment Programme to continue, within existing United Nations resources, to service the Scientific Committee and to disseminate its findings to Member States, the scientific community and the public and to ensure that the administrative measures in place are appropriate so that the secretariat is able to adequately and efficiently service the Committee in a predictable and sustainable manner;

25. *Encourages* the Scientific Committee to stand ready to carry out unplanned additional work, in strict compliance with its mandate, and in coordination with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant international organizations, as appropriate, such as after nuclear incidents and accidents, that could include those in the context of military actions or natural disasters;

26. *Welcomes* the increase of the regular budget of the Scientific Committee in 2023 as decided after the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly, allowing in particular to sustain the capacities of the secretariat to support the Committee;

27. *Expresses strong expectations* that, despite liquidity challenges faced by the United Nations, the regular budget of the Scientific Committee will be allocated in full, to implement the Committee's programme of work as referred to above;

28. *Requests* the Secretary-General to strengthen support for the secretariat, as decided in 2023, in order to adequately and efficiently provide service to the Scientific Committee in a predictable and sustainable manner, and to effectively facilitate the use of the invaluable expertise offered to the Committee by its members, and to report to the General Assembly at its eightieth session on these issues;

29. *Understands* that, as the budgetary situation remains challenging, extrabudgetary support continues to be crucial for the timely implementation of the programme of work to deliver on the mandate of the Scientific Committee, which would require the provision of additional professional and administrative secretariat services;

30. *Acknowledges* that contributions to the general trust fund by Member States (through funding support and mostly in-kind contributions of cost-free experts and technical officers) have augmented the regular budget, allowing work to progress in a number of areas;

31. *Encourages* Member States in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and also to make contributions in kind, in order to support the work of the Scientific Committee, and the dissemination of its findings, in a sustainable manner.

*47th plenary meeting
4 December 2024*