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Effects of atomic radiation

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

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I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 16 September 2022, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its seventy-seventh session the item entitled “Effects of atomic radiation” and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).
2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 10th meeting, on 17 October 2022. The Committee held a general debate and took action on the item at the same meeting. Statements and observations made in the course of the Committee’s consideration of the item are reflected the relevant summary record.¹
3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to the General Assembly on its sixty-ninth session ([A/77/46](#)).
4. At the 10th meeting, on 17 October, the Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (Canada) introduced the report of that Committee.

II. Consideration of draft resolution [A/C.4/77/L.5](#)

5. At the 10th meeting, on 17 October, the representative of Canada introduced a draft resolution entitled “Effects of atomic radiation” ([A/C.4/77/L.5](#)). Subsequently, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Slovakia and Thailand joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

¹ [A/C.4/77/SR.10](#).



6. At the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee read out an oral statement on programme budget implications in connection with the draft resolution.
7. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution [A/C.4/77/L.5](#), without a vote (see para. 8).

III. Recommendation of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

8. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

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 atomic and ionizing radiation and to analyse its effects on humankind and the environment, and conscious also of the increased volume, complexity and diversity of that information,

Acknowledging the concerns about the radiological consequences of nuclear accidents,

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 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 the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station,

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, in particular 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 to the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to support the work of the 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,

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.

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

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

Recognizing further the challenges faced by the Scientific Committee in undertaking its important work throughout the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,

Welcoming Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Norway and the United Arab Emirates as members of the Scientific Committee and their attendance at the sixty-ninth session of the Committee in May 2022,

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

4. *Commends* the Scientific Committee and secretariat for its ongoing efforts to fulfil its mandate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic;

5. *Notes with appreciation* the work of the Scientific Committee, takes note of the report on its sixty-ninth session,² including the update on the Committee's long-term strategic directions,³ 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;

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

7. *Welcomes* the continuation 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, to implement the updated strategy for data collection and to work with the secretariat to continue the preparation of the future programme of work of the Committee for 2025 to 2029;

8. *Also welcomes* the publication of four substantive scientific reports adopted by the Scientific Committee during its sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth

² *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-seventh Session, Supplement No. 46 (A/77/46).*

³ *Ibid.*, chap. II, sect. B.

sessions, on biological mechanisms relevant for the inference of cancer risk from low-dose and low-dose-rate radiation exposure, the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station: implications of information published since the 2013 report of the Committee, the evaluation of medical exposure to ionizing radiation and the evaluation of occupational exposure to ionizing radiation;

9. *Continues to encourage* the secretariat of the Scientific Committee to disseminate the findings of the Committee's updated evaluation on the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, released on 9 March 2021, in particular to the public;

10. *Notes* the progress of the ongoing evaluations on second primary cancer after radiotherapy, on epidemiological studies of radiation and cancer, on evaluation of public exposure due to ionizing radiation from natural and other sources and on evaluation of diseases of the circulatory system from radiation exposure;

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 seventy-eighth session;

12. *Supports* the Scientific Committee in continuing to conduct its programme of work of scientific review and assessment on behalf of the General Assembly, in particular its global survey and evaluation of public exposure due to ionizing radiation from natural and other sources and its assessments of second primary cancer after radiotherapy, epidemiological studies of radiation and cancer, and evaluation of diseases of the circulatory system from radiation exposure, which are being conducted in close cooperation with other relevant organizations, and requests the Committee to submit plans for its ongoing and future programme of work to the Assembly at its seventy-eighth session;

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

14. *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;

15. *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;

16. *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 radiation exposure 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 public;

17. *Notes* the memorandum of understanding signed between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Scientific Committee in May 2022 in Vienna, and the framework of cooperation signed between the World Health Organization and the Committee in September 2022 in Geneva;

18. *Welcomes* the use and ongoing development by the secretariat of an online platform for collecting data on the exposure of patients, workers and the public, and urges Member States to take part in the Scientific Committee's global survey of public exposure and to nominate national contact persons to facilitate coordination of the collection and submission of data on the exposure of patients, workers and the public within the country;

19. *Also welcomes* the Scientific Committee's outreach strategy for the period 2020–2024, in particular the enhancement of the website of the Committee and the planned publication of information for the general public in all the official languages of the United Nations, continues to encourage that consideration be given to publishing the website in all of those languages, and notes that the dissemination of the Committee's findings and further enhancements to the website would depend on the financial and human resources made available to the secretariat;

20. *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;

21. *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, including in the context of military actions;

22. *Acknowledges* the Scientific Committee's ongoing and increasing concern with respect to the Committee's continued decline in regular budget funds allocated to engage expert consultants for performing the Committee's scientific evaluations, and notes that in the past 10 years, the annual budget allocated for consultants has decreased by about 50 per cent;

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General to strengthen support for the secretariat 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 seventy-eighth session on these issues;

24. *Understands* that the present extrabudgetary support is expected to expire by 2023 and the timely implementation of the programme of work to deliver on the mandate of the Committee would require the provision of additional professional and administrative secretariat services;

25. *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;

26. *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.