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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

4th meeting

held on

Monday, 13 October 1980

at 3 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

EXPRESSION OF CONDOLENCES IN CONNEXION WITH THE EARTHQUAKE IN ALGERIA

1. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of the Committee, expressed condolences to the Government and people of Algeria for the devastation and loss of life caused by earthquakes that had occurred on Friday, 10 October 1980.
2. Mr. BILINSKI (Poland), Mr. FUJITA (Japan), Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria), Mr. CLEYSSTEEN (United States), Mr. STEPHANOPOULOS (Greece) and Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) joined in expressing their condolences to the Government and people of Algeria for the tragic event which had taken place in that country.
3. Mr. TADLAOUI (Algeria) expressed the deep gratitude of his delegation for the condolences expressed to his country and paid a tribute to the international community for the speedy and effective assistance which it had rendered to Algeria in that time of crisis.

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

4. Mr. MACKAY (New Zealand) nominated Mr. Pelaez (Peru) as Rapporteur.
5. Mr. Pelaez (Peru) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.
6. Mr. PELAEZ (Peru), Rapporteur, thanked the Committee for having elected him Rapporteur and pledged his fullest co-operation in carrying out the work of the Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

7. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the time-table for its work contained in document A/SPC/35/L.1, on the understanding that it could be modified if necessary.
8. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 52: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (A/35/451; A/SPC/35/L.2)

9. Mr. BILINSKI (Poland) said that his delegation welcomed the fruitful co-operation between the United Nations Scientific Committee and the various specialized agencies, particularly the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In the 25 years of its existence, the Scientific Committee had accomplished much, and its future recommendations would prove to be both useful and practical.
10. One of the most pressing issues to be considered was the effects of radiation released by nuclear explosions. His country, together with other socialist

(Mr. Bilinski, Poland)

countries, had assigned the highest priority to practical measures for stopping the arms race, including a complete and general prohibition of nuclear-weapon tests and the prohibition of radiological weapons. The conclusion of an agreement on those measures, as had been emphasized in the Declaration of the States Parties to the Warsaw Treaty adopted at the meeting of their Political Consultative Committee in Warsaw the preceding May, would do much to improve the international situation and would represent a significant step forward in the important work of the Scientific Committee.

11. On behalf of the delegations of Argentina, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Japan, Poland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States of America, he introduced the draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation contained in document A/SPC/C.5/L.2. He briefly outlined the preamble and summarized the operative paragraph, emphasizing the endorsement of the Scientific Committee's request for further data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that that draft resolution would be adopted by a broad consensus.

12. Mr. FUJITA (Japan) said that his country, which had always attached great importance to the activities of the Scientific Committee, was concerned about the potentially harmful effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the natural environment, and it believed that the effects of atomic radiation should be thoroughly investigated and objectively assessed. His delegation, therefore, greatly appreciated the Committee's approach in studying atomic radiation from a purely scientific viewpoint and it supported the report of the Scientific Committee (A/35/451), particularly paragraph 5 thereof, concerning the decision of the Committee to submit its report with scientific annexes to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session. He noted with satisfaction that the co-operation between the Scientific Committee and UNEP continued to grow. Lastly, his delegation, which was a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.2, hoped that that draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

13. Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria) said that ever-increasing exposure to atomic radiation from natural sources, nuclear tests and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was an alarming phenomenon for all States. The utilization of nuclear power plants and the question of the disposal of nuclear waste continued to be central questions in an ongoing public debate. Contamination resulting from medical radiological procedures and the doses of radiation to which workers might be exposed in the normal course of their work had been investigated more closely. Because of its magnitude, the problem required the most careful and responsible scientific investigation. Her delegation greatly appreciated the work done by international organizations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, and by independent expert groups like the Scientific Committee. Furthermore, it was highly gratifying to see that the close co-operation between the Scientific Committee, UNEP and IAEA was continuing to grow. That was further proof of the important role played by the United Nations as a focal point for investigating and solving problems which affected the entire world. Lastly, she said her delegation was happy to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.2.

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14. Mr. GLEYSTEN (United States) said that his delegation, which attached great importance to the work of the Scientific Committee, looked forward to receiving the Committee's fifth report, to be presented at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly. His country sought to ensure the transmission to the Scientific Committee of all relevant data from the United States and it urged other Member States to do likewise. He expressed the hope that the International Atomic Energy Agency and UNEP would fully co-operate in realizing the Committee's objective of completing its comprehensive report in 1982. Lastly, his delegation expressed satisfaction at joining other delegations in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/35/L.2.

15. Mr. STEPHANOU (Greece) said that the need to take protective measures against the harmful effects of ionizing radiation was becoming increasingly urgent in view of the fact that nuclear power plants were being expanded as a result of the world energy crisis. The work of the Scientific Committee could contribute much to the task of establishing programmes and taking measures to combat those effects. His delegation endorsed the report of the Scientific Committee and fully supported the draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation (A/SPC/35/L.2).

16. His country was an active member of the various international organizations which dealt with the problem of radiation protection and intended to take all appropriate measures to prevent and limit the exposure of the population to ionizing radiation. He emphasized the importance of continuing the work of the Committee and extending its activities to include gathering information and examining the long-term significance of exposure to radio-isotopes. The study of the effects of exposure to low-level radiation should also be continued. That was important because of the inevitable use of atomic energy for the production of electricity and the proliferation of devices containing radio-active substances in the field of consumer goods. The continuation of the investigation of the validity of the linear dose-effect relationship in the low doses, population exposures to natural radiation sources and doses received by workers in the course of their work were related questions.

17. His delegation attached equal importance to the effects of radiation on the environment, especially the problem of pollution, which had assumed alarming proportions. His country, which firmly supported the establishment of a close link between UNEP and the Scientific Committee, endorsed the support of UNEP for the effective conduct of the Committee's work. In that regard, he reiterated the need for a thorough investigation by means of the environment impact assessment process into the potentially harmful effects of atomic radiation on ecosystems. The Scientific Committee, in co-operation with UNEP, could, therefore, also begin to collect and elaborate data in order to provide information and guidelines to assist the national authorities in locating areas where new nuclear power plants could be established. In that context, he urged Member States to collaborate closely with the Scientific Committee and provide it with the necessary data to facilitate its work.

18. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Scientific Committee had accomplished important preliminary work in the preparation of the comprehensive report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh

(Mr. Kazakov, USSR)

session. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Scientific Committee had undertaken a comprehensive and painstaking study of the harmful effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the environment. Its recommendations would undoubtedly be of great use in the practical sphere.

19. His delegation again stressed that nuclear explosions, especially in the atmosphere, posed the greatest threat with respect to atomic radiation. Those tests were extremely harmful to human beings, animals and plant life throughout the world. The Soviet Union was continuing its efforts to halt the testing of nuclear weapons and the nuclear-weapons arms race. To that end his country had proposed including in the agenda as an important and urgent question the item entitled "Urgent measures for reducing the danger of war" (item 121). One of the most important provisions of that proposal dealt with the conclusion of a treaty on the full and complete prohibition of nuclear-arms testing. The Soviet Union had also proposed the inclusion in the agenda of the item entitled "Historical responsibility of States for the preservation of nature for present and future generations" (item 120). That proposal was designed, in particular, to ensure that the testing of various types of weapons, especially nuclear weapons, would not adversely affect man's environment or plant and animal life. The objective of those proposals was to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and effectively reduce the threat of the use of nuclear weapons and the danger of radio-active contamination.

20. His delegation took a favourable view of the efforts of the scientific community to study the harmful effects of radiation and urged it to continue that important and useful work. He also noted with satisfaction the growing co-operation between the Scientific Committee and UNEP in the field of the environment and felt that that work should be continued since it would be of great practical importance in protecting the health of mankind and the earth's environment.

21. The CHAIRMAN announced that Sweden had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation (A/SPC/35/L.2).

The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.