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EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

1. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was established by resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955 at the tenth session of the General Assembly. It consists of the following members: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Arab Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.
2. The Committee held its twentieth session at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 21 to 25 September 1970. Professor B. Lindell of Sweden and Professor L.R. Caldas of Brazil served as Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively. The Committee regretted the absence of Dr. V. Zelený of Czechoslovakia, Vice-Chairman.
3. During that session the Committee, after taking note of General Assembly resolution 2496 (XXIV) and of the statements made during the debate in the Special Political Committee,^{1/} discussed, on the basis of reviews prepared in the Secretariat, recent information on genetic effects of radiation, induction of cancer by radiation, effects of radiation on the immune response, population doses from medical and occupational exposure, and radio-active contamination of the environment.
4. The Committee also discussed the contribution that might be made to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Human Environment from the Committee's experience of radiation problems.

^{1/} See A/SPC/SR.643 and 644.

5. The Committee expressed its intention of preparing for submission to the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh session a report dealing with such evaluations of risk as might result from its consideration of the subjects mentioned in paragraph 3.

6. In connexion with the problem of radio-active contamination of the environment, the Committee recalled that so far it had been mainly concerned with doses and risks from global contamination by radio-nuclides released by atmospheric nuclear explosions, and that it had largely based its conclusions on data that it had requested of States Members of the United Nations or members of specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

7. As peaceful applications of nuclear energy, particularly for the generation of electricity, were now expanding at a rapidly accelerating pace, the Committee decided that, in its future reviews of environmental contamination, it would also give detailed attention to that resulting from these applications, and from applications of radio-active isotopes in medicine, industry, research and other miscellaneous fields.

8. To enable it to assess their respective contribution to the radiation exposure of human populations and the attendant risks, the Committee invited States Members of the United Nations or members of specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency to submit available data on releases of radio-nuclides into the environment and on measured or estimated radiation doses received by populations, including local population groups such as those that may be subject to unusual exposures because of their habitat or their dietary habits.

9. In particular, therefore, the Committee would value available information, including relevant data on discharge rates, relating to releases of specific radio-nuclides into the environment from such types of installations as nuclear-fuel manufacturing and re-processing plants, nuclear power reactors and research centres, isotope production plants and large isotope application centres (e.g. hospitals, factories, etc.). The Committee also indicated its interest in concentrations of specific radio-nuclides in air, water, food-stuffs and human tissues, and felt that any quantitative information relating to the entry of radio-nuclides into, and their transfer through, food chains would be of value in its work.

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10. The assistance provided to the Committee by the World Health Organization in securing from certain countries information on radio-active contamination of human tissues was noted with appreciation.

11. It was recognized that it would be necessary to hold one session in 1971, and it was requested that arrangements be made for the twenty-first session to be held from 14 to 25 June at United Nations Headquarters.
