UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
3rd meeting
held on
Wednesday, 9 October 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SCHÄFER (Germany)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/46/SR.3
15 October 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

91-56395 3915S (E)

/...

The meeting was called ta order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 70: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (A/46/218; A/SPC/46/L.2)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/46/218). It also drew attention to documents *A/46/203, 223, 225, 276,* 314 and 320, containing letters from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru on behalf of the members of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, and tc documents A/46/163, 344 and 501, containing letters from Ukraine, Vanuatu (on behalf of the seven countries of the South Pacific Forum, namely, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and China, respectively, The Committee also had before it a draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/46/L.2.

2. He suggested that the list of speakers in the debate on item 70 should close at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 9 October 1991, and that the draft resolution should be put to the vote at the following meeting of the Committee. He would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Committee agreed to those suggestions.

3. It was so decided.

4. Mr. DEREYMAEKER (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, introduced draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.2 and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus by the members of the Committee.

5. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that tha Community attached great importance to the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and welcomed the fruitful cooperation between the Scientific Committee and specialized agencies such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) , the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements. The Community also expressed its satisfaction with the report recently submitted by the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session (A/46/218).

6. The report emphasized the need for further knowledge of radiation sources and of unavoidable and circumstantial exposures to radiation. The efforts in that direction by the Scientific Committee were of great value to the European Community and its member States, since they provided a useful input to Community policy in the field of radiation protection.

7. The Twelve noted with appreciation that the methodology developed by the Scientific Committee for close evaluations had provided a fundamental basis for the comparison of the results of the international review undertaken the previous year to assess the consequences in the Soviet Union of the Chernobyl

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

accident. The European Community and individual axpsrts from member States had been actively involved in the assessment project, and it was hoped that the project report, presented in Vienna in May 1991, would provide guidelines for follow-up research and that the fruitful collaboration between the Scientific Committee and other organizations would continue.

8. Although accidents causing serious exposure had been very rare.. the possibility of accidents could not be disregarded, because a nuclear industry existed and radiation sources were used for industrial, medical and agricultural purposes. The European Community and its member States were convinced of the importance of effective international cooperation in that area. It should be recalled in that respect that, at the meeting of the European Council held in Rome in December 1990, the Community and its member States had decided to provide technical assistance to the Soviet Union in the field of, inter alia, safety of nuclear installations. The Community's trade and cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union made provision for, inter alia, a 400-million ECU programme of technical assistance that designated as priority areas energy sources an2 the safety of nuclear installations. The Community was currently also negotiating cooperation agreements between the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATQM) and the Soviet Union, in particular in the field of nuclear safety.

9. Furthermore, all member States of the European Community had signed the Convention on Earlier Notification of a Nuclear Accident. The European Community as such had also decided to accede to it, since the Community itself operated nuclear plants within its joint research centres, and had specific responsibilities in the field of radiological protection under the EURATOM Treaty.

10. The European Community and its member States supported the resolution to renew the mandate of the Scientific Committee.

11. Mr. SIDOROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/46/218) showed that the Committee was carrying out activities of great importance and deserved to be commended. Of particular value was the Committee's work on analysing the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The current situation in the Chernobyl region continued to be very serious. Although years had passed, the inhabitants of the region were still suffering from health problems caused by the disaster at the nuclear power station. Efforts were currently continuing at both the central government and the republic level to offset the accident's impact as much as possible and focused on medical assistance, food distribution, pollution control and measures for the well-being of the population.

12. Since May 1986, more than 25,000 million roubles had been allocated to resolve Chernobyl's problems, but it had not yet been possible to improve the situation substantially in the areas affected, and only recently had the magnitude of the long-term impact of the accident become clear,

(Mr. Sidorov, USSR)

13. The efforts to counteract the adverse consequences of the Chernobyl tragedy clearly could not be carried out in an isolated fashion, but necessitated a pooling of both intellectual and material resources and the technical and scientific potential of many States, international organizations and scientific research centres. The Soviet Union was deeply grateful for the assistance it had received from the international community in confronting the problems that had arisen in the aftermath of the Chernobyl tragedy, and he commended in particular the efforts of the specialized agencies and the other bodies of the United Nations system. The lessons of Chernobyl had borne out the conviction that there could be no fully reliable guarantee against accidents in nuclear facilities. The problem of atomfc radiation confirmed the overriding need to achieve nuclear disarmament. The initiatives recently adopted by the Presidents of the USSR and the United States showed that the process of nuclear disarmament had begun and that mankind was gradually drawing nearer to a non-nuclear world, one that was safer and more stable.

14. The information contained in the report of the Committee underscored the need to prevent radiation from polluting the environment. One important initiative in that connection might be to halt nuclear arms testing. The Soviet Union was in favour of reducing, and eventually totally eliminating, nuclear tests as soon as possible. President Gorbachev had recently announced a unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests for one year and had expressed the hope that the other nuclear Powers would follow suit.

15. With the third millennium approaching, the time had come for United Nations bodies, including the Scientific Committee on the Effects *of* Atomic Radiation, to participate more actively in efforts to protect the environment and to use scientific and technological achievements for peaceful means and for the good of all States. It was to be hoped that the Scientific Committee would make a major contribution to that end.

16. Mr. NEJEDLY (Czechoslovakia) said that his country had participated in the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation since its creation in 1955 and had contributed to it, mainly by providing data from Czechoslovak research institutes. At first, the Scientific Committee's efforts had focused primarily on the question of radionuclide fallout from nuclear-weapon testing in the atmosphere and its biological consequences for human beings. The situation had changed in 1963 with the conclusion of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Testing in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water, a positive development that to a large extent had been the result of the work of the Scientific Committee, which had warned the General Assembly of the dangerous consequences of radioactive fallout. With the Treaty in place, the Committee had been able to devote more attention to the effects of nuclear radiation from other sources, such as the nuclear fuel cycle, from the mining of uranium ore to the nuclear energy industry, natural sources and uses in medicine for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes.

(Mr. Nejedly, Czechoslovakia)

17. The Scientific Committee had recently begun to study the effects of nuclear radiation on flora and fauna and had focused on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, in collaboration with other international organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency and others. It had also considered the psychological impact of the perception of radiation risks and the genetic risks of nuclear radiation.

18. Czechoslovakia would continue to support the activities of the Scientific Committee, mainly by providing scientific data. In that connection, it had given detailed answers to the Committee's questionnaire on medical applications of radiation (including nuclear medicine) and had provided information on occupational exposure to radiation and on radionuclides released into the atmosphere and water by Czechoslovak nuclear power stations. Czechoslovakia was also interested in questions regarding radon, a subject to which the Scientific Committee had qiven considerable attention for a number of years.

19. His Government was pleased to contribute to the efforts of the Scientific Committee because of the great importance that it had from the point of view of ecology. Other aspects of the Scientific Committee's work, such as the induction of malignant tumours through radiation or the effects of radiation on the growing human brain, were also important, although Czechoslovakia was unable to participate actively in those activities for lack of relevant data.

20. He hoped that the Scientific Committee could continue its work with the support of the Special Political Committee and the General Assembly.

21. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee would continue its discussion of agenda item 70 at the next meeting, to be held on Thursday, 10 October 1991, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.