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Chairman: Mr. Humberto LOPEZ VILLAMIL (Honduras).

Election of the Rapporteur

1. Mr. ABDEL-HAMID (United Arab Republic) nominated Mr. Abdullah Kamil (Indonesia).
2. Mr. CHOWDHURY (India) supported the nomination.

Mr. Kamil (Indonesia) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.

AGENDA ITEM 36

Effects of atomic radiation: report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/6814 and Corr.1; A/SPC/L.145)

3. Mr. BEAULIEU (Canada) expressed appreciation of the work performed by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation in its twelve years of existence and stressed the usefulness of such a body of eminent scientists, drawn from different parts of the world, in view of the potential hazard deriving from the possibility of the further development or use of nuclear weapons.

4. He recalled that at the meeting of the Scientific Committee in June 1966, the Secretary-General had suggested that the volume and type of information concerning world radiation levels that the Committee required should be reviewed and that, as no further biological questions were awaiting its consideration, another complete report would not be necessary at the present stage. Accordingly, the Scientific Committee had decided that it would not submit its next comprehensive report to the General Assembly until 1969.

5. There had been a reduction in the Scientific Committee's activities in recent years, and so long as there was no immediate threat of a serious radiation hazard, the scientific community might take advantage of that situation to consider the possibility of less frequent reports by the Committee.

6. In presenting the joint draft resolution (A/SPC/L.145) on the Scientific Committee's report (A/6814 and Corr.1), which reiterated the General Assembly's concern about the harmful effects of atomic radiation and requested the Scientific Committee to continue its programme, he expressed particular satisfaction at the broad geographical representation of the sponsors of the draft resolution.

7. Mr. ITAGAKI (Japan) said that it was obvious from the interim reports of the Scientific Committee that the report which it would prepare for submission to the General Assembly, at its twenty-fourth session—on such subjects as radio-active contamination of the environment by nuclear tests, effects of ionizing radiation on the nervous system and the pathological significance of chromosome anomalies induced by radiation in somatic cells would be of great importance to the future welfare of the human race, and his country considered it a privilege to have been a member of the Scientific Committee since its inception in 1955.

8. The accomplishments of the Scientific Committee were a good example of the quiet work done under the auspices of the United Nations which, while it did not command headlines or startle radio and television audiences, was nevertheless of immense importance to mankind. Accordingly, his delegation had been glad to join with other delegations in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/L.145.

9. Mr. CERNIK (Czechoslovakia) expressed his delegation's approval of the work of the Scientific Committee, which had contributed considerably to the precision and objectivity of the assessment of the risk attendant upon the technological development of the use of nuclear energy in general and tests of nuclear weapons in particular. The Scientific Committee's documents earned wide recognition in scientific circles, and the conclusions reached acquired general validity.

10. The Scientific Committee's conclusions concerning radiation risks were a convincing argument for total prohibition of all nuclear testing binding all States. The Czechoslovak delegation would welcome the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. Such a step would *eo ipso* remove any interest of States in nuclear weapons testing and reduce the risks emanating from uncontrollable radiation.

11. The Scientific Committee's annual report proved extremely helpful in making the estimation of risks to human populations resulting from radio-active contamination increasingly precise. The representative of Czechoslovakia urged unanimous adoption of

draft resolution A/SPC/L.145, which had been co-sponsored by his country.

12. Mr. MILLER (New Zealand) said that his country had consistently supported the work of the Scientific Committee, which had an important continuing task to perform. It shared the general view that there should be no slackening in the international effort to gather reliable information about atomic radiation and to analyse its effects on man and his environment.

13. One aspect of the Scientific Committee's work—its continuing assessment of world-wide levels of radiation from nuclear tests—was of special interest to New Zealand as its people, together with those in other Pacific islands, were greatly concerned at the continuance of nuclear testing in the atmosphere, particularly in the South Pacific. However, while his Government's monitoring stations had found significant increases in radio-activity in some areas for some periods in 1967, the total radio-active fall-out had been less than in 1966 and the level of radio-activity was still below the levels recognized as constituting a health hazard for continuing exposure of populations. As one of the countries which had long-term plans for nuclear power development, New Zealand attached great importance to the application of strict safeguards to the peaceful uses of atomic energy and believed that the Scientific Committee could contribute materially to extending the knowledge on which any system of safeguards must be based. He was confident that the Scientific Committee's work would be as valuable in future as it had been thus far and he hoped that draft resolution A/SPC/L.145 would receive unanimous support.

14. Mr. HOPE (United Kingdom) welcomed the Scientific Committee's report. The discussions at the Committee's seventeenth session on the assumptions and parameters used in estimating dose commitments, the effects of ionizing radiation on the nervous system and the possible pathological significance of chromosome anomalies induced by radiation in somatic cells, as well as their possible use as indicators of exposure to radiation, constituted a most valuable contribution to scientific knowledge.

15. His delegation looked forward to receiving, in due course, the results of the review of the information required to enable the Scientific Committee to continue its assessment of world-wide levels of radiation from nuclear tests, and hoped that the Member States of the United Nations and the specialized agencies would continue to co-operate fully with the Scientific Committee.

16. In that connexion, he had read with interest the report of the meeting of the Committee in Working Group,^{1/} and was glad to learn that in the 1969 report of the Scientific Committee to the General Assembly the main emphasis was to be placed on aberrations in somatic cells. The United Kingdom welcomed the Scientific Committee's plan to hold its next session in New York from 8 to 19 April 1968, and hoped once again to send a team of experts to participate in the proceedings.

17. There was much continuing value in the Scientific Committee's deliberations, and his delegation supported the draft resolution (A/SPC/L.145) on that Committee's future work.

18. Mr. CHOWDHURY (India) recalled that it was on a proposal by his delegation that the item under consideration had first been included in the General Assembly's agenda in 1955. Since then the Scientific Committee had done commendable work in providing the international community with scientific facts about radiation hazards to human life. The World Meteorological Organization had also made a valuable contribution by monitoring and reporting on levels of atmospheric radio-activity, and the Scientific Committee had received further assistance from other specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and non-governmental organizations.

19. His delegation noted that the Scientific Committee was intending to prepare a study on recent information on radio-active contamination of the environment by nuclear tests, and the other topics mentioned in paragraph 3 of the report (A/6814 and Corr.1); and it was looking forward with particular interest to the Scientific Committee's assessment of world-wide levels of radiation from nuclear tests. In that connexion, he expressed deep concern at the continued contamination caused by nuclear tests in the atmosphere, particularly the tests conducted by certain Powers not far from India's frontiers. Those tests constituted new dangers and risks to the health of millions of people. It was regrettable that, at a time when radio-activity in the atmosphere was gradually being reduced, some countries persisted in conducting nuclear tests in the atmosphere in violation of the Moscow Treaty.^{2/} He earnestly hoped that the provisions of the Treaty would be observed even by those who had not seen fit to adhere to it.

20. Finally, his delegation supported the draft resolution on the Scientific Committee's future work.

21. Mr. FIEDLER (Austria) said that the exposure of mankind to atomic radiation from an increasing number of artificial sources was a matter of concern to all countries. The practical applications of atomic energy were constantly increasing, and it had not yet been possible to put an end to nuclear test explosions. The particular nature of atomic radiation would require continuing and long-term observation since the radio-active materials produced, for instance, by nuclear explosions would continue to affect the environment for a long time. The Scientific Committee's studies represented a significant contribution to the knowledge and control of radio-active contamination.

22. He hoped that the Committee would continue its investigations, in close co-operation with the Member States of the United Nations, the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other organizations throughout the world. The hazards of atomic radiation could be reduced only if all Governments recognized their responsibility in the matter.

^{1/} Document A/AC.82/R.226 (restricted distribution).

^{2/} Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water, signed in Moscow on 5 August 1963.

23. Mr. KUTAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the four major reports submitted by the Scientific Committee^{3/} had confirmed beyond doubt the initial warnings that radio-active contamination caused by the increasing number of artificial radiation sources, particularly nuclear weapons tests, was a danger to the present and future generations. Modern science had shown that even a relatively small increase in the radio-active contamination of the environment might have disastrous effects, including somatic changes.

24. He was glad to note that the Scientific Committee would be submitting to the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth session a report on the assumptions and parameters used in estimating dose commitments, recent information on radio-active contamination of the environment by nuclear tests, the effects of ionizing radiation on the nervous system, and the other topics discussed at the Committee's seventeenth session. The Scientific Committee's assessment of information on radiation hazards, and its reviews of the results of biological and medical research on the consequences of radiation, were leading to a better understanding of the true dimensions of the dangers to which mankind would be exposed if further vast sources of artificial radiation, such as the existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, were ever to be let loose.

25. The Soviet Union had on a number of occasions submitted proposals for total nuclear disarmament, and was itself prepared to take such a step without delay; but certain other countries had not indicated their willingness to accept the proposals. Accordingly, in the hope of achieving some progress towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, the Government of the USSR had proposed the inclusion in the General Assembly's agenda for the present session of an item entitled "Conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons". The conclusion of such a convention would be a definite step towards a practical solution to the problem of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction. Another way of checking the nuclear arms race would be to conclude an agreement on a comprehensive nuclear test ban, which the Government of the USSR had also been advocating.

^{3/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Supplement No. 17 *ibid.*, Seventeenth Session, Supplement No. 16; *ibid.*, Nineteenth Session, Supplement No. 14; and *ibid.*, Twenty-first Session, Supplement No. 14.

26. The report under discussion showed that the Scientific Committee was doing useful work on the problems referred to it by the General Assembly, and his delegation was confident that the Committee would in future discharge its mandate with equal success. It supported the proposal that note should be taken of the report submitted by the Scientific Committee and that it should be requested to continue its work within its terms of reference.

27. Mr. FOUNTAIN (United States of America) said that, with other members of the United States Congress, he had recently introduced legislation designed to protect the population from radio-active hazards, from whatever source, within the United States.

28. He was glad to note, from its report, that the Scientific Committee's work was proceeding smoothly. In particular, he looked forward to studying the reports which that Committee was to submit to the General Assembly's twenty-fourth session on the radio-active contamination of the environment, the effects of ionizing radiation on the nervous system and chromosome anomalies induced by radiation.

29. The Scientific Committee was continuing to perform its allotted task in its usual capable manner; and he would support the draft resolution on its future work.

30. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the draft resolution on the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/SPC/L.145).

The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.

Organization of the Committee's work

31. Mr. FARAH (Somalia), supported by Mr. M'BAYE (Guinea), suggested that the Committee should begin its consideration of the next item on its agenda, relating to the policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, on the afternoon of Thursday 19 October, and should at that time grant the request for a hearing made by the Reverend Canon L. John Collins, President of the International Defence and Aid Fund.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.