UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FOURTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
3rd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 17 October 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

CONTENTS

89-56370 1688S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/44/SR.3
26 October 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

/...

13P.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (A/44/587 and A/SPC/44/L.3)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/44/409 which contained a letter from the representative of Zimbabwe concerning the item under consideration.

2. Mr. BAMSEY (Australia) referred briefly to the work done by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which was described in its report (A/44/587). He then introduced on behalf of the sponsors draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3, in which the Scientific Committee was requested to continue its work. It would be desirable for the additional staff resources authorized two years earlier to be made available to the Scientific Committee as soon as possible. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus, as had been the case at the previous session.

3. The Scientific Committee's work affected all aspects of the life of the world's population, which was exposed to the possible effects of atomic radiation in a world where there were too many nuclear weapons and where nuclear testing continued. That was why his Government was firmly committed to the objective of complete nuclear disarmament under effective international control and urged the super-Powers and the States in possession of nuclear arsenals to negotiate deep cuts as a step towards that goal, and in particular to negotiate urgently a comprehensive test-ban treaty which would prohibit the testing of nuclear explosive devices by all States in all environments and for all time. Such a treaty would ensure that nuclear arsenals were not further increased, prevent the development of new weapons systems and the modernization of present systems, and strengthen efforts to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons.

4. Australia welcomed the ratification of the relevant Protocols of the Treaty of Rarotonga by the Soviet Union and China, but it was disappointed that the United States, the United Kingdom and France had yet to sign or ratify them. Protocol 3 of the Treaty constituted an undertaking not to test any explosive device within the area covered by the Treaty. It was understandable that the countries of the region remained deeply concerned about the continuation of French nuclear testing there. Australia was opposed to the conduct of nuclear tests at Mururoa and Fangataufa because of the long-term dangers to the region stemming from the structural damage to the atoll and because of the possible short-term health risks. Australia and the countries of the South Pacific had called on France many times to cease its nuclear-testing programme in the area, not only because its aim was to develop nuclear weapons but also because the tests were carried out far from mainland France. If France insisted on continuing the programme, it should conduct it in its own territory.

5. Mr. ZAWELS (Argentina) reiterated his country's support for the work of the Scientific Committee. He also underlined the importance which Argentina attached to the study of the effects of atomic radiation on the environment, particularly on the human being, drawing attention in that connection to document A/44/480. His delegation wished to support and promote increased co-operation between the specialized agencies and other bodies, including the United Nations Environment Programme and the Scientific Committee.

6. His delegation was pleased that the scientific annexes had been issued as United Nations sales publications. It also believed that the Scientific Committee should be given increased resources in order to cope with its future programme of work.

7. Mr. MANENT (France), speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the European Community, stressed the importance of increased co-operation with the specialized agencies and other bodies, especially the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as well as the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measures. The Twelve thought it useful for the co-operation between the Scientific Committee and the International Atomic Energy Agency to continue.

8. The Twelve had established systems of measurement, prevention and protection with respect to natural and man-made sources of radiation. The high level of safety achieved in that respect by the States members of the European Community was due to the attention which they gave to the problem.

9. Despite the precautions taken, it was not possible to eliminate fully the possibility of accidents. In that connection, the Scientific Committee should continue its studies of the overall medium- and long-term effects of the Chernobyl accident, for it was a reminder of the limits of control over the most advanced technology. The Twelve urged the continuation of international collaboration with respect to the notification of nuclear accidents. It was obvious that without the introduction of new areas of co-operation and improved co-ordination on certain specific aspects it would be impossible to secure effective prevention and protection.

10. The CHAIRMAN announced that Indonesia had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

11. Mr. SHEVCHENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that in his delegation's opinion the Scientific Committee's studies helped not only to disseminate knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and dangers of atomic radiation but also to focus attention on the need to give serious and thoughtful consideration to guaranteeing the safety of all kinds of activities connected with the use of nuclear energy. It was to be hoped that the international community had drawn the necessary lessons from the tragic accidents in nuclear plants and had come to understand the importance of man's

(Mr. Shevchenko, Ukrainian SSR)

miscalculations, technical oversights, mistakes and carelessness, which could not be blamed on atomic energy as such. Bitter experience demanded the final elimination of nuclear means of warfare from the life of the international community, for any accident with a nuclear weapon risked unleashing a world conflict with disastrous consequences for civilization on Earth.

12. The Chernobyl accident had demonstrated that the magnitude, complexity and multifaceted nature of the problem of the protection of the population and the elimination of the consequences of nuclear accidents and the resulting radiation required international collaboration in every respect. He drew attention to some of the steps taken to prevent and neutralize the adverse effects of such an accident on the health of the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, such as emergency evacuation, the housing of evacuees, the construction of the town of Slavutich and the creation of social and cultural institutions. Attention had also been given to the inhabitants of the area within a 30-kilometre radius, where the work of urban rehabilitation was continuing. The places in question received food supplies; farm produce harvested on private plots was subject to controls; and it had been recommended that the inhabitants of 12 villages should be transferred to "sanitized" land.

13. Strict standards had been introduced with regard to safety measures. Major work was being done to improve safety arrangements in various operating nuclear power stations. Work had continued on the radioactive decontamination of Chernobyl and other nearby localities, on chemical treatment of the land and on the implementation of other measures to rehabilitate agricultural centres. More than $600 million had been allocated to those activities in the past year. In addition, measures had been taken to protect water-supply sources against radioactive contamination.

14. People who had taken part in the clean-up operations and those who had been exposed to radiation had been put under the medical supervision of a nuclear-medicine centre in Kiev and one of the Republic's specialist clinics. As had been announced, apart from the victims of the accident at the nuclear power station, no new cases had been recorded of illnesses resulting from the effects of radiation. The foreign researchers who had taken part in the international conference on medical aspects of the accident had agreed with that finding.

15. As a result of the Chernobyl disaster, the population was questioning any plan to build atomic power stations and demanding that those already in existence should cease to operate. Plans to build the fifth and sixth reactors in the second stage of the Chernobyl power station had been shelved and suspension of the construction of the Crimea power station was being seriously considered. Precautionary measures had also been taken and new standards were being considered for the location of new nuclear power stations. In addition, the restrictions previously imposed on confidential information relating to the consequences of the accident and the resulting radiation had been lifted.

(Mr. Shevchenko, Ukrainian SSR)

16. The essential thing was to reduce the possible risks of nuclear energy to a minimum. For that purpose, joint efforts at the international level were needed to establish an international régime that would allow nuclear energy to be developed in safety. In that connection, the Scientific Committee could make a major contribution to co-ordination efforts aimed at creating a better understanding of the effects and dangers of ionizing radiation, whatever its origin. In view of the foregoing, his delegation was in full agreement with draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3.

17. For nuclear energy to be used only for peaceful purposes under strict international control, it was necessary to create a denuclearized, non-violent and, ultimately, demilitarized world. The accident had forced the international community to consider what might happen, in Europe for example, if a nuclear power station was destroyed as a result of a military conflict in which only conventional weapons were used; that showed that even totally safe nuclear power stations did not cease to be an enormous risk in the event of military aggression. A group of distinguished scientists had proposed, in that connection, that a joint investigation be carried out within the framework of the World Peace Council's programme of action in order to examine the possible consequences for Europe of the destruction of a nuclear power station, a chemical plant or major hydroelectric installations. It was to be hoped that the future activities of the Scientific Committee and the implementation of practical measures to strengthen international co-operation would help to ensure the survival of the human race, in particular by strengthening environmental safety.

18. Mr. JANOWSKI (Poland) said that his country, being an active and longstanding member of IAEA and of the Scientific Committee, once more confirmed its interest in safe and peaceful applications of nuclear energy for the benefit of all mankind. For those reasons, it supported every effort aimed at lessening the risk of exposure to the potentially harmful effects of atomic radiation. It was necessary to continue bilateral and multilateral efforts to prevent a very dangerous development of events leading to a massive release of radiation resulting from non-peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Poland therefore welcomed recent advances in the field of nuclear disarmament.

19. The question of the efficiency of civilian nuclear installations must also take account of the issue of their safety. Poland supported the various proposals and endeavours made to help establish a new régime for the safe use of nuclear energy under the auspices of IAEA. In addition, it was of the opinion that a legal instrument governing international liability for damage caused by a nuclear accident should be worked out.

20. Turning to the report of the Scientific Committee (A/44/587), he wished to draw attention to the problem of the stimulation effects of low doses of radiation which the Scientific Committee was going to study. The problem was related to the concept of hypothetical threshold-dose-effects and might have a very fundamental bearing on the further development of the philosophy and practice of radiological protection, as well as on the public perception of radiation risks. In that connection, he commended the proposal put forward by the Soviet Union within the

(Mr. Janowski, Poland)

Committee to determine the so-called "life dose" of radiation, in addition to natural and medical doses. That concept corresponded to the Polish delegation's earlier proposal to unify the doses of intervention levels in case of a sudden release of radiation and radioactive contamination of the environment.

21. It was no secret that the work-load of the Scientific Committee significantly exceeded its budget and that its inadequate means prevented the employment of more scientists; that situation called for a prompt solution. In that connection, his delegation suggested that placing the Scientific Committee under the Vienna International Centre would be beneficial for both bodies.

22. In conclusion, he wished to emphasize that, thanks to the Scientific Committee's work, there was now a better understanding of the multiple effects of radiation and the necessity of further studies in that field. As a result, his delegation fully supported the draft resolution introduced by the Australian delegation.

23. Mr. LIU ZHAODONG (China) was pleased to note that, at the thirty-eighth session of the Scientific Committee, due importance had been accorded to resolution A/43/55 adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-third session and the Committee had immediately begun its implementation. His delegation had also taken note with satisfaction that the Committee had decided to carry out studies on doses from natural sources of radiation, doses from man-made sources of radiation in the environment, the effects of all types of exposure to man-made radiation, the effects of radiation exposure on plants and animals in the environment and hereditary effects of radiation in human populations. Those studies were directly related to the survival of present and future generations.

24. China was currrently engaged in a modernization process aimed at developing its national economy and improving the standard of living of its people. In its economic and technical policy, China took care that the utilization of nuclear energy was safe and was for peaceful purposes. The Government of China, therefore, valued and supported the activities of the United Nations, and its special committees and agencies on the effects of atomic radiation which served to protect human health and safety.

25. His delegation wished to emphasize, in particular, that in view of his country's concern about the possible effects of atomic radiation on present and future generations, China supported the activities of the Scientific Committee and would participate actively in some of those activities in so far as its facilities and resources would permit. Furthermore, while it was important to request the Scientific Committee to "continue its work, including its important co-ordinating activities, to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources", it was equally crucial to provide and disseminate data and information in a timely fashion to States Members, especially the developing countries, with the support of the United Nations. Finally, China intended to participate actively in the consultations on drafting a resolution and hoped that the text submitted would be adopted by consensus.

26. Mr. DUTT (India) said that his country attached great importance to the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy for the benefit of mankind. India had always looked upon science and technology as the means to fight the lack of economic development. The prime objective of India's atomic energy programme, as defined in the Atomic Energy Act of 1948, was the development, control and use of atomic energy solely for peaceful purposes, namely, the generation of electricity and the development of nuclear applications in research, agriculture, industry, medicine and other fields.

27. India had closely co-operated with the Scientific Committee, and its scientists had participated actively in the preparation of its annual reports. India had closely followed events relating to nuclear accidents and the effects of radiation and had played an important role in the international meetings and conferences on that issue. Furthermore, it had taken and was continuing to take all necessary steps in that area and understood the need to maintain the highest nuclear safety standards.

28. His delegation welcomed the excellent annual report submitted by the Scientific Committee (A/44/587), which was a reflection of its important and fruitful work. It hoped that the report would help to make the destructive effects of atomic radiation more widely known and would be useful in harnessing nuclear energy for the benefit of mankind.

29. India hoped that the States Members, the specialized agencies and the organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other national and international scientific bodies, would continue to make available information pertinent to the studies and research carried out by the Scientific Committee, so that its reports would be of increasing utility.

30. The accidents at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island had not been forgotten. While it was important to continue to improve safety conditions in nuclear plants, at the same time it was necessary to continue research to protect all those likely to be affected by radiation leakages. His delegation hoped that the Scientific Committee would continue to fulfil its functions successfully and reiterated India's whole-hearted co-operation with its efforts. Finally, he expressed support for draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3 and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

31. Mr. OKUDA (Japan) said that the growing use of nuclear power and associated technologies caused his country increasing concern about the potentially harmful effects of atomic radiation on human beings and the environment. In order to protect life on the planet from those effects, it was essential to have accurate scientific information. Because atomic radiation had global implications, scientists from all countries should co-operate in the research and study of its effects. The Scientific Committee was an ideal forum for such international co-operation. In dealing with the issue of atomic radiation a myriad of related political, economic and social problems must also be addressed. Nevertheless, it was essential to rely on purely scientific and technical information in order for efforts to address the issue to be effective. The Scientific Committee had achieved a great deal in providing such information.

(Mr. Okuda, Japan)

32. Japan hoped that the States Members of the United Nations as well as IAEA, other specialized agencies and the various non-governmental organizations concerned would continue to co-operate with the Committee by providing it with relevant information which would serve as a basis for its activities.

33. In conclusion, his delegation supported the draft resolution under consideration and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus, which would demonstrate the full support of the Special Political Committee for the work of the Scientific Committee.

34. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Scientific Committee had done useful work which would help to increase awareness of the risks of atomic radiation for man and the environment. The usefulness of the Committee's activities rested in its close co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Soviet Union hoped that that constructive collaboration would continue.

35. The crucial change from confrontation to co-operation among States should allow co-ordination of efforts by the international community so as to foster the development of ideas, eliminate suspicions and fears and achieve a collective will to solve global problems of safety, as a necessary condition for survival on the Earth. The ratification of the treaty between the United States and the USSR on medium-range nuclear forces was an important step in that direction, and the next step should be the conclusion of an agreement to reduce by 50 per cent the strategic offensive weapons of the Soviet Union and the United States.

36. The Scientific Committee had played an important role in the elaboration of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space, and under Water, signed at Moscow in 1963. Aware of its responsibility to the international community, the Soviet Union had revised its testing programme, but the solution to that problem was not unilateral but required concerted multilateral action. The Soviet Union was prepared to declare a reciprocal moratorium on nuclear testing with the United States and believed that the moment had come to get out of the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament and to discuss the specifics of a total ban on testing, with a possible extension of the 1963 Treaty to include underground tests.

37. The Soviet Union had shut down a reactor producing plutonium for military purposes in 1987. Further shut-downs were scheduled for 1989 and 1990, and by the year 2000 all reactors should be closed. It had also suggested to all nuclear States, particularly the United States, that work should begin on reaching an agreement to end and ban the production of fissionable material and to allow verification based on the extensive experience of IAEA. The Soviet Union was willing to act unilaterally by placing one of its closed reactors under IAEA control.

(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

38. Nuclear weapons threatened to bring about the total annihilation of life on Earth. Without a full awareness of the need for joint action to eliminate all nuclear weapons and to create favourable conditions for the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes under strict international control, there could be no hope of a brighter future. United Nations bodies, including the Scientific Committee, had a fundamental role to play in achieving that noble goal.

39. Mr. VOCETKA (Czechoslovakia) said that the report of the Scientific Committee (A/44/587) not only provided a study of current world realities but also laid the ground work for political decisions that would influence the future development conditions of nations in many spheres.

40. Czechoslovakia welcomed the work of the Scientific Committee, since apart from the unquestionable link to the subject of nuclear weapons and the ensuing risks for the world community, its long-term activities also gave particular importance to the area of environmental protection, as shown by the inclusion of new fields of study focused solely on that subject.

41. Czechoslovakia had taken an active part in the work of the Scientific Committee and believed that the Committee's decision to prepare two documents on scurces of radiation in the environment was significant, since it made it possible to separate the exploration of radiation existing in nature from that of radiation caused by technological activities.

42. He thanked the Soviet delegation for the information which it had provided during the Scientific Committee's session on the actions taken by the USSR National Council for Radiation Protection in tackling the effects of the Chernobyl accident. The information provided was important for Czechoslovakia, owing to its geographic location as a neighbouring State, and would contribute to improving the knowledge of the Czechoslovak people about the complex issues of radiation safety.

43. The successful work of the Scientific Committee was also facilitated by its close co-operation with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Health Organization and the United Nations Environmental Programme. Czechoslovakia believed that that co-operation would develop constructively in the future. Czechoslovakia would continue to participate actively in the Committee's work and was therefore co-sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3, whose adoption would help to further the productive work of the Committee.

44. Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations which were also members of the South Pacific Forum, said that paragraph 3 of the report of the Scientific Committee (A/44/587) confirmed that the Committee had selected a comprehensive and demanding work programme.

45. The countries of the South Pacific were paying close attention to studies and reports on the impact of radiation on their environment. The Pacific area had been for many years the site of atmospheric nuclear weapons testing, with a consequent rise in artificial radiation levels, particularly Strontium 90 and Caesium 137

(Mr. Thompson, Fiji)

levels. Since the termination of the testing programme in 1974, those levels had declined, but their longer-term effects on the human populations of the region would require careful monitoring for many years. Just as in Japan, where new effects were still being observed in the victims of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki more than 40 years before, constant monitoring would be necessary in the Pacific, the Ukraine and other regions where artificial radioactivity had been released into the environment, and the results of the Scientific Committee's investigations would be highly valuable.

46. Although testing in their region had finally ceased, the members of the South Pacific Forum remained deeply concerned at the continued testing of nuclear explosives. France's nuclear testing programme in the Tuamotu Archipelago to the east of the Cook Islands was in its fifteenth year. In that time, more than 100 nuclear devices had been detonated, mostly at the Mururoa atoll. According to figures published by the French scientist, Jacques-Ives Cousteau, the total yield of those explosions had been between 1500 and 2500 kilotons. The capacity of the atoll to contain such explosions was now so nearly exhausted that, for the first time since the underground testing programme had begun, the French authorities had once again started to conduct tests at the Fangataufa atoll. The first test, with an estimated yield of about 100 kilotons, had taken place on 30 November 1988 and had been followed by another in June 1989 with an estimated yield of 70 kilotons. Between October 1988 and June 1989, six more tests had taken place at Mururoa, with yields estimated at between 1 and 50 kilotons.

47. The countries of the South Pacific were profoundly concerned about the risks posed by the nuclear testing programme in the region. In that connection, they had noted the French Government's recent statement concerning its readiness to receive scientific missions in French Polynesia, which they believed to be a positive development. They urged the French Government to allow an independent investigation of the health of the population of the territory and to cease its nuclear testing programme in that region.

48. The States members of the South Pacific Forum supported draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3.

49. Mr. RASHDI (Pakistan) expressed his appreciation for the work of the Scientific Committee and for the valuable contribution it had made, in co-operation with other organizations of the United Nations system, to the knowledge of radiation and its effects.

50. He emphasized the need to support a moratorium on all kinds of nuclear explosions as the only means of preserving the global environment from the risks of future contamination. Pakistan was prepared to subscribe to a comprehensive global, regional or bilateral test ban treaty that would prevent the development of new weapons and weapons proliferation.

(Mr. Rashdi, Pakistan)

51. In order to avoid the spread of atomic contamination, Pakistan also wished to emphasize the need to protect nuclear installations from armed attack. An international agreement on that issue would further reinforce measures for nuclear safety. At Islamabad on 31 December 1988, India and Pakistan had signed an agreement prohibiting attacks against each other's nuclear installations and facilities, including nuclear power and research reactors, and fuel-fabrication, uranium-enrichment and isotope-separation and - reprocessing facilities, as well as any other installations using nuclear fuel or nuclear materials of any kind or storing radioactive materials. The agreement was a confidence-building measure that would have a stabilizing effect on the situation in South Asia.

52. There was an urgent need for a programme of co-operation in the nuclear field. The industrialized countries must help the developing countries maintain the reactors they had exported and make spare parts available. His delegation was strongly opposed to the restrictions imposed on the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, which was indispensable to developing countries faced with an acute shortage of conventional sources of energy. It was also unfortunate that certain countries had withheld information relating to safety in nuclear power plants, although the situation had improved as a result of the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency to ensure an uninterrupted flow of such information.

53. World-wide concern over atomic radiation pointed up the importance of the Scientific Committee. His delegation was therefore disturbed by the inadequacy of the Committee's financial resources, and he urged that sufficient resources should be provided to enable the Committee to continue its important and useful work.

54. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that, because of the current world energy shortage, States had increasingly turned to nuclear power as an alternative and economical source, despite the risks it posed. Nuclear installations were vulnerable to technical malfunctions and human error, and the ramifications of an accident would be felt not only in the surrounding area but in distant regions and countries as well. To cope with such situations, international co-operation must seek to minimize or eliminate the environmental and health hazards posed by nuclear contamination and to establish nuclear safety standards. In that connection, Indonesia had always attached importance to the work done by the Scientific Committee to promote preventive measures in the field of health by focusing on the effects of atomic radiation.

55. His delegation wished to express its appreciation to the Scientific Committee for its useful work, which would enable the international community to obtain a better understanding of the effects of radiation. Indonesia pledged to continue to co-operate with the Committee. Accordingly, it wished to join in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3.

56. Mr. AL-KAHTANY (Saudi Arabia) said that atomic radiation and its harmful effects on man and the environment had become a nightmare for mankind; the international community must therefore intensify its efforts to find adequate solutions to that problem. The commendable work done by the Scientific Committee, despite a lack of adequate resources, constituted the first international effort to disseminate information on all aspects of the question.

57. One of the most serious dangers man faced was the release of atomic radiation as the result of an accident in a civilian nuclear facility or the use of nuclear energy for military purposes. That was what had happened when a State like Israel, refusing to abide by international law, had attacked an Iraqi nuclear reactor used for peaceful purposes without considering the effects of atomic radiation, which could kill thousands of persons and seriously endanger neighbouring States. That same attitude of defiance vis-à-vis the Charter of the United Nations and international treaties characterized the racist régime of South Africa.

58. Another cause for concern in the developing world was the utilization of certain parts of their countries for the dumping of radioactive wastes by companies from industrialized countries. Equally to be deplored was the export of food contaminated by radiation to the poorest developing countries, an action which took advantage of their neediness.

59. Saudi Arabia, which supported all measures to eliminate the threat of a nuclear war, ban all nuclear tests and establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, had become a party during the preceding year to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and was working with the peace-loving States of the Middle East to make the region a nuclear-weapon-free zone. However, Israel posed a threat to the entire region, because it continued to develop nuclear programmes for military purposes and refused to become a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or to allow any monitoring by experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Israel continued to test intermediate-range missiles which could be equipped with nuclear warheads. On 14 September 1989, the information media had announced that a missile of that type had fallen into the Mediterranean Sea some 400 kilometres north of Benghazi, Libya. Such activities on the part of the Israelis were in keeping with their determination to develop their nuclear capacity, in defiance of the international community's will as expressed in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose provisions Israel refused to accept.

60. His delegation welcomed the measures adopted by the major Powers to limit the arms build-up and nuclear tests; it also supported the efforts of the Scientific Committee and condemned the irresponsible activities of the racist régimes of Israel and South Africa in the nuclear field, which threatened international peace and security.

61. Mr. FLEMMING (Saint Lucia) said that his delegation wished to join in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/44/L.3.

62. Mrs. GAZEAU-SECRET (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representatives of Australia and Fiji had taken issue with the nuclear tests her country was conducting in French Polynesia. It should be noted that those delegations raised that question every year, even though they had no grounds for doing so, as studies showed that underground tests were completely safe and did not harm the environment.

63. The representative of Australia had suggested that such tests ought to be conducted in metropolitan France. French Polynesia belonged to France, and France was free to choose the part of its territory it considered most appropriate, chiefly for geological reasons, for the conducting of such tests. It should also be pointed out that the areas chosen were situated thousands of miles from the other countries of the region.

64. Her delegation could understand the feelings of those countries and hoped that they would appreciate the exigencies of French security; France must continue such tests because it needed to keep up with the latest technological developments if it was to remain independent in so far as its defence was concerned. In fact, France, in a spirit of collaboration and transparency, had decided to reduce the number of tests carried out during the year from eight to six and to report them to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

65. Mr. BAMSEY (Australia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of France had spoken with confidence of long- and short-term security. His delegation did not share that confidence.

66. Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that France lacked conclusive proof that the effects of nuclear tests were harmless; there was a great deal of scientific and medical data which described the harmful effects of radiation in the short and long terms. France should allow a global and independent study to be carried out on the possible effects of nuclear tests in French Polynesia.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.