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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
4th meeting  
held on  
Monday, 7 October 1985  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KORHONEN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (A/40/417; A/SPC/40/L.2)  
(continued)

1. Mr. LODGE (United States of America) reaffirmed the great importance which his country attached to the work of the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation since the establishment of that body. United States governmental and private agencies had exerted substantial efforts to supply the Committee with the data necessary to accomplish its functions. In particular, the United States Government would continue its strong leadership role and support to sustain the important work of the Committee. Over the span of its 30 years, the Scientific Committee had performed work of the highest quality characterized by objective standards, as was again reflected in its report. His delegation, a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2, noted with satisfaction the co-operation between the Scientific Committee, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Atomic Energy Agency, and looked forward to seeing other examples of such co-operation in the future.
2. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that his country was happy that the Scientific Committee had again held its session at Vienna, the third seat of the United Nations, in June 1985. As the Secretary-General had observed in his message to the current session, it had been the Committee's findings that had provided the facts and assessments necessary for the drafting and adoption of the partial Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty. The Committee had subsequently provided further useful scientific findings.
3. His delegation, which was a sponsor of the draft resolution submitted to the Special Political Committee, had taken note of the Scientific Committee's intention to publish in 1986 a study on somatic and hereditary effects of atomic radiation. It associated itself with the Scientific Committee's appeal to the States Members and specialized agencies of the United Nations to continue to provide information which they had at their disposal on subjects studied by the Scientific Committee.
4. Mr. KOVACIC (Czechoslovakia) noted that the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations was also the fortieth anniversary of the tragic events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. That Committee had been established to study the negative effects of nuclear weapons, and its conclusions had served as the basis for the elaboration and adoption of the 1963 partial Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The work done by the Scientific Committee on both the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the effects of atomic radiation had constituted substantial progress in the field of disarmament and had contributed at the time to the creation of an atmosphere of détente, trust and international co-operation for the peaceful uses of that form of energy.
5. It was time to draw up a realistic programme for nuclear disarmament, including the prohibition of testing of nuclear weapons of any kind. In that

(Mr. Kovacic, Czechoslovakia)

connection, Czechoslovakia welcomed the fact that the Soviet Union had proclaimed a moratorium on all types of nuclear explosions from 6 August 1985 to 1 January 1986, a moratorium whose application could be continued if the United States associated itself with it, thus creating conditions favourable for the conclusion of a treaty in that field. The Scientific Committee could then concentrate its attention on more positive aspects of the subject.

6. Like the overwhelming majority of States, Czechoslovakia attached great importance to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as a means of strengthening international security. It highly appreciated the results of the third conference to review the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty, results which confirmed that political will could help to overcome differences, thus leading to agreed solutions to the problems of the current era. Czechoslovakia therefore supported the efforts of all States which sought to establish denuclearized zones in the different regions of the world, which would contribute greatly to eliminating the effects of atomic radiation. It participated actively in the highly regarded work of the Scientific Committee and, in that connection, had established scientific institutions to measure very low levels of radioactivity, where dozens of scientists from other Member States had received training.

7. The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic would continue to support the Committee and the work which it was doing in accordance with the purposes for which it had been established. With respect to the Committee's report, his delegation noted with satisfaction the co-operation that had been established between the Committee and specialized bodies, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations Environment Programme in particular. It supported the conclusions of the report and recommended its adoption and that of draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2.

8. Mr. CANALES MARQUEZ (Chile) said that his country and the other States members of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, namely, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, had strongly protested the nuclear explosions in the South Pacific, which constituted a serious threat to the marine environment and its natural resources (A/39/343). It regretted that on such an important question as the cessation of nuclear explosions hardly any progress had been made, as could be seen from the draft report of the 1985 Disarmament Conference.

9. Chile noted with concern that despite growing international protests and the constant pressure exerted by ecologists and countries of the region, the French Government had reaffirmed quite recently that it had no intention of stopping those tests on Mururoa Atoll, tests which would reach, for the first time, a force of 150 kilotons. Chile wished to express its solidarity in particular with the States of the South Pacific, which were the most affected, and would continue to denounce in the appropriate international forums the countries which threatened their sovereign interests. It noted that those very countries which carried out nuclear tests in their overseas territories would not tolerate such explosions off their own coasts. Those explosions, regardless of their origin, constituted an attack on the most elementary norms of justice because they affected the maritime zones of third States which had not consented to them.

(Mr. Canales Marquez, Chile)

10. Chile commended the Scientific Committee, which had carried out its functions with competence and seriousness. Given the scope of the danger of atomic radiation produced by nuclear tests, it was of the highest importance that the Committee should continue its work, with the support of the international community and by maintaining close and continuous contact with the United Nations Environment Programme.

11. Chile appealed to the international community and to all States possessing advanced nuclear technology to co-operate in the exploitation of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with the countries which needed it for their social and economic development. They would thus be promoting the well-being of peoples and contributing to strengthening international peace and security.

12. Mr. TEWARI (India) noted with satisfaction that the Scientific Community had continued to review the important problems raised in the field of atomic radiation and that it was currently working on scientific documents on the doses, effects and risks of atomic radiation. It awaited with interest the report dealing essentially with some somatic and hereditary effects of atomic radiation which was to be published in 1986 and the other material under study which would probably be released in 1988.

13. His delegation welcomed the support given to the activities of the Committee by the United Nations Development Programme and the high-level co-operation that had been established with the International Commission on Radiological Protection, the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organization, and hoped that Member States, the specialized agencies, other organizations of the United Nations system and other international and national scientific bodies would continue to make available information on the subjects under study by the Scientific Committee.

14. India believed in the usefulness of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and for the well-being of all mankind and it would continue to co-operate fully with the Committee. It wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution (A/SPC/40/L.2) which the Special Political Committee had before it.

15. Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji) complimented the Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation on the quality of its work. Of course, the controlled use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes could have substantial advantages, but Fiji, like all countries of the South Pacific region, was greatly concerned about the potentially harmful effects of atomic radiation from all sources, particularly on the marine resources that were so important for meeting the needs of the population and ensuring economic development.

16. The South Pacific Forum countries at their meeting in Raratonga had endorsed the South Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which could not only make a major contribution to disarmament and arms control but also strengthen peace and stability in the region.

(Mr. Thompson, Fiji)

17. A related issue of no less concern to Fiji and the other South Pacific countries was the dumping of nuclear waste in the region. At its most recent meeting, the members of the South Pacific Forum had reaffirmed their opposition to that practice and had welcomed the statement made at the beginning of the year by the Prime Minister of Japan that Japan had no intention of dumping radioactive waste in the Pacific Ocean in defiance of the concern expressed by the communities of the region.
18. Regrettably, the same could not be said with respect to nuclear tests. In spite of the fact that the South Pacific Forum had reaffirmed its total opposition to the nuclear tests carried out by France in the South Pacific in defiance of the view of all independent and self-governing countries of the region and had urged France to cease immediately its nuclear testing programme on Mururoa Atoll, France intended to continue its tests. It was distressing to note that France, a permanent member of the Security Council, ignored the unanimous opposition of all the nations of the Pacific, both the countries members of the South Pacific Forum and the States members of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific, to French nuclear tests in the region.
19. The cordial relations which his country maintained with France, within the framework of the Commission and the Lomé Convention, and France's contribution to the Pacific region, which his country recognized and would always recognize, did not stop Fiji from opposing the continuation of French nuclear tests in the region and condemning France openly for its disregard for the protests of the Pacific countries and their security.
20. His delegation hoped that the Scientific Committee would continue to take account of the views expressed by the Pacific countries in carrying out its mandate.
21. Mr. AL-SUDANI (Iraq) said that his country had for many years been following with interest the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and noted with satisfaction the co-operation between the Special Committee and the relevant specialized bodies of the United Nations, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
22. Nevertheless, his delegation noted with astonishment, indeed with keen regret, that once again the report of the Scientific Committee (A/40/417) and the draft resolution on that item (A/SPC/40/L.2) made no mention of the dangers resulting from the military attacks against nuclear installations used for peaceful purposes. For many years, his delegation had been requesting that the documents concerning the item under consideration should include an appeal to all Member States to refrain from carrying out such attacks, which, apart from possibly causing the spread of nuclear radiation, were deliberately designed to prevent developing countries from acquiring the nuclear technology necessary to improve their situation.
23. The States which wished to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes had no choice but to place their installations under the control of the

(Mr. Al-Sudani, Iraq)

International Atomic Energy Agency; it was therefore surprising to see the Zionist entity assume the right - exceeding all authority, including that of the United Nations and the great Powers - to do as it pleased without fear of deterrence or reprisals.

24. Mr. BARROMI said that he wished to speak on a point of order.

25. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the provisions of rule 71 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly concerning points of order.

26. Mr. BARROMI (Israel) said that it was the custom at the United Nations to refer to countries by their official names. He therefore requested the representative of Iraq to refrain from using other names with regard to his country.

27. Mr. AL-SUDANI (Iraq), continuing his statement, said that since that question came within the purview of the Special Political Committee, remaining silent with regard to the dangers arising from the attacks against the Iraqi nuclear installations used for peaceful purposes could only lead the Zionist entity to think that the international community and its institutions had forgotten or disregarded its criminal attack against those installations. While commending the delegations which had condemned that crime, he wished to remind those which remained silent on the question that they were wrong in thinking that their nuclear installations were immune from similar attacks. The lack of deterrent measures or sanctions against the Zionist State had only encouraged it to continue its policy of aggression in various ways. His delegation, which had requested that the report of the Special Committee and the draft resolution on the item should not ignore that important aspect of the Committee's work with regard to the effects of atomic radiation, could only express regret and astonishment at the absence of any mention in the two documents of the dangers resulting from attacks against nuclear installations used for peaceful purposes. His Government might have to adopt a negative position with regard to the item if that silence was maintained in the years to come.

28. Mr. NOWAK (Poland) stressed the particular importance which his Government attached to the work of the Scientific Committee, of which Poland was an active member and which his delegation had chaired for a number of years. As a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2, Poland commended the Special Committee, on its thirtieth anniversary, for the work and the activities which it had skilfully carried out in seeking to determine the risks of atomic radiation and propose preventive measures in various fields, particularly the field of health. The various types of research referred to in the report of the Special Committee were of great importance for the international community and his delegation hoped that the results of that research would speed up international co-operation in the field and that no obstacle would be put in the way of the exchange of scientific and technical data on the prevention of the harmful effects of atomic radiation. Since that question was closely linked to the state of the natural environment, the Scientific Committee in its work should endorse the idea put forward by the Prime Minister of Poland in his address to the General Assembly on 27 September, namely "the acceptance of a

(Mr. Nowak, Poland)

universal principle of unrestricted flow of experience, licences and know-how relating to the protection of the natural environment".

29. His delegation was pleased to note that the co-operation between the Special Committee and the United Nations Environment Programme and other international agencies was continuing in a satisfactory manner. It could not be denied that the problem of the harmful effects of atomic radiation was closely linked to the larger problem of the nuclear arms race and nuclear-weapon tests in particular. The proliferation of nuclear weapons also posed the considerable danger of radioactive contamination of the earth. In order to be effective, international co-operation on all aspects of atomic radiation should be accompanied by equally effective measures to prohibit all nuclear tests. The moratorium on all nuclear explosions declared by the Soviet Union as of 6 August 1985 was a welcome measure which, if implemented also by other nuclear Powers, would make it possible to progress towards a general and complete prohibition of all nuclear weapons, thus freeing the world from that threat and the related dangers of atomic radiation. The adoption of the draft resolution submitted to the Committee would certainly help the Scientific Committee continue its useful work.

30. Mr. de KEMOULARIA (France) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Economic Community, expressing appreciation of the work done by the Scientific Committee and reiterating the Community's commitment to provide the Scientific Committee with all the data necessary for its work. His delegation had likewise joined unreservedly in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2 and hoped that the text would be adopted by consensus.

31. His delegation had listened with great attention to the statements made in the debate by the representatives of Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Chile and Fiji. In particular, it had noted that the Australian Ambassador had not been convinced by the French Government's statement that the French nuclear test programme was essential and not dangerous. The representative of New Zealand had also spoken of the doubts expressed in the conclusions to the report by the scientific mission which had visited the Mururoa test site in October 1983 concerning the long-term effects of the tests on the structure of the atoll. He wished to make the following points clear. The report's conclusion that radioactive leakage might occur in 500 or 1,000 years at the earliest was based on a working hypothesis which took the total source of activity - i.e. the sum of all tests conducted - to be 100 megatons. That figure was obviously an overestimate, since the energy total over the previous 10 years on Mururoa, as measured by the authors of the report, amounted to 0.933 megatons. In other words, in 10 years it had reached less than one hundredth of the figure used in the working hypothesis. Those figures confirmed the conclusions which French scientists had invariably reached on the basis of the investigations they had carried out on Mururoa in previous years, the results of which had been regularly transmitted to the Special Political Committee and the Scientific Committee.

(Mr. de Kemoularia, France)

32. His French delegation had pointed out on several occasions that the objections raised by the representatives in question concerning France's underground nuclear tests were essentially of a political nature and would be more appropriate in the First Committee's debate's on the banning of all nuclear tests in any environment. The French nuclear test programme was simply intended to maintain the credibility of the French nuclear strike force with as few tests as possible. In 1984, the tests conducted by France had amounted to less than one tenth of all tests conducted by the nuclear-weapon Powers. France was taking action on French territory which was essential to its security, in accordance with its law and in the exercise of its sovereignty. That action did not affect peace in the region, the security of the States of the region, the health of the population or the environment.

33. Mr. BARJUCH (Colombia) said that his country had joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2. He supported the serious and balanced work of the Scientific Committee and was convinced that the international community would benefit from the publication of its work. The Scientific Committee should forge even closer links with UNEP, UNDP and IAEA.

34. Colombia had always opposed the use of fissionable material for non-peaceful purposes, experimental nuclear explosions and pollution with radioactive waste. If denuclearization was to become a reality, the United Nations system must provide co-ordination in that sensitive area, and all States, especially the members of the "nuclear club", should prove that they possessed the necessary political will.

35. Colombia, with Ecuador, Peru and Chile, was a member of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific. That Commission was seriously concerned at the nuclear tests which had been conducted on the Mururoa Atoll, as indicated in its declaration on the subject (A/39/343). Colombia reiterated its strong protests against such tests and called upon France to cease them immediately, not only in order to protect the atoll's resources and population, but also to preserve harmony among friendly States. It noted with concern that those dubious operations had given rise to awkward international disagreements, and hoped they would soon be resolved by the parties concerned.

36. As a signatory to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Colombia participated fully in efforts to bring about the denuclearization of the Pacific region. Any increase in the number of geographical regions where aggressive nuclear activity was forbidden would reduce the risk of a nuclear holocaust. The United Nations, which had worked successfully after it was established to bring about decolonization, should now apply itself to the achievement of the denuclearization of the entire planet in order to realize the ideals of justice, security and peace proclaimed by the signatories to its Charter.

37. Mr. FORTEZA (Uruguay) endorsed the Secretary-General's statement that the Scientific Committee's terms of reference, although essentially scientific and even technical in nature, had always had important political ramifications.



(Mr. Forteza, Uruguay)

38. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the South Pacific Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty had been opened for signature two months before. As the representative of Australia had pointed out, the South Pacific zone bordered the nuclear-weapon-free zones designated by the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Antarctic Treaty.

39. Uruguay was a small country dedicated to peace and considered that nuclear energy should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. His delegation therefore shared the concern expressed by other delegations concerning nuclear tests in the South Pacific.

40. During its 30 years of study aimed at evaluating the levels, effects and risks of atomic radiation, the Scientific Committee had proved its great scientific competence. In recent years the co-operation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) had been particularly useful to it, especially in the fields of physics and biology.

41. The Scientific Committee's report (A/40/417) essentially comprised a description in summary form of its annual session which had been held at Vienna. Since one of its tasks was to disseminate information on the effects of atomic radiation, the Scientific Committee should publish a recapitulation of the technical documents on which its studies had been based. It would be useful for all States, especially those which were not members of the Scientific Committee, to be provided with comprehensive information in the medium term on the conclusions of the Committee's various technical debates.

42. In order to strengthen the Scientific Committee's resources, its terms of reference under General Assembly resolution 913 (X) should be reconsidered. The Committee should be empowered to draw up both specific and general recommendations on measures to be adopted at the national, regional or international levels to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of atomic radiation. A provision of that nature in the terms of reference would lend more weight to the data submitted by the Committee and would enable it to help States by providing guidelines on problems endangering the future of humanity.

43. Mr. SHARFI (Sudan) said the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on Atomic Radiation was of great importance, particularly the technical studies it conducted in that vital area. The Sudan was gravely concerned by the increase in sources of atomic radiation, the dangers of which were clearly described in the Committee's report (A/40/417), and considered that the international community should comply with the relevant documents and instruments in order to solve a problem of particular importance for third world countries, which wanted nuclear energy to be used solely for peaceful purposes and to accelerate their development. The continuation of nuclear testing, and the growing tendency to use third world countries, which lacked the requisite technical expertise, as dumping grounds for nuclear waste, were a further source of difficulty and danger for such countries because of the threat thus posed to the limited resources of the planet.

(Mr. Sharfi, Sudan)

The Sudan therefore reaffirmed its categorical opposition to the disposal of nuclear waste underground, on the sea-bed or elsewhere on the planet. Like all countries dedicated to the cause of international peace and security, the Sudan continued to feel concerned in particular about the aggression perpetrated against the Iraqi nuclear reactor and the unthinkable disasters it might have caused. The international community therefore had a duty to take the necessary effective steps to prevent any such attacks in the future, particularly as no nuclear installations could be considered immune from them. His delegation supported draft resolution A/SPC/40.1.2, particularly with regard to the Committee's future activities and its co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme.

44. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that his delegation noted with satisfaction the Committee's report in document A/40/417 and had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2.

45. Ecuador was concerned about the possible harmful effects of nuclear tests, which tended to increase the mean level of radiation, affecting not only people, but also resources, and marine resources in particular. That last aspect of the matter was of particular concern to Ecuador since a large proportion of the fishery resources available to its population consisted of migratory species.

46. Like the other members of the South Pacific Commission, Ecuador shared the concern that had arisen as a result of nuclear testing in the region and reaffirmed its opposition to the continuation of that activity.

47. Mr. FARMER (Australia) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement made by the representative of France implied that Australia had acted inappropriately in raising the issue of French nuclear testing in connection with the matter under review. The French delegation appeared to regard the Special Political Committee as a body responsible solely for the discussion of technical matters. Australia could not accept that argument. The Special Political Committee dealt with many political problems and it was perfectly appropriate for it to consider matters on which there were diverging political views. Australia considered that it was entitled to discuss French nuclear testing on Mururoa in the Committee and intended to continue doing so.

48. With regard to the safety of the tests, the French delegation had made selective reference to a scientific report, mentioning with approval the conclusions that the tests would have no harmful effects in the short term but questioning those conclusions with which it did not agree. The report gave no assurance with regard to the long-term effects of the tests and it was not yet known what seismic or geophysical effects there might be. Australia was also concerned by press reports of subsidence on Mururoa Atoll and of contaminated substances reported to have been found there. It noted once again that France had made no mention of the reasons why the tests were not being carried out in metropolitan France if, as was asserted, the tests were harmless.

49. Australia wanted nuclear weapons to be completely eliminated from the world's arsenals, and called for the cessation of all nuclear testing everywhere, particularly in the South Pacific.

50. Mr. RAPIN (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that as far as his delegation was concerned, the purpose of the current meeting was to consider the scientific report of a committee concerned with the effects and consequences of atomic radiation. It should be remembered that a number of scientific missions had visited the French site on Mururoa to measure the level of radiation there, whereas no other nuclear Power had ever opened a test site to foreign scientists. It should also be remembered that the President of the French Republic had requested the Australian Government a few weeks earlier to authorize a visit by French scientists to Australia to measure the effects of the tests carried out there by the United Kingdom. No reply had yet been received.

51. The Permanent Representative of France had dealt at length in his statement with those matters coming within the terms of reference of the Scientific Committee. With regard to the political aspect, his delegation intended to return to the matter later in the competent committees and organs.

52. Mr. MANSFIELD (New Zealand) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that New Zealand had close links with France and fully agreed that France was entitled to security and a strong defence system. However, New Zealand did not agree that France had the right to test nuclear weapons over 10,000 kilometres from its territory and did not consider such nuclear testing to be harmless. The report of the 1983 scientific mission gave no grounds for asserting that the test programme was entirely safe. The countries and peoples of the South Pacific found it difficult not to believe that if such were the case the French Government would prefer to carry out the tests in metropolitan France.

53. Mr. FARMER (Australia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the nuclear tests referred to by the French representative, which the United Kingdom had conducted in Australia, had been made several decades previously. Australia had set up a royal commission to investigate the effects of those tests; the Commission was still at work and its report was awaited.

54. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2 and announced that Colombia, Ecuador, India, Sri Lanka and Swaziland had joined its sponsors.

55. Draft resolution A/SPC/40/L.2 was adopted without a vote.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had completed its consideration of item 74.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

57. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the timetable for the work of the Committee (A/SPC/40/L.3). In view of the very heavy programme of work that the Committee would have before it from 28 October onwards, it would be preferable for working parties to meet during the next three weeks. When the Committee was holding two meetings a day working parties would have to meet whenever conference services were available, in the evening or on weekends. He requested interested delegations to communicate with the Committee secretariat as soon as possible to submit requests for secretariat services.

The meeting rose at noon