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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
4th meeting
held on
Thursday, 9 October 1986
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

CONTENTS

**AGENDA ITEM 70: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (continued)**

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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

AGENDA ITEM 70: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION (continued) (A/41/16 and A/41/546; A/SPC/41/L.3 and L.4)

1. Mr. STACKHOUSE (Canada) said that his country was concerned about the effects of atomic radiation from nuclear weapons. That was one reason why Canada had foresworn arming itself with nuclear weapons, had supported efforts to restrict their spread and had refused to build nuclear reactors in countries which did not restrict their use to peaceful purposes. It had consistently proposed a comprehensive and definitive ban on all nuclear testing.
2. Canada was also deeply concerned about the indisputable risks of atomic radiation from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, above all following the accidents that had recently taken place, unforeseen accidents whose consequences knew no borders and which should oblige all to recognize that the use of the nuclear energy should not only be peaceful but also safe.
3. It was therefore essential to increase knowledge of the effects of atomic radiation and, accordingly, Canada renewed its support for the Scientific Committee entrusted with that vital task. It had sponsored draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4 because it was convinced that the contribution of China to the work of the Scientific Committee would prove especially useful.
4. Mr. ABDULLAH (Indonesia) supported the participation of China in the work of the Scientific Committee, which should benefit significantly. He paid a tribute to the indispensable role played by the Scientific Committee for more than 30 years to enhance awareness of the dangers of atomic radiation. Its work which contributed to promoting nuclear disarmament was greatly enhanced by the close co-operation which it maintained with various relevant international bodies. His delegation welcomed the very important conclusions submitted in the report (A/41/16).
5. More and more States, recognizing that the development of nuclear energy was necessary and desirable, used that energy while taking pains to ensure operational reliability and safety. All the safety measures taken in nuclear power plants had not been able, however, to prevent accidents. It was heartening to note in that regard the efforts made following the Chernobyl accident to strengthen international co-operation in order to minimize the effects of nuclear contamination on health and to establish international standards for nuclear safety. Indonesia would continue to co-operate closely with IAEA in that regard and hoped that the Committee would also contribute to those efforts.
6. One of the important lessons to be drawn from Chernobyl was that it was urgent and necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons and to halt all nuclear tests. In that context, the ASEAN countries had decided to accelerate their work with a view to promoting the establishment of a denuclearized zone in South-East Asia, and the recent adoption by the South Pacific Forum of the Rarotonga Treaty was an encouraging development.
7. Indonesia was one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3.

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8. Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the States members of the South Pacific Forum, reaffirmed their support for the Scientific Committee and welcomed its excellent report.
9. The horrifying accident at Chernobyl had brutally reminded the entire world of the immense dangers of atomic radiation and of the need for international co-operation in that field, which transcended borders and concerned the future of all mankind.
10. The South Pacific countries had good reason to follow closely the work of the Scientific Committee because they could still remember the days when they had to monitor very closely the level of radioactivity in the atmosphere because of the number of tests carried out in their region by three nuclear Powers. Those days were, fortunately, gone, and the countries members of the Forum were pleased to note that the five nuclear Powers had decided not to resume their tests in the atmosphere. However, France continued its underground tests in the region despite the firm opposition of the countries members of the South Pacific Forum. Those countries once again called on France, an appeal which they would reiterate until it was heeded, to cease immediately the testing programme it was conducting on Mururoa Atoll in defiance of the views of all the Governments and peoples of the independent and self-governing States of the region.
11. The countries members of the South Pacific Forum wished to state their position regarding the mission that had been sent to Mururoa Atoll in 1983. The participation of Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in that mission showed the will of those countries to engage in serious dialogue with the French Government concerning France's nuclear-testing programme and in no way implied that they had changed their position. Moreover, the mission had remained in the territory for too short a time to have undertaken a comprehensive study of the effects of the French underground nuclear tests, and there was no proof, from its conclusions, that that programme was completely safe and that it should be allowed to continue.
12. The South Pacific countries were determined that no nuclear weapon should be used, tested or deployed in their region, as they had concretely demonstrated by adopting one year earlier the Treaty of Rarotonga which had established a nuclear-free zone in the South Pacific. In 1986, they had adopted three protocols to that Treaty, that were open for signature, and they fervently hoped that they would be signed by the States concerned.
13. Mr. KUMAR (India) said that the ninth substantive report submitted by the Scientific Committee was an excellent addition to previous reports, inasmuch as the studies carried out would contribute usefully both to the enhancement of knowledge of the destructive effects of atomic radiation and to the eradication of various types of diseases. It was heartening to note that competent organizations had participated in the sessions of the Scientific Committee, and his delegation was certain that those organizations, together with the States Members and specialized agencies of the United Nations and other national and international scientific organizations would continue to co-operate with the Scientific Committee. It particularly welcomed, in that regard, the development of co-operation between the Scientific Committee and the United Nations Environment Programme. India would continue to contribute to the important work which the Scientific Committee was doing on the effects of atomic radiation, especially on human beings.

(Mr. Kumar, India)

14. The recent nuclear mishaps obliged States to treat the problem of nuclear safety with all due seriousness and an extreme sense of responsibility, and his delegation approved the measures taken in that regard by IAEA. According to a report by an international team of nuclear experts, commissioned by the organization Greenpeace, several common types of nuclear reactors in service around the world were far from safe. It was therefore urgent to arrive at international agreements on nuclear safety and to strengthen co-operation between countries, especially between the developed world and developing countries. His delegation welcomed the decision that had been taken by the United States and the Soviet Union to provide information on radiation emissions from military as well as civilian accidents.

15. India's nuclear programme was being carried out with a high degree of safety and India was closely studying the recommendations of IAEA with a view to improving safety standards in Indian plants. One of the first countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it had always regarded science and technology as a means of escaping economic backwardness. The prime objective of its nuclear programme was the development, control and use of nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes, and it sought to build up a versatile infrastructure in that regard.

16. His delegation supported the request for the admission of China to the Scientific Committee because it was convinced that that body would thus benefit from a useful and stimulating contribution.

17. Mr. GODSON (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Economic Community, noted that an accident as tragic as that which had occurred at Chernobyl, although fortunately very rare, nevertheless provided a stark reminder of the terrible consequences that atomic radiation could have for man and his environment, and of how important it was that the Scientific Committee should continue the valuable and critical work which it had been carrying out effectively for more than 30 years. In that connection, the Twelve welcomed the co-operation maintained between the Scientific Committee and other related international bodies, as illustrated by the three studies contained in the Scientific Committee's report. They hoped that the mandate of the Scientific Committee would be renewed by consensus.

18. The States members of the European Economic Community also welcomed the admission of China to membership of the Scientific Committee, the work of which would thereby be enhanced.

19. Mr. BOLKUS (Australia) hoped that the Scientific Committee, as a small and technically oriented body, would continue its record of excellence and professionalism, by virtue of which it had attracted the assistance of several specialized agencies, not least WHO and UNDP. It was to be hoped that the accident at the Chernobyl plant, which had brought home to everyone the potentially catastrophic effects on the environment of the release of atomic radiation into the atmosphere, would prove both a salutary and a unique event.

(Mr. Bolkus, Australia)

20. His country, along with nearly 60 other States, had signed the two conventions on nuclear safety drawn up under the auspices of IAEA. Although those conventions would not come into effect until 27 October, he was pleased to note that the Soviet Union had already acted in accordance with one of them by notifying IAEA and other States of the recent accident involving one of its nuclear submarines in the Atlantic. The experience and expertise of the Scientific Committee would enable it to make a valuable contribution to international action designed to enhance nuclear safety in the wake of the Chernobyl accident, as it had already undertaken to do.

21. His delegation, which had for a long time regretted the fact that China was the only nuclear Power not to enjoy full membership in the Scientific Committee, supported China's admission, which would be of great benefit and would also serve to correct the current geographical imbalance in the membership of that body. It was therefore co-sponsoring draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4.

22. It would be only too easy to regard the problem of atomic radiation as being of a purely technical and scientific nature, outside the context of the real world. However, to do so would be irresponsible, because the problem related not only to nuclear plants like Chernobyl but to the chilling reality of a world which had the potential to destroy itself several times over. The Australian Government resolutely pursued the objective of complete nuclear disarmament under effective international control and worked tirelessly towards that objective, particularly through the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. It also consistently urged the major nuclear Powers to conclude bilateral agreements providing for cuts in their nuclear arsenals.

23. As a first move, however, his country called on all States to join in negotiating a comprehensive and final ban on all nuclear tests as the only means of ensuring that nuclear arsenals were not increased and modernized. Only then would both sides perhaps be able to embark on the deep cuts in their arsenals that would lead to the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons from the planet.

24. The Treaty of Rarotonga, adopted in August 1985 by the members of the South Pacific Forum, was due to come into force by the end of the year. Ten countries had already signed it, and the Australian Federal Parliament was making the necessary arrangements to enable Australia to add its name to those of the five countries which had already ratified it. Following upon the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Antarctic Treaty, the Rarotonga Treaty added significantly to the nuclear-weapon-free zones of the world and also marked a major advance with regard to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It included three protocols, which would be open for signature from next 1 December 1986. The first invited France, the United States and the United Kingdom to apply key provisions of the Treaty to the Territories administered by them in the South Pacific. The other two called on the five nuclear-weapon States not to use or threaten to use nuclear explosive devices against parties to the Treaty and not to test such devices in the region.

(Mr. Bolkus, Australia)

25. It was regrettable that the Ambassador of France to the United States had declared publicly on 29 September that France would not sign any of those protocols. It was to be hoped that the declaration was not France's final word and that it would come to see that the Treaty had been drawn up on the basis not of enmity to France but of regard for the interests of the inhabitants of the Pacific.

26. His delegation categorically rejected the conclusions drawn by France, on the basis of a selective reading, from the report on its nuclear tests at Mururoa. It was justifiably concerned over the future long-term effects of those tests on the geology of the atoll. If France truly believed that the tests were safe and necessary, it should conduct them in its own metropolitan territory and not in a region whose inhabitants were opposed to them. It was regrettable, but unavoidable, that he should have to speak of France in such terms.

27. Mr. ENDO (Japan) said that his delegation, which had co-sponsored draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4, was convinced that China, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a nuclear Power, would make a valuable contribution to the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. The co-operation which had been established among Member States, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations was of crucial importance for the work of the Scientific Committee. His delegation therefore hoped that it would continue.

28. Referring to the serious nuclear accident which had occurred at the end of April at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, his delegation wished to express its deep sympathy to those affected by the accident and to reiterate that his country was prepared to extend assistance, particularly in the medical field, if necessary.

29. In view of the ever-increasing use of nuclear power, it was essential that each country should remember that it bore primary responsibility for the safety of its nuclear plants. However, since releases of radioactivity resulting from nuclear accidents did not respect national boundaries, the safe operation of nuclear plants, wherever they might be located, had become the shared responsibility of the international community. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the measures taken by IAEA to develop international co-operation with a view to enhancing security standards and particularly welcomed the adoption by consensus of two conventions on nuclear safety.

30. Mr. RAPIN (France) said that his delegation, which was a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4, welcomed in advance the admission of the People's Republic of China, as a nuclear Power and permanent member of the Security Council, to membership of such an important body as the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. His country fully appreciated the work done by the Scientific Committee and had striven, for a number of years, to provide it with all the information it required to carry out its task. It was for that reason that his delegation had unreservedly become a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3, in which the General Assembly requested the Scientific Committee to continue its work and endorsed its intentions and plans for future activities.

(Mr. Rapin, France)

31. On 24 September the French Prime Minister stressed the gravity of the Chernobyl accident in his address to the General Assembly. France had noted with satisfaction that the International Atomic Energy Agency had responded effectively to the incident by unanimously adopting two conventions on nuclear safety. The accident had, moreover, clearly underscored the importance of the task of the Scientific Committee.

32. With reference to the comments made by the representatives of Australia and Fiji regarding the French underground nuclear tests in the South Pacific, the delegations of those two countries had once again questioned the harmlessness of the French programme, notwithstanding the international and national reports which had been issued on the question. However, the report of the mission of scientists which had visited the Mururoa Experimental Centre had clearly established that the tests did not jeopardize the safety of the population of the region and the environment.

33. The representative of Australia had accused the French representative of having read selectively from the report's findings which, he had alleged, gave rise to concern regarding the long-term effects of the French tests. It should be emphasized that, while the Atkinson report had pointed out that radioactive leakage might occur in 500 years at the earliest, it had done so on the basis of a working hypothesis which had assumed a total release of energy more than 100 times greater than that measured at Mururoa over the past 10 years. Thus, there was nothing in the report questioning the harmlessness of the French nuclear tests and the opposition in principle to the continuance of the French nuclear tests in the Pacific on the part of the two countries mentioned was motivated by what France regarded as a discriminatory policy and the demands of those countries were contrary to the elementary rules of international law. In fact it was on French territory that France, consistent with its most legitimate rights and within the framework of its sovereignty, had taken an action which was necessary for its security and which was in no way a threat to peace in the region, to the States of the region, to the health of the populations living there or to the environment.

34. France would explain its position on the Treaty of Rarotonga and the protocols annexed thereto in the First Committee when the item came up.

35. Mr. CLARK (United States of America) said that his Government would like to reaffirm its strong support for the ongoing work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, which had fulfilled its task of providing comprehensive information in that critical area.

36. The tragic accident at Chernobyl had confirmed the importance of that work. His Government was confident that, as the Committee, in collaboration with IAEA, WHO and other interested agencies, studied the long-term consequences of that accident, it would make far-reaching advances towards a fuller understanding of the nature and effects of radiation exposure.

37. His delegation believed that the participation of the People's Republic of China would make a significant contribution to the Committee's deliberations and therefore wished to join other States in inviting that country to become a member. His delegation was a co-sponsor of the draft resolutions under consideration.

38. Mr. CHANFARI (Oman) said that concern regarding the effects of radiation no longer stemmed from purely theoretical considerations; the world was confronting a very real problem which posed a serious danger to the human race.

39. For his Government, protection of the environment against pollution and, in particular, against radiation was a priority task. It was for that reason that a committee had been established to deal exclusively with that problem. Its principal activities would be to evaluate the level of radioactivity in the country and to draw up a national plan for the protection of the population against the effects of radiation in emergencies.

40. Past events and recent experience had shown that the use of nuclear weapons and accidents resulting from technical or human error could cause considerable damage at the local, regional and even world level; in other words, the effects of such accidents could transcend national borders.

41. Since the entire human race was endangered, it was essential for the international community to mobilize in order to establish the means of controlling those effects. The nuclear Powers therefore bore a special responsibility; they must help the developing countries to build systems of protection.

42. Israel continued to refuse to allow IAEA to inspect its nuclear installations and to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Its refusal was inevitably a matter of concern to the countries of the Middle East.

43. The attack which Israel had launched against the nuclear installations of Iraq, despite the fact that IAEA had confirmed that they were intended for peaceful purposes, and the further threats against the same installations notwithstanding the dangers they implied for the region, justified an appeal to the international community to exert pressure; it must induce Israel to co-operate with IAEA and to pledge not to use its nuclear potential for military purposes.

44. His delegation welcomed the forthcoming participation of China in the work of the Scientific Committee. The contribution of that country would certainly be very valuable.

45. In view of the importance of the work of the Committee, Oman had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3.

46. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) observed that the international community was becoming increasingly aware of the dangers of atomic radiation and recalled that his country, together with the other member States of the Permanent Commission for the South Pacific (Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) had protested strongly against the nuclear tests carried out in the South Pacific because of the implied threat to the marine environment and its natural resources (A/39/343). It was to be deplored that the question of putting an end to nuclear testing had made no progress, as had been made clear in the 1985 report of the Disarmament Conference (CD/WP/192/Rev.2). That was tantamount to saying that nuclear testing would continue with impunity.

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

47. Chile, which had protested strongly on a number of occasions against the French nuclear tests at Mururoa, viewed with dismay the French Government's failure to abandon its programme notwithstanding growing international protests. Chile stood solidly alongside the States of the South Pacific which were directly concerned and would continue to denounce those countries which posed a threat to the sovereign interests of all the States concerned in the appropriate international forums. Nuclear explosions, regardless of the country responsible, represented an infringement of the most elementary norms of justice since they affected the maritime zones of third States which had not given their consent.

48. The recent explosion of a nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union had called attention to the dangers, direct and indirect, immediate and potential, of atomic radiation. IAEA should devote increasing attention to establishing mechanisms to guarantee safety and to carrying out unannounced on-site inspections of nuclear installations. It was also essential that international law should provide penalties for contamination of the atmosphere. In that connection, the usefulness of the studies made by the Scientific Committee should be stressed.

49. In view of the extent of the danger of atomic radiation caused by nuclear tests in the atmosphere, underwater and underground, it was absolutely imperative that the Scientific Committee should continue its work with the support of the international community while maintaining close and continuing contact with the United Nations Environment Programme.

50. Lastly, Chile appealed to the international community and to all States possessing advanced nuclear technology to co-operate in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with the countries which required such energy for their socio-economic development; they would thus help to strengthen international peace and security in accordance with the fundamental purposes of the Charter.

51. Mr. DARWISH (Egypt) said that his country, which had been a member of the Scientific Committee since its establishment in 1955, commended the work of that body. Its studies provided the international community with important information on the harmful effects of atomic radiation. The studies which had just been carried out dealt with the genetic effects of radiation and other important questions. In that regard, his delegation supported the co-operation instituted between the Scientific Committee, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization.

52. It was more important than ever to re-examine and strengthen the security arrangements of nuclear installations in order to prevent nuclear catastrophes such as the one which had occurred at Chernobyl. For that reason, Egypt had signed the two conventions on nuclear safety adopted at the latest special session of the General Conference of IAEA.

53. He noted with appreciation the positive step taken by the Soviet Union which had declared a unilateral moratorium on all nuclear explosions and had extended it on several occasions. That country had thus helped reduce the doses of radioactivity to which man and the environment were exposed. His delegation, which had always supported the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, sincerely hoped that greater efforts would be made to achieve that goal.

(Mr. Darwish, Egypt)

54. Egypt had sponsored the two draft resolutions under consideration. It was convinced that the Scientific Committee would benefit appreciably from the participation of China in its work.

55. Mr. RADENKOVIC (Yugoslavia) stressed the importance of the studies carried out by the Scientific Committee on the genetic effects of radiation and the biological effects of pre-natal irradiation. The participation of China, a new member of that Committee, would certainly be very valuable.

56. While nuclear energy opened up immense possibilities, it also presented dangers. Depending on the way in which it was used, nuclear energy could greatly enhance the well-being, or endanger the health or even the survival, of mankind and cause enormous destruction. Within the framework of existing programmes for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, accidents could occur in civilian or military installations and have tragic and unforeseeable consequences. Recent accidents had caused great concern, particularly in European countries, including Yugoslavia. Some people had come to believe that the use of nuclear energy should be discontinued, particularly for the generation of electricity.

57. Yugoslavia was one of the 26 countries which had nuclear reactors. It showed great vigilance and sought very actively to protect the environment from all sources of pollution, including atomic radiation emissions. His country was therefore all the more eager to support activities aimed at strengthening the security of nuclear reactors. Greater efforts must be made to regulate the use of nuclear energy through the adoption of appropriate instruments. In view of the importance of its goals, the United Nations Conference for the Promotion of International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy should give appropriate impetus to multilateral co-operation in that field.

58. Yugoslavia had always supported the need to provide early notification and assistance in cases of nuclear accidents and atomic radiation emissions. The nuclear Powers had recently in Vienna expressed their readiness to provide all relevant information on accidents which might occur at military nuclear installations.

59. Lastly, it should be recalled that Yugoslavia was continually striving to bring about a comprehensive nuclear-test ban, as a first important step towards halting the nuclear-arms race. His country consistently advocated that position, as was demonstrated in the documents of the Movement of Non-aligned Countries, including those from the latest Summit Conference in Harare.

60. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that his country, which had long been a member of the Scientific Committee, followed with the greatest interest the work of that body, which contributed so much to making world public opinion aware of the harmful effects of atomic radiation.

61. The Sudan fully supported China's application for membership in that Committee. In view of its importance politically, scientifically and demographically, China would undoubtedly make a valuable contribution.

(Mr. Idris, Sudan)

62. The lessons drawn from the Chernobyl accident and the sinking of a submarine armed with nuclear missiles demonstrated the urgency of taking the necessary measures to avert the dangers of atomic radiation emissions. Countries must observe all the rules of international law and the provisions of multilateral conventions and accept inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

63. Ever since certain States had had nuclear weapons and used them as the basis of their strategy of military supremacy, mankind had been under a constant threat. According to information received from numerous sources, Israel, which had been the cause of more than five wars in the Middle East, possessed approximately 200 nuclear warheads in silos situated in the Negev Desert. That information had been made public at a time when the indignation aroused by the Israeli attack against the Iraqi reactor at Tammouz had still been very strong.

64. The Sudan, which, like many developing countries, had not been spared famine and devastating natural disasters and whose debts and lack of technical means delayed the execution of economic and social development plans, sincerely hoped that the efforts and resources devoted to nuclear research for military purposes would be used to promote the welfare of mankind. It therefore fervently hoped that the Reykjavik summit conference would make it possible to reach agreement on reducing the levels of nuclear arms, slowing down the nuclear-arms race and suspending the exorbitantly expensive military research which risked causing considerable destruction and the disappearance of all life on the planet.

65. Mr. FARTAS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) explained that, contrary to what had been stated in the summary record of the 2nd meeting, his delegation had requested that the Arabic version of the summary records should appear at the same time as the versions in the other languages in accordance with the provisions of a resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

66. Although not a member of the Scientific Committee, his country followed its work with interest because of the importance of the studies carried out on the effects of atomic radiation.

67. His country, which was once again a sponsor of the draft resolution on the question, felt that the Scientific Committee should be empowered to formulate recommendations on measures to be taken at the national, regional or world level to protect the environment.

68. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya hoped that the co-operation between IAEA, UNEP and the Scientific Committee would increase. It considered the report of the Scientific Committee of vital importance for all countries, particularly those which were exposed to the dangers of pollution and did not have the means to protect themselves.

69. His country was also concerned about reports stating that, because of sea currents and the movement of contaminated migratory fish, the radioactivity released during nuclear testing could lead to unprecedented marine pollution. Libya's concern was all the more justifiable because its Mediterranean coastline was 1,900 kilometres long and the Mediterranean was its only means of access to fishing.

(Mr. Fartas, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

70. The same considerations had led the Libyan authorities to demand the withdrawal of foreign naval forces from the Mediterranean. His country was anxious to protect the Mediterranean from the pollution caused by military manoeuvres.

71. Libya's demands were based on the rule of international law, which guaranteed the integrity of territorial waters and gulfs which historically, formed part of them; the United States Sixth Fleet had flagrantly violated the territorial waters of Libya, and those violations had been followed by an act of armed aggression which had caused many civilian casualties.

72. His delegation welcomed the initiative proposed by Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, who had declared that the USSR was prepared to withdraw its naval forces from the Mediterranean if the United States of America would do the same.

73. Libya was categorically opposed to nuclear testing for military purposes and the discharge of radioactive waste into the sea, just as it opposed an arms race in space.

74. At the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had drawn attention to the risk of pollution from the escape of atomic radiation if nuclear installations came under attack from conventional weapons. Such attacks might, in fact, spark off a nuclear war. Certain Member States did not hesitate to violate the principles of the Charter and considered that they had a divine right to launch attacks under the guise of self-defence. The attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor could have had serious consequences if the responsible Iraqi authorities had not taken the necessary preventive measures. Paradoxically, those responsible for that attack now possessed more than 200 nuclear warheads.

75. At a time when the international community was preparing to draw up a convention on the banning of radiological weapons, it should not ignore such a threat, since those who made the threat had declared that they would be moving their field of action from the Maghreb to Pakistan.

76. Mr. POLICHTCHOUK (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) unreservedly approved the report of the Scientific Committee, which had proved itself an international authority for the study of the effects of atomic radiation and whose conclusions and recommendations confirmed the need to put an end to nuclear testing and remove the threat of thermonuclear war.

77. The Ukrainian delegation would like to make a brief progress report on the Chernobyl nuclear power station. As of 1 October, the fourth reactor had been enclosed in a solid casing of concrete and metal which completely isolated the damaged reactor block and precluded any danger. It was completely isolated from the machine room, where radioactivity levels had returned to normal and work had begun again. The first reactor had begun to operate again at the beginning of October, and the second a little later. After decontamination and some repair work, the third reactor would begin to operate again in the first half of 1987. The press release sent to the United Nations by the Ukrainian delegation on the previous day gave more detailed information on all the above questions.

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(Mr. Polichtchouk, Ukrainian SSR)

78. The report drawn up by Soviet experts on the events at Chernobyl had been highly appreciated by international specialists, who had praised its thoroughness, honesty and objectivity and had stressed the reliability and usefulness of its conclusions.

79. The Ukrainian SSR attached great importance to the two conventions on nuclear safety drawn up under the auspices of IAEA, and had been among the first to sign them.

80. His delegation considered that the programme to establish an international system for the safe development of nuclear energy, proposed by the USSR at the special meeting of IAEA, was most opportune and deserved unstinting support. His delegation supported draft resolutions A/SPC/41/L.3 and L.4.

81. Lastly, his delegation wished to thank all those who had offered their aid on an official or personal basis following the events at Chernobyl.

82. Mr. LASARTE (Uruguay) said that, as at previous sessions, his country supported the draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation because it acknowledged the importance of the Scientific Committee's work, supported the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy and was aware of the need to strengthen security mechanisms to the maximum, as the Chernobyl accident had made clear. In that connection, it was reassuring to learn that, after a long period of preparation, the United Nations Conference for the Promotion of International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy would take place in Geneva in March 1987. The Conference could provide a particularly welcome boost to the activities of IAEA, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization in fields which were often interdependent. Not only could the Scientific Committee play an important role in the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Conference, but it could also help IAEA to promote international nuclear security.

83. During the 30 years of study which it had devoted to the evaluation of levels, effects and risks of atomic radiation, the Committee had displayed great scientific competence, which was amply displayed in its ninth report.

84. The various draft resolutions on the Scientific Committee's work had been adopted without a vote. In order to extend the means available to it, the Scientific Committee should be empowered to formulate general and specific recommendations on the measures to be taken at a national, regional or world level to prevent or alleviate the effects of atomic radiation. A mandate of that kind would make the information submitted by the Scientific Committee more interesting and would also be in the interests of Member States.

85. In conclusion, his delegation was pleased to note that the People's Republic of China was now represented on the Scientific Committee. As a nuclear Power and a permanent member of the Security Council, China would certainly make a valuable contribution to the study of the effects of atomic radiation.

86. MR. OKELY (Australia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation had been somewhat surprised to hear the representative of France declare once again that French nuclear testing in the Pacific had no harmful effects. The Atkinson report raised serious questions about the consequences of testing on the Mururoa Atoll in the future. That danger was of the greatest concern to all the countries in the region and, anxious to preserve future generations from such consequences, they called upon France once again to stop its nuclear testing programme in the Pacific immediately.

87. Despite the statement which the representative of France had just made, that country had interpreted the conclusions of the Atkinson report to suit itself. There were serious doubts about the basis of some projections. His delegation could only repeat, as it had already done before the Committee and in other bodies, that if France sincerely believed in the need to continue its nuclear tests for reasons of security, it should carry them out on metropolitan territory.

88. Mr. RAPIN (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, in his statement, he had already described the conditions under which French testing took place and had restated the facts about their effect on the environment, particularly on the structure of the Atoll. It was surprising that a certain delegation's remarks were aimed exclusively at nuclear testing in the Pacific, when part of the territory of that country was closer to other nuclear test sites, such as Nevada, than to the Mururoa Atoll. Such a selective and discriminatory attitude detracted greatly from the impact of that country's remarks.

89. The representative of Australia had invited France to resume its nuclear tests in France itself. However, the specious nature of that demand was all too obvious. Indeed, how could a country sharing a frontier with the United States, for example, reasonably request the Government of that country to conduct its underground testing in the north-east of the Atlantic coast on the pretext that the island of Nantucket was further away from its frontier with the United States than the Nevada desert? The comparison was self-explanatory. He would remind the representative of Australia that the activities carried out by France on its national territory were conducted in conformity with its rights and in exercise of its sovereignty, and did not threaten any country or jeopardize the health of the population or the environment.

90. Mr. THOMPSON (Fiji), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out once again that the Atkinson report had failed to establish conclusively that the programme of nuclear testing in the Pacific was completely safe, and that it was therefore inappropriate to oppose its continuation. The way in which France had used the facts contained in that report was unacceptable.

91. The delegation of Fiji also rejected the argument put forward by the French delegation, according to which Fiji's opposition to the resumption of French nuclear testing was being prompted by a discriminatory political position and its appeal to that country to conduct its nuclear tests in France itself was against the rules of international law. It was grotesque to claim that the continuation of testing on the atoll of Mururoa, thousands of kilometres away from France, was consistent with the rules of international law, because it was likely to jeopardize the health and security of the populations of neighbouring countries.

92. Mr. CLARK (United States of America) said that the allegations made by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya contained nothing new and did not call for comment.

93. Mr. FARTAS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out that it was allegedly in defence of freedom of navigation in international waters that civilian targets on the shores of the Gulf of Syrte had been attacked, that coast-guard launches had been sunk and that innocent children had been murdered in their sleep. Although the Gulf of Syrte had always been an integral part of Libyan territory, the United States had always arrogated to itself the right to carry out manoeuvres there, and the installations and civilian airports of the two main cities, namely, Tripoli and Benghazi, had been attacked by the United States Air Force.

94. Never before had Libyan sovereignty over that Gulf been called into question. The order that the United States had given to its navy to conduct manoeuvres in that area, which had led to military aggression, had been purely provocative. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was demanding the withdrawal of all naval forces from the Mediterranean in the fervent hope that it might once again become a zone of peace and security.

95. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3 and announced that Costa Rica and Nigeria had joined the list of sponsors.

96. Draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3 was adopted without a vote.

97. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4.

98. Mr. ORTNER (Secretary of the Committee) said that the financial implications of the draft resolution under consideration would not entail any additional expenses. The travel expenses and subsistence allowance payable in respect of the new member of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation amounted to approximately \$7,000 and would be covered by the appropriation made under section 18 of the draft programme budget for the biennium 1986-1987.

99. Draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4 was adopted without a vote.

100. Mr. AL-SUDANI (Iraq) wished to express reservations regarding draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.3. Indeed, it contained no reference to the risk of atomic radiation being emitted as a result of attacks - even conventional - launched against non-military nuclear installations.

101. Iraq, which in June 1981 had been the target of a flagrant act of Israeli aggression during which the Tammuz nuclear installation - whose peaceful nature had been confirmed by IAEA - had been destroyed, had repeatedly requested that the risk associated with such attacks should be mentioned during the consideration of the question at issue. Had the Iraqi scientific authorities failed to take the necessary precautionary measures, that act of aggression, which had been prompted by the Zionist régime's determination to prevent Iraq and the Arab countries in general from achieving progress in technical fields, would have had disastrous

(Mr. Al-Sudani, Iraq)

consequences. Not only had the Israeli attack deprived Iraq of a legitimate right, but it had also completely destroyed a project on which the Iraqi people had spent millions of dollars. The Zionist régime, for its part, was refusing to allow the IAEA to inspect its nuclear installations.

102. Iraq thanked the delegations which had stressed the serious nature of the attack perpetrated by the Zionist régime.

103. Mr. LIANG Yufan (China) thanked the delegations - especially the delegation of Sweden - which had sponsored draft resolution A/SPC/41/L.4, inviting his country to become a member of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and invited them to convey the gratitude of his Government to their respective Governments.

104. The work of the Committee was of tremendous value to the developed and developing countries which were endeavouring to harness atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The Chinese delegation deeply appreciated the work of the Committee and the fruitful co-operation it had enjoyed with the IAEA, UNEP and other international agencies.

105. The Chinese Government attached great importance to the peaceful uses of atomic energy and the development of science and technology for the reduction and elimination of the harmful effects of atomic radiation. It was therefore anxious to benefit from the results of the scientific research conducted by the Committee and the other agencies concerned with that question. It was also fully aware of the obligations that it would have to assume as a member of the Committee, and of the contribution that it would be able to make to its work. It was precisely those considerations which had prompted China to apply for membership of the Committee.

106. The CHAIRMAN observed that the Committee had completed consideration of agenda item 70.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

107. The CHAIRMAN said that, in view of the very heavy work-load which the Committee would have to cope with as from 27 October, it would be preferable for the working groups to meet during the next fortnight. After the Committee had begun to meet twice daily, the working groups would have to meet in the evenings or on weekends whenever conference services were available. The Chairman invited interested delegations to contact the Committee secretariat as soon as possible to submit requests for secretariat services.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.