



CONTENTS

	Page
Agenda item 59:	
Effects of atomic radiation (<i>continued</i>):	
(a) Co-ordination of information relating to the effects of atomic radiation upon human health and safety;	
(b) Dissemination of information on the effects of atomic radiation and on the effects of experimental explosions of thermo-nuclear bombs.....	127

Chairman: Sir Leslie MUNRO (New Zealand).

AGENDA ITEM 59

Effects of atomic radiation (A/2931, A/2949 and Add.1, A/INF/67, A/C.1/L.138, A/C.1/L.139/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.140 and Corr.1, A/C.1/L.141/Rev.1, A/C.1/L.142) (*continued*):

- (a) Co-ordination of information relating to the effects of atomic radiation upon human health and safety;
- (b) Dissemination of information on the effects of atomic radiation and on the effects of experimental explosions of thermo-nuclear bombs

1. Mr. MENON (India) referred to a trend of thought expressed by the United Kingdom delegation and, to some extent, by the United States delegation also. The explanatory memorandum (A/2931) submitted by the United States in support of the inclusion of the item in the agenda in fact contained the statement that "scientific data available to the United States Government indicate that properly safeguarded nuclear testing does not constitute a threat to human health". Similarly, other speakers had said that the existing amount of radiation was not alarming and that there was therefore no cause for concern.

2. But the argument that man was already living in a sea of radiation carried no weight, because it was precisely an increase in the normal level to which man was psychologically and physiologically adapted that might have consequences as disastrous as a significant change in temperature, an increase in the rate of the earth's movement or in the intensity of ultra-violet rays. If it was borne in mind that a mere drop in temperature was sufficient to cause disease in man, it must be admitted that, having regard to the intensity of radiation effects, there was sufficient *prima facie* evidence that nuclear weapons or the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes presented a real danger. That did not call for the renunciation of the possible benefits of atomic energy, as the Canadian representative had rightly pointed out

(775th meeting), but steps must be taken to ward off the danger.

3. Where the various amendments proposed by India (A/C.1/L.139/Rev.1) were concerned, his delegation did not strongly object to describing the committee as "scientific". It nevertheless assumed that the proposed committee would not be an academic body concerned with the promotion of science for its own sake.

4. On the other hand, it felt strongly that the reference in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.138) should be to "scientists" and not to "one scientist"; as it stood, the text would mean that Governments would have to delegate their power to designate their representatives. The "scientist" in question would find it impossible to carry out his task unaided and would have to nominate his colleagues himself, which would be contrary to the procedure followed in all delegations to international conferences. In view of the explanations already given by some of the delegations that had sponsored the joint draft resolution, it was merely a question of bringing the text into line with their actual intentions.

5. Having regard to the explanation given by the sponsors of the joint draft resolution, the Indian delegation was prepared not to press its amendment to add the words "and other relevant matters". It had, however, thought that that completely innocuous addition would have given a body, which would inevitably have to feel its way in the early stages, the latitude it needed.

6. It could not, on the other hand, agree to the phrase "States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies" in operative paragraph 2. True, the United States representative had said (778th meeting) that political considerations should not enter into the debate. But as the Indian delegation understood it, there was no suggestion of taking any action that conflicted with decisions taken in the current year. A more general drafting had been proposed precisely in order to eliminate the political considerations which other delegations had been responsible for introducing in a sphere in which they were as out of place as they would be in meteorology or in campaigns to control epidemics. A scheme for the collection of information on radiation must operate on a world-wide basis. The text as it stood would preclude members of the committee from looking at information emanating from sources other than Member States.

7. He was grateful to the sponsors of joint draft resolution A/C.1/L.138 for having accepted his delegation's amendment to operative paragraph 2 (e) and for having deleted the words "if appropriate" in connexion with the yearly report to be made by the future committee.

8. It was evident from the statements made by the representatives of Norway (776th meeting) and the United Kingdom (775th meeting) that the sponsors of the joint draft resolution agreed that the committee

should benefit from the experience of the Secretary-General, who should play an active role in the matter. The paper submitted by the Secretary-General (A/INF/67, para. 12) contained the statement that "a request to the Secretary-General to assist the committee . . . would provide a sufficient basis for the organizational arrangements necessary. . . ." In view of that document, and having regard to the fact that the wording of the draft resolution had acquired a satisfactory connotation as a result of the discussion, the Indian delegation would not press for a vote on the amendment to add the words "in co-operation with the Secretary-General".

9. Where the specific reference to the Japanese Government in paragraph 6 of the draft resolution was concerned, there was no reason to place that Government on a different footing. It should either be specified that the Secretary-General would convene the committee—since the United States representative had in fact indicated (778th meeting) that that was what he had in mind—or operative paragraph 6 should simply be omitted.

10. Turning to the substance of the problem, he said that the membership of the committee was vitally important, as it was essential to avoid creating an oligarchy in the field of atomic energy. The composition proposed, moreover, was unbalanced from the standpoint of the geographical distribution of States. The Indian delegation had proposed that Egypt and Mexico should be included in the committee and was prepared to support any other suggestion that might be made. While it had no wish to suggest that Soviet or United States scientists would not be objective, the fact remained that countries which were not committed in that field might be the best qualified for membership if, as India believed, the aim was to set up a body capable of examining the facts in a strictly scientific spirit.

11. The contention of some delegations that the harmful effects of atomic radiation remained to be proved was somewhat surprising. It was only necessary to call to mind the Japanese fishermen, the victims of Hiroshima and the effects of explosions both known and unknown. It was true that the victims did not die at once, but in the opinion of the Indian delegation, it was not merely burns, but all the effects of radiation, that should be studied. The Japanese representative at the Asian-African Conference at Bandung had, for example, said his Government had evidence that atomic radiation had conclusive genetic effects.

12. Moreover, those who claimed that the present level of radiation was not dangerous could not guarantee that it would not rise in future. It was therefore necessary to study the effects of nuclear explosions. While the Indian delegation had not proposed that experimental explosions should be discontinued, it was bound to support the amendment of Indonesia and Syria (A/C.1/L.141/Rev.1), because it was in line with the attitude that India had consistently adopted.

13. The United Kingdom representative had expressed (775th meeting) misgivings that the public would not be in a position to understand the true implications of some of the statements made and would be left with an impression of hostility towards mathematics in general and the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes in particular. There was, however, no suggestion that a calculated risk should not be taken, but merely that it should be taken under conditions of adequate security. The fact remained that existing knowledge justified

some apprehensions, particularly as there was no threshold for mutations which were induced in the human organism by any dose of radiation, however slight.

14. His delegation wished to make clear that it was not pursuing any political aim in proposing the removal of certain restrictions on the collection of information; the problem was not that of the admission of new members, but simply that of safeguarding mankind by eliminating a provision that would rule out certain sources of information. He therefore hoped that the sponsors of the draft resolution would be able to accept the few amendments his delegation had requested.

15. Sir Pierson DIXON (United Kingdom) said that the debate had been most enlightening and encouraging and that it had been conducted with a sense of realism befitting so complex and challenging a problem. The scheme being an entirely new venture in international co-operation, it was right that it should have been launched under United Nations auspices. Sweden, which had been one of the first Governments to suggest that the effects of radiation should be studied on an international basis, had made an invaluable contribution to the results which the Committee was destined to achieve. Similarly, he wished to pay a tribute to the valuable assistance rendered by the delegation of India in defining the scope of the inquiry, clear demarcation of its bounds obviously being essential in order to avoid introducing extraneous problems into the debate. Questions relating, for example, to the military aspects of atomic energy, and particularly to the use of nuclear weapons, were quite out of place, and the United Kingdom delegation would therefore be obliged to vote against the amendments on those points submitted by the Soviet Union delegation (A/C.1/L.140 and Corr.1) and the Indonesian and Syrian delegations (A/C.1/L.141/Rev.1). Nor did it think it wise to ask the proposed scientific committee to deal with "other relevant matters" as suggested in one of the Indian amendments (A/C.1/L.139/Rev.1). The mandate given the Committee was already wide enough to enable it to deal with all the relevant aspects of the problem.

16. Furthermore, it would not be desirable to assign the Committee tasks which were already being performed by other international bodies, as the fourth of the Soviet Union amendments proposed. The problems of protection from the effects of atomic radiation and of remedies and methods in the treatment of illnesses, for instance, were already being dealt with by the World Health Organization and the International Labour Office. To avoid confusion, his delegation would accordingly vote against the amendment in question.

17. Regarding the first of the Soviet Union amendments, he must disagree with the statement of the USSR representative (775th meeting). There appeared to be no justification for distinguishing two sources of atomic radiation as far as their effects on human beings were concerned. It was just as important to be concerned with the extent of genetic mutations arising from peaceful developments of atomic energy as with those traceable to radio-active "fall-out", both being merely aspects of the effect of ionizing radiation on man and his environment. The United Kingdom delegation would therefore vote against the first of the Soviet Union amendments.

18. With regard to the committee itself, he thought there was good reason to give it the epithet "scientific". If the aid of eminent scientists was to be recruited, they

would have to be given the assurance that the committee's work would be essentially scientific in character. He did not, therefore, feel that its title should be changed as the Indian delegation had proposed.

19. The suggestion made by the Canadian delegation (775th meeting) that the eleven scientists constituting the committee should be able to call upon alternates and consultants to assist them seemed an excellent idea, as the scientists would probably have heavy commitments in their own countries already. On the other hand, the effect of the Indian amendment to substitute the word "scientists" for the words "one scientist" might well be to make the committee unwieldy. It was, however, important to keep the committee as compact as possible.

20. As to the composition of the committee, the first consideration must be to form a body of eminent scientists commanding the respect of their colleagues throughout the world. He felt that a team of eleven, together with alternates and advisers, would be the optimum for efficient operations. The Argentine representative had expressed (778th meeting) concern about the fact that the committee, as envisaged, would include no Spanish-speaking member; but that problem could hardly be met by the mere addition of new members. The representative of Denmark had hinted (778th meeting) that the Swedish member of the committee might call upon scientists of other Scandinavian countries to assist him. A solution on those lines might be adopted for the problem raised by the representative of Argentina. Similarly, it would be a mistake to expand the membership of the committee, as proposed in the amendments submitted by the Indian and Soviet Union representatives. The question of geographical distribution—to which in any case due regard was paid in the proposed composition—should not be the dominant consideration in so exceptional a case. The main thing was for the committee to be composed of scientists with the greatest experience in that field.

21. The proposed Soviet Union amendment to paragraph 1 of the draft resolution would raise highly controversial questions out of keeping with the subject.

22. The committee's terms of reference must be flexible enough to enable it to tackle any new tasks which initial study might show to be necessary. The Indian delegation had suggested in its amendments (A/C.1/L.139/Rev.1) that the committee should make a collective evaluation of the reports it received. Experience had already shown, however, the extraordinary difficulty of obtaining a consensus of opinion even among the geneticists of a single country and the United Kingdom delegation would vote against the amendment. The first task was to elicit the facts. It would be for the committee itself to evaluate usefulness of the various reports from a strictly scientific standpoint.

23. Other amendments were designed to enable the committee to receive data from, and disseminate documents to, the world at large, regardless of the question of membership in the United Nations or the specialized agencies. While all would wish the inquiry to range over as wide an area as possible, it must not be forgotten that it was to be a United Nations inquiry—and that the scientific committee was to be a United Nations body working in close contact with the whole United Nations family. The Soviet Union amendment stating explicitly that the committee was to be a subsidiary body of the United Nations added nothing to the draft.

Nevertheless, if the committee was to operate within the United Nations orbit, the Organization's decisions regarding the representation of Member States must be respected.

24. Both the First Committee and the future members of the scientific committee would undoubtedly derive great benefit from the clarification given by the Secretary-General in the working paper (A/INF/67) circulated on the organization of the work of the committee. Undoubtedly, too, the Secretary-General would play an important role, in particular as the co-ordinating link between the scientific committee and the specialized agencies. The recent establishment of the Atomic Sub-Committee of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, of which the Secretary-General was Chairman, would help to ensure smooth co-operation in that field. As it could likewise be assumed that the task of convening meetings of the scientific committee would fall to the Secretary-General, there was no need for any such stipulation in the draft, as the Indian delegation proposed. On the other hand, in view of the fact that Japan was not a Member of the United Nations, there should be a special paragraph requesting the Secretary-General to invite the Japanese Government to nominate a representative to the committee.

25. His delegation, like the United States delegation, was prepared to accept the amendment of the Indian delegation to delete the words "if appropriate" from sub-paragraph (e) of operative paragraph 2, and to add a seventh paragraph at the end of the draft resolution on the lines it proposed. The United Kingdom delegation could not, however, support the other amendments, which it did not regard as calculated to contribute to the efficient working of the committee.

26. Mr. TRUJILLO (Ecuador) on behalf of the Latin-American delegations, formally submitted an amendment (A/C.1/L.142) proposing to add Argentina, Mexico, Belgium and Egypt to the membership of the proposed committee. That would ensure better geographical representation in that important body and so contribute to the better dissemination of information on the effects of radiation.

27. Not only scientific, but also geographic, linguistic, and above all, democratic considerations should be borne in mind in setting up such a committee. The new members proposed possessed a number of highly qualified scientists who were fully up to the standard of those of the eleven States designated in the original draft resolution, and would be able to make an effective contribution to the solution of the problems to be dealt with by the committee.

28. The group of twenty Latin-American countries which had introduced the amendment represented practically a whole continent; they urged the United Nations to heed their proposal and to understand that it was in no way opposed to the excellent intentions of the eight-Power draft resolution. The original draft made provision for four seats in the committee for the Anglo-Saxon countries, while Latin America would have only one representative. Belgium had made a distinguished contribution to atomic science. Egypt belonged to another part of the world, the countries of which formed an important group within the United Nations.

29. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.138) did not reflect the desire of the peoples to free

themselves from the danger of atomic radiation caused by the test explosion of thermo-nuclear weapons, which constituted the chief source of radio-activity. Contrary to the view held by the United Kingdom representative, there was no comparison possible between radiation caused by explosions and the readily controlled radiation produced by the peaceful use of atomic energy. They were as much unlike as a hurricane and a fan. The danger of radiation could not be entirely eliminated unless the use and manufacture of nuclear weapons were prohibited and atomic energy used for peaceful purposes only. All the Soviet Union's proposals sought to achieve that goal.

30. The Soviet delegation considered that the General Assembly should define its attitude towards the general public demand for the cessation of atomic explosions. There could be no doubt that an international agreement to that effect concluded under the General Assembly's auspices would constitute an important step forward in the solution of the problem of prohibiting nuclear weapons, and would remove the dangers of atomic radiation.

31. In that connexion, he could not pass over the statement by the Philippine representative (776th meeting) who had pronounced himself in favour of continuing the test explosions, claiming that they were necessary for the accumulation of sufficient experience in the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Despite what the Philippine representative had said, the Soviet Union had never proposed to set off explosions of that kind in order to develop the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. There could be no doubt that it was possible, even without atomic explosions, to obtain the further knowledge necessary for the peaceful use of atomic energy. On the other hand, to oppose the conclusion of an agreement designed to end such tests was tantamount to hindering the liberation of mankind from the threat of nuclear war.

32. The Soviet Union delegation could not accept the United States argument that it would be out of place to insert a clause prohibiting atomic weapons in the draft resolution on the grounds that it was a question for the Disarmament Commission. Nuclear explosions, which were the chief source of radiation, were closely linked to the question of the uses of atomic energy.

33. The committee which it was proposed to establish should also be instructed to determine existing levels of radio-activity in the environment and the effects of ionizing radiation. Of particular importance were the solution of the problem of protection and the remedies and methods of treatment to be applied in cases of exposure to such radiation. The USSR delegation proposed (A/C.1/L.140 and Corr.1) that a paragraph to that effect should be added to the draft resolution. The fact that the problem was already being dealt with by the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organisation, among others, would not mean any duplication of effort since the committee's role would be to secure co-operation and co-ordination in the work being done in that field by various organizations in various countries. There was no reason to deprive the committee of the possibility of collecting, circulating and distributing information relating to that very important problem of medical protection. Moreover, certain functions which it was proposed the committee should have also came within the competence of other agencies; for example, the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International

Congress of Radiology were already studying the question of atomic radiation.

34. Atomic radiation did not stop at national frontiers and it was therefore essential that it should be studied by scientists and technicians from all countries, whether or not they were Members of the United Nations. That was why the USSR delegation proposed that the words "Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies" should be deleted from the draft resolution. For the same reason and in order to make the proposed scientific committee more representative, it would be desirable to increase the committee's membership by including the People's Republic of China and Romania. To deny the People's Republic of China the possibility of participating in the work of the committee would mean depriving the committee of the experience of scientists in that country and of information on the effects of atomic radiation in that vast area of the world. Romanian scientists had also done considerable work in that field and would be able to make an extremely useful contribution.

35. The Soviet Union delegation considered that the committee, owing to the nature of the tasks it would have to perform, would have to work in close contact with the United Nations Secretariat. It proposed therefore that it should be indicated in the draft resolution that the committee would be an organ of the United Nations.

36. Mr. DE SOUZA GOMES (Brazil) stressed the highly technical nature of the problem under discussion. The political implications were only a minor aspect. Accordingly, the efforts of some delegations to drag disarmament into the discussion could only be considered regrettable.

37. It was important above all to learn more facts and to carry out more scientific research before drawing any conclusions regarding the effects of atomic radiation. Any other course of action might lead to dangerous speculation and misconception.

38. The fact that opinion seemed to be unanimously in favour of setting up a scientific committee was a matter for congratulation. However, differences of opinion had arisen over the composition of the committee. As a member of the Secretary-General's Advisory Committee for the International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy at Geneva, Brazil had found itself automatically included. Nevertheless, the Brazilian delegation had joined in sponsoring the twenty-Power amendment (A/C.1/L.142) submitted by Ecuador, since it was designed to secure more equitable geographical representation in the scientific committee.

39. In conclusion, Brazil considered that the method of appointing countries rather than persons would enable the committee to have the benefit of all the resources of each country, rather than to content itself with the contribution of a single person, however outstanding.

40. Mr. WADSWORTH (United States of America) said that the proposal to set up a committee of eleven members was based on the conviction that a larger committee would be too unwieldy. That was why the United States delegation would not be able to support any proposal to expand the committee. That position had been adopted by the United States delegation before the Committee had received the amendment submitted by the Latin-American countries and it could not therefore be regarded as reflecting in any way on any of the

States whose names had been put forward. In a committee where neither economic, political nor social questions would be dealt with, scientific effectiveness must remain the chief preoccupation. The United States dele-

gation deeply regretted having to adopt an attitude opposed to that of the States of Latin America on that point.

The meeting rose at 6.5 p.m.