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Summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 2 November 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Ramírez Carreño . . . . . (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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17-19389 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 51: Effects of atomic radiation
(A/72/46, A/72/557 and A/C.4/72/L.13)

1. **Mr. Vanmarcke** (Belgium), Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the report of the Scientific Committee on its sixty-fourth session (A/72/46). At the session, which had been attended by all 27 members and more than 120 scientists, the Scientific Committee had approved two scientific annexes which were currently being published. The first was on principles and criteria for ensuring the quality of its reviews of epidemiological studies of radiation exposure. Using state-of-the-art methods, the Committee had pooled the results of an ever increasing amount of research data to develop an approach to assessing the quality of the studies and synthesizing the findings that enhanced the coherence, transparency and objectivity of its evaluations.

2. The second annex contained the Scientific Committee's evaluation, produced with the new approach presented in the first annex, of epidemiological studies analysing cancer risk due to exposure at low dose rates from environmental sources. The evaluation showed that there was no evidence that the risk of cancer per unit dose at low dose rates was higher than the risk derived from studies of higher doses. However, there were considerable uncertainties in the estimates owing to limited statistical power and because there were confounding factors and inaccuracies in the assessment of exposure, making it impossible to exclude the possibility that the risk per unit dose at low dose rates was lower than that observed at higher doses.

3. In addition to approving the two scientific annexes, the Scientific Committee had evaluated the latest data provided by Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine on observed thyroid cancer incidence after the 1986 Chernobyl accident, and had assessed the fraction of that incidence that could be attributed to radiation exposure. Over the period 2006–2015, both the total number of cases of thyroid cancer and the number of cases per 100,000 person-years had continued to increase. The total number of cases registered over the period 1991–2015 among people who had been under 18 years of age in 1986 approached 20,000, three times higher than the number of thyroid cancer cases registered in the same cohort over the period 1991–2005. However, the observed increase in the incidence of thyroid cancer was not entirely attributable to radiation exposure: there was a natural increase in the spontaneous incidence of thyroid cancer as people aged, and improved diagnostic methods had increased detection. The Scientific Committee estimated that approximately 25 per cent of the observed incidence could be attributed to radiation exposure from the Chernobyl accident, although that percentage could range from 7 to 50.

4. Following the publication of its 2013 report on the levels and effects of exposure due to the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident (A/68/46), the Scientific Committee had established a group of experts to keep abreast of new scientific publications on that subject. The group had published its first two digests in white papers issued in English and Japanese in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and its 2017 white paper had been published the previous week and shared with the authorities, scientific community and public in Japan. The Scientific Committee continued to deem the major assumptions and findings of its 2013 report valid. Thus far, there had been no evidence of increased thyroid cancer rates attributable to radiation exposure. However, some scientific topics warranted further analysis or additional research, and the Scientific Committee had requested the secretariat to develop a plan for updating its 2013 report. Aside from its scientific work, the Scientific Committee had worked to share its findings with those who valued the information the most through outreach efforts in Japan. However, in 2017, that work had been cut back somewhat owing to resource constraints.

5. Turning to the Scientific Committee's programme of work, he said that, in 2014, its secretariat had launched an online platform to facilitate data collection on medical exposure and, more recently, on occupational exposure. Its collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) had resulted in joint questionnaires for its global surveys. The secretariat had also requested that countries nominate national contact points to coordinate the collection of national data. By June 2017, 60 countries had nominated their contact points and other countries were invited to do so. The Scientific Committee expected to review an evaluation of the data at its next session, and its secretariat would begin conducting similar surveys on public exposures from natural and artificial sources of radiation.

6. The Scientific Committee planned to publish its 2017 report by the end of the year. It would also publish its evaluation of the Chernobyl thyroid cancer data. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) booklet on radiation effects and sources, written to provide a simple introduction for the general public to a subject that could be confusing, had been well received

and had been translated into ten languages. The translated versions would be made available online that same day.

7. At its sixty-third session, the Scientific Committee had agreed on long-term strategic directions for its work beyond 2019, which would include the establishment of standing working groups focused on areas such as sources and exposure; seeking out expertise from States which were not part of its membership; increasing its efforts to present its findings in a manner that attracted readers without compromising scientific rigour and integrity; and enhancing links with other bodies to avoid duplication of efforts. In the meantime, the Scientific Committee's ongoing programme of work covered, inter alia, selected evaluations of health effects and of risk inference due to radiation exposure; lung cancer as a result of exposure to radon and penetrating radiation; biological mechanisms influencing health effects from low-dose radiation exposure; and assessments of human exposure to ionizing radiation. It had also discussed plans for two new projects, one on second cancers after radiotherapy and another on epidemiological studies of radiation and cancer, but the resignation of the current scientific secretary and other administrative challenges were limiting the extent to which those projects could be initiated.

8. The Scientific Committee provided added value to the global community as a cost-effective mechanism for sharing scientific knowledge and had earned respect internationally for its objectivity, independence and quality of work, attributes which needed to be maintained in the future. The contributions made by some Member States to the general trust fund established to support the work of the Scientific Committee helped the secretariat to accelerate work and address outreach and infrastructure. Much, if not all the outreach work by the Scientific Committee, was financed by voluntary contributions to the trust fund. The secretariat's capacity to support the Scientific Committee and take on new projects would be significantly reduced if contributions were not sufficient and sustained, and the General Assembly should therefore encourage such contributions.

9. **Ms. Kemppainen** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union was satisfied with the outcome of the sixty-fourth session of the Scientific Committee. That Committee's work and assessments played a key role in improving international scientific understanding of exposure to ionizing radiation and its health and environmental effects and in providing essential and authoritative scientific information to the international community.

10. The European Union welcomed the Scientific Committee's focus on quality criteria for epidemiological studies of radiation effects and its decision to publish a dedicated document on that subject. It also welcomed its decision to apply similar principles and approaches to the inclusion of literature from other sciences in future reviews and evaluations, and its intention to electronically publish, on its website, its evaluation of thyroid cancer data from the regions affected by the Chernobyl accident. Lastly, the Scientific Committee's programme of work was in line with the priorities of the European Union, which were reflected in its research community's strategic agenda on radiation protection, and contributed to the Multidisciplinary European Low Dose Initiative (MELODI).

11. **Ms. Martinic** (Argentina) said that her delegation welcomed the Scientific Committee's follow-up to its 2013 report on the levels and effects of radiation exposure following the Fukushima nuclear accident. It also welcomed the scientific evaluations conducted during its sixty-fourth session and hoped that the supporting annexes would be published soon. Argentina actively used the online platform established by the Scientific Committee and had nominated a national contact point for the collection and submission of data on the exposure of patients and workers to radiation. Her delegation hoped that the Scientific Committee would report soon on the risks associated with exposure to radon and, in particular, on the coefficient that could be used to calculate the effective dose and equivalent dose according to the concentration of radon in the environment. The Scientific Committee should also study secondary cancers after radiotherapy. In that connection, Argentina had concluded a bilateral agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on regulatory steps for protecting against radiation during radiotherapy.

12. The Scientific Committee's current functions and independence should be maintained and it should continue to hold regular sessions on an annual basis so that its report could reflect the latest developments in the field of ionizing radiation. Member States were encouraged to make contributions in kind to support the Scientific Committee's work given that voluntary contributions to the general trust fund could be interpreted as impinging on the independence of the Scientific Committee's work. Each of the countries in the list provided by the Secretary-General of Member

States that had expressed their interest in membership of the Scientific Committee (A/72/557) should be invited to designate one scientist to attend the sixty-fifth session of the Scientific Committee as an observer, on the understanding that such an invitation would not constitute an invitation to become a member of the Scientific Committee. In the meantime, the General Assembly should review the possible increase in membership of the Scientific Committee with a view to establishing a clear, transparent procedure based on scientific credentials for the selection of new members, which it should apply to the countries in the above-mentioned list.

13. **Mr. Razm** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that nuclear energy provided a clean source of energy that was useful in a variety of areas, including health care, food preservation and scientific and technological research and development. Despite those beneficial uses, the international community should remain wary of the harmful effects of atomic radiation on human beings and the environment, and it was essential to disseminate information and share best practices to ensure safe use of that technology.

14. His Government attached great importance to the role of the Scientific Committee. As a body that promoted wider knowledge and understanding of the risks of radiation, it should benefit from the contribution and knowledge of all countries that possessed a high level of relevant expertise and potential. In that connection, his delegation welcomed all measures aimed at strengthening and enhancing the work of the Scientific Committee.

15. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that, seventy-two years after the horrific attacks on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons remained a latent threat. The vast majority of States had supported the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a milestone in the history of the United Nations and a major contribution to international peace and security. Cuba reaffirmed its position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons was the only effective way to guarantee that humanity never again suffered their terrible effects.

16. Despite economic difficulties stemming from the cruel economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, his country had offered its assistance to the brotherly people of Ukraine following the Chernobyl accident through its humanitarian programme in Tarará. The programme, in addition to providing care to thousands of children affected by atomic radiation, had played an important scientific role as the data collected had been disseminated at major scientific events and had been used by a number of agencies and institutions of the United Nations system. It was important to maintain and strengthen the links between the Scientific Committee and bodies such as WHO, IAEA and UNEP. All of humanity stood to benefit from such cooperation through the application of technological advances, particularly in health and environmental protection. Cuba remained convinced that serious and wide-ranging cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear energy was the only path that would eliminate the potential dangers associated with ionizing radiation.

17. **Mr. Kazi** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation appreciated the Scientific Committee's substantive scientific evaluations on the risks and effects of ionizing radiation, especially as they related to public health and occupational safety. The Scientific Committee's follow-up on the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident following the east-Japan earthquake and tsunami would remain one of its most significant contributions to public health.

18. The Scientific Committee's programme of work covered a range of issues that were of relevance for Bangladesh as it continued to invest in nuclear safety and safeguards, and its work in assessing human exposure to ionizing radiation was particularly valuable. Given the cross-cutting relevance of that body's work, it was crucial that it coordinate with other relevant United Nations entities, including IAEA, WHO and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The secretariat support provided by UNEP was welcome, but increased voluntary contributions to the trust fund were needed.

19. Bangladesh continued to explore opportunities for broadening the scope of its engagement with the Scientific Committee. It would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Committee, and looked forward to the deliberations on increasing its membership that were to be held in 2018. Bangladesh would also be willing to provide scientists to participate in evaluations on an ad hoc basis. Given that data collection and sharing were essential to enable the Scientific Committee to carry out its work effectively, his delegation urged Member States to designate national contact persons to facilitate the collection and submission of data on human exposure to ionizing radiation.

20. **Ms. Jáquez Huacuja** (Mexico) said that the Scientific Committee's work was crucial and the information that it had disseminated on the levels and effects of exposure to ionizing radiation had enabled Member States to put effective protection measures in place. As a member of the Scientific Committee, Mexico

participated actively in its work; it had contributed to the translation of the UNEP booklet on radiation effects and sources into ten languages including Spanish and was collaborating with the Scientific Committee to obtain comprehensive global feedback through the development of two surveys on occupational and medical exposure, respectively. In August 2017, Mexico had joined the expert group on occupational exposure, and it would soon present its national data on patients and workers who had been exposed to radiation.

21. International efforts to guarantee the universal and inalienable right to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy were inseparable from non-proliferation efforts and actions to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Preventing the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons was at the core of multilateral work for nuclear disarmament and underpinned legal instruments such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It was also the basis for her country's unreserved support for the work of IAEA and the Scientific Committee.

22. **Mr. Leschenko** (Ukraine) said that, given the potentially harmful effects of exposure to radiation on present and future generations, there was a continuing need to compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation, analyse its effects on humankind and the environment and disseminate the results of the work of the Scientific Committee. As an active member of the Scientific Committee, Ukraine stood ready to participate in updating and consolidating the findings on the radiological consequences of nuclear accidents. Throughout 2016 and 2017, Ukraine had made a significant contribution to the Scientific Committee's work on evaluating data on thyroid cancer in regions affected by the Chernobyl accident, which had resulted in an authoritative report on the numbers of thyroid health effects observed to date, primarily among people who had been children or adolescents at the time of the accident.

23. The most important lesson learned from the 1986 Chernobyl accident had been that lasting improvements in nuclear and radiation safety were needed globally. The New Safe Confinement over the destroyed nuclear power plant's Unit 4, an unprecedented engineering project, had been completed in late 2016. The New Safe Confinement was designed to convert the destroyed Unit 4 into an environmentally safe system, which would reduce corrosion and weathering of the existing shelter and enable safe demolition of unstable structures. The activities taking place under the Shelter Implementation Plan exemplified new approaches and technologies for radiation protection developed since the accident. In recent years, Ukraine, together with United Nations agencies, the European Union, scientific organizations and non-governmental organizations, had done much to mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and to study its effects on public health and the environment. A number of national projects on decommissioning and radioactive waste management at the nuclear power plant had been successfully implemented through the Technical Cooperation Programme of IAEA. Ukraine also appreciated the work of IAEA to reduce exposure to radiation at the former Soviet Union's nuclear legacy sites.

24. His Government recognized the Scientific Committee's contribution to the development of State legislation and norms governing nuclear and radiation safety and fully supported the ongoing activities of the Committee, whose scientific role and independence must be maintained.

25. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan) said that, as a member of the Scientific Committee, Pakistan was cognizant of its important role in disseminating knowledge about the levels, effects and risks of radiation. While disastrous accidents had made the international community aware of the need for extreme caution in handling nuclear power, its use for peaceful purposes was increasing and Pakistan used nuclear technology in areas such as power production, health, agriculture, bio-technology, pharmacology and industry.

26. Pakistan had a robust national infrastructure to protect the environment, the general public and workers from radiation. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority was responsible for controlling, regulating and supervising radiation safety in all facilities operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. Nuclear facilities were required to have procedures and policies in place to protect people and the environment from the harmful effects of atomic radiation. They also had accident response plans, and were required to develop comprehensive environmental monitoring programmes to monitor radiological levels in their vicinity. Since highly skilled professionals were needed to staff the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Pakistan had taken steps to build capacity in the areas of nuclear and radiation safety, including establishing a centre of excellence that would provide training in nuclear safety and security and regulation. Pakistan remained firmly committed to upgrading infrastructure and building capacity, in collaboration with international organizations, to support radiation safety.

27. The Regulatory Authority, a national warning point and the competent authority designated under early notification and assistance conventions for

coordination of nuclear or radiological emergencies at the national and international levels, had developed a thorough emergency preparedness and response system. Pakistan regularly participated in emergency exercises conducted by IAEA. Health monitoring programmes and free medical care for workers had been developed and implemented in all facilities operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. To date, no incidents of radiation-induced diseases, including cancer, had been reported.

28. The reports of the Scientific Committee, recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection and IAEA standards were regularly used in Pakistan to develop national regulations, shape research activities and enhance understanding of the effects of atomic radiation. In addition, the Government had shown a strong commitment to implementing the recommendations contained in the reports of the Scientific Committee. As an active member of the Scientific Committee, Pakistan would continue to support its work.

29. **Ms. Rodríguez Silva** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that Venezuela, while rejecting the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction, reaffirmed the sovereign right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Venezuela had historically used nuclear energy exclusively for scientific and medicinal purposes. Furthermore, conscious of the dangers of atomic radiation, it had established a regulatory system to guarantee the safe management of sources of radioactive energy, and, with the support of IAEA, since the 1980s it had carried out various radiological security projects. Although it had the capacity to scale up its development and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, Venezuela had always approached nuclear development with caution. In the light of the increasing use of nuclear technologies all over the world, the international community should act with urgency to strengthen international regulations on nuclear technology, and should base relevant regulations and binding decisions on reliable scientific evaluations.

30. Her delegation valued the progress made by the Scientific Committee in evaluating the health effects and risks resulting from exposure to ionizing radiation following the 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant; however, it was surprising that the Scientific Committee had concluded that no discernible changes in birth defects and hereditary diseases were expected and that any increased incidence of cancer among workers due to their exposure was expected to be indiscernible, given that the effects of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still persisted in the population. Nevertheless, her delegation urged the Scientific Committee to continue to find and systematically evaluate information on the levels and effects of radiation exposure as a consequence of the Fukushima accident. It was concerning that the dissemination of the Scientific Committee's findings was limited by a lack of secretariat staff and financial resources.

31. Despite having experienced an era in which atomic weapons had been used against civilian populations and the nuclear arms race had accelerated, resulting in a dark legacy of weapons capable of destroying the planet several times over, humankind had nonetheless benefited from advances in the development of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, the peaceful use of nuclear energy was accompanied by the risk of human error or natural disasters, and the tragedies of Chernobyl and Fukushima served as a reminder of the need for precaution and the broad sharing of all available information on the effects of atomic radiation. Her Government also supported investigations into the potential effects on the population and the environment of past nuclear tests conducted in remote regions. Given the risks, efforts to educate and to raise the awareness of the public were essential. That included highlighting the differences between human exposure to radiation from nuclear sources and exposure for medical purposes. The Department of Public Information should use its various platforms to continue circulating and promoting information on the effects of atomic radiation.

32. In the case of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the administrating Power for French Polynesia should continue to provide information on the impact of the nuclear tests carried out in that Territory, and Member States should support initiatives to establish the effects of atomic radiation produced by nuclear tests. Lastly, her Government remained committed to the development of the international system for protection against the effects of atomic radiation and would continue to do all it could to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

33. **Mr. Ngouambe Wouaga** (Cameroon) said that Cameroon attached great importance to the Scientific Committee's work on the harmful consequences of ionizing radiation, which constituted the scientific basis for international standards.

34. In 2002 Cameroon had established a national radiation protection agency. It had also adopted a law on radiation protection, in 1995, which imposed severe sanctions on anyone who caused exposure to ionizing radiation. The Government had taken measures to regulate the use of sources of ionizing radiation, the

import and export of radioactive sources, the transport of radioactive materials, the management of radioactive waste and the dosimetric monitoring of workers. Cameroon had made progress with the implementation of its integrated nuclear security support plan, notably through its ratification of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, in April 2016.

35. Cameroon was cooperating closely with IAEA and in 2015 had ratified the Protocol Additional to the Agreement between the Republic of Cameroon and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It had also signed its second Country Programme Framework with IAEA, for the period 2014–2018, which would serve as a medium-term frame of reference for technical cooperation. His delegation welcomed the establishment by IAEA of the Radiation Safety Information Management System, an online platform for sharing information on radiation and waste safety, and urged the Agency to raise the profile of African member States on the platform in order to support their development of nuclear programmes for peaceful purposes.

36. **Ms. Oku** (Japan) said that Japan had long been committed to nuclear safety, particularly following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident. The draft resolution on the effects of atomic radiation (A/C.4/72/L.13) affirmed the support of her country and others for the Scientific Committee's work of scientific review in the service of the scientific community and the broader public, and its efforts to broaden knowledge and deepen understanding of the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation.

37. Noting the importance of disseminating the Scientific Committee's findings, her delegation welcomed the publication of the report and annex on the levels and effects of radiation exposure after the 2011 great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami. The previous week the Secretary of the Scientific Committee had presented the findings of the report and the white papers in Iwaki, Japan, which had provided vital information and helped to alleviate public concerns. The Scientific Committee played a key role in deepening understanding of the effects of ionizing radiation and Japan remained committed to supporting its work.

38. **Mr. Abbani** (Algeria) said that the increasing use of atomic and radioactive energy in everyday life meant that States must bear in mind the potential risks. His country had experienced the impact of radioactive contamination first-hand as a result of the nuclear tests conducted in the Algerian Sahara in the early 1960s, which had left the affected regions uninhabitable. The Algerian Government had enacted legislation to curb the effects of atomic radiation and monitor its sources. The Algerian Atomic Energy Commission ensured compliance with the existing regulatory framework and standards for the use of radiation sources and organized regular training sessions for operators of equipment that used radiation sources. In coordination with Government entities representing various sectors, the Commission granted licences to import and use such equipment in accordance with stringent safety regulations pertaining to the handling of radioactive materials.

39. Algeria had organized regional and international training workshops in cooperation with African, Arab and international organizations, with a view to strengthening the capacities of States to improve their regulatory framework on radiation safety and promoting regional and international cooperation on the matter. His delegation welcomed the progress made in assessing epidemiological studies of cancers caused by exposure to low-dose radiation from environmental sources. Such studies could be used to warn the public of the health risks posed by radiation. In that connection, the Scientific Committee's commendable use of media and communications strategies to raise public awareness on the issue would benefit efforts to prevent the adverse effects of atomic radiation. However, it was regrettable that the execution of those strategies had been hampered by the Scientific Committee secretariat's shortage of human and financial resources. Such steps as the establishment of a joint United Nations fund among agencies dealing with atomic radiation could be considered in order to ensure that such awareness-raising activities continued.

40. **Ms. Fedorovich** (Belarus) said that the Scientific Committee facilitated the vital collective effort of States to study the impact of atomic radiation on human health and the environment. Her delegation hoped that the data gathered in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident would be a useful contribution to the Scientific Committee's forthcoming reports. The epidemiological studies on cases of cancer caused by exposure to low-dose radiation from environmental sources and the assessment of the findings on the incidence of thyroid cancer in regions affected by Chernobyl, including the latest data supplied by Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation, were particularly welcome, as was the development of enhanced criteria for ensuring the quality of reviews of epidemiological studies. The finding that the incidence of thyroid cancer in women and men under 18 years of age at the time of the accident in Belarus, Ukraine and the four most contaminated

regions of the Russian Federation for the period from 1991 to 2015 was three times higher than the number of cases registered in the same cohort in the period 1991–2005 attested to the need for further study of the problem and its repercussions. Her delegation hoped that all relevant Scientific Committee documentation would be made available in the six official United Nations languages. The inclusion in the Scientific Committee of States whose scientists had a contribution to make would enhance the quality of its work.

41. **Mr. Corden** (Observer for the Holy See) said that, in its 64 years of existence, the Scientific Committee had provided the Organization with information on both the devastating effects of atomic radiation and its role in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of both. The catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapon use and testing included death, radiation-caused injuries and other medical effects. The recently concluded negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons had resulted in large measure from the renewed attention paid to those consequences. Its adoption had brought the international community closer to a world free of nuclear weapons and to the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

42. After the nuclear accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima, it was clear that careful evaluation of the peaceful use of nuclear weapons was needed in order to minimize the risk of accidents. Lessons learned would serve to improve further the safety standards that regulated those uses, including the safe, secure and permanent disposal of the growing amount of radioactive waste. Implementing those lessons was necessary to ensure the safety and security of populations and protect the environment. Moreover, improving the safety and protection of nuclear energy plants would discourage terrorists from targeting them.

43. The Scientific Committee's important work on epidemiological studies, on the radiation consequences of the Fukushima accident, on thyroid cancer data in the Chernobyl region and on the biological mechanisms for health effects from low-dose exposure to radiation was relevant to eliminating the threats to global health that nuclear explosions could cause and to pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals. The activities of the Scientific Committee, IAEA and other agencies to ensure the safe uses of nuclear technology contributed to authentic human development and fostered peace and prosperity worldwide, helping world leaders ensure that the horrors of a nuclear war were never witnessed again on Earth.

44. Nuclear technology could contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development by improving living conditions for millions in the areas of agriculture, food safety, quality of nutrition, purity of scarce water resources and efforts to monitor and remedy environmental pollution. The most successful uses of nuclear technology had come in the field of health care, in the diagnosis and treatment of many diseases. Making the benefits of such technologies more widely available to all peoples, especially in the developing world, would lead to improved public awareness and greater recognition of those significant achievements.

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.13: Effects of atomic radiation

45. **Ms. Boels** (Belgium), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that the text, which had been facilitated in Vienna and finalized in New York, reaffirmed the importance of the work of the Scientific Committee, which was mandated to evaluate the levels, effects and risks of exposure to ionizing radiation from natural and artificial sources.

46. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom had joined the sponsors.

47. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

48. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.13 was adopted.*

Agenda item 56: Comprehensive review of special political missions (*continued*) (A/72/357/Rev.1 and A/C.4/72/L.10)

49. **Mr. Al-Sahhaf** (Iraq) said that his country fully endorsed the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Special political missions had a major role in maintaining international peace and security, through specific mandates formulated in consultation with national Governments, in full respect of the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

50. His Government remained an integrated, cohesive entity. It was committed to promoting and pursuing constructive dialogue without preconditions to resolve outstanding issues between the federal Government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, whose unconstitutional decisions and their potential to undermine the national unity of Iraq were absolutely

unacceptable. The Council of Representatives had voted to reject the referendum, which amounted to a major violation of the Iraqi Constitution. All necessary measures would be taken to preserve the unity of the country and the safety of all its people. To that end and with a view to upholding the rule of law, his Government had sent federal forces into the disputed region.

51. The Iraqi Government worked in close coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI). The Mission was supporting the Iraqi people and Government in the process of political dialogue leading to national reconciliation, providing assistance with such tasks as organizing elections and promoting human rights and judicial reform. In conjunction with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNAMI was also extending humanitarian and relief assistance to Iraqis displaced from their regions by the ferocious onslaught of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist gangs. In addition, the Mission continued to collaborate with the United Nations country team on a regional response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

52. His Government welcomed the call in Security Council resolution 2367 (2017) for an independent, external assessment of the structure and staffing of the Mission in order to ensure that it and the United Nations country team were configured to most appropriately and efficiently fulfil mandated tasks. Consultation with the Iraqi Government must be an integral part of that process, in the light of the country's current and future challenges. His Government looked forward to contributing to the assessment in order to enable the Mission to respond to the country's needs in the post-ISIL period, particularly with regard to helping displaced persons return to their cities and improving the country's economic situation. In closing, he thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the head of UNAMI for their tireless efforts to assist the Government and people of Iraq.

53. **Ms. Rawet** (Sweden) said that special political missions played a pivotal role in preventing and removing threats to international peace and security, whether through identifying risks early and coordinating effective responses or monitoring ceasefires. At the same time, the reviews of the Organization's role in peace and security conducted over the previous two years had underlined the need to improve efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace. To that end, Member States should be ready to ensure that financing was in place to deliver the versatility and flexibility that characterized special political missions, sustaining them throughout the conflict cycle. Furthermore, the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General to integrate peace operations more effectively into the Organization's holistic efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace were vital to strengthen the role of special political missions. Those missions were well placed to work with regional partners in the field, thereby ensuring that early political engagement and long-term political strategies operated in tandem with development, human rights and humanitarian efforts from the outset. Lastly, the full, equal and effective participation of women should be a key element of the work carried out by special political missions, given that lasting peace required the involvement of the entire population.

54. **Mr. Kuzmin** (Russian Federation) said that special political missions not only supported Member States in their efforts to maintain peace and prevent latent conflicts from entering another phase but also helped to promote political change through dialogue and to achieve lasting national reconciliation. Their flexibility made them a vital instrument in such efforts. To that end, special political missions must have clearly defined, achievable mandates.

55. Special political missions were increasingly called upon to perform such complex tasks as assisting in maintenance of the rule of law, drafting legislation, overseeing electoral processes, protecting human rights and reforming security sectors. His delegation supported the convening of a dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat that took into account the competence and authority of United Nations bodies and the Organization's cumulative experience in the area of special political missions. The contents of the dialogue should not overlap with issues discussed in other forums.

56. Emerging threats should be addressed by special political missions on a case-by-case basis, determined by the specific circumstances and in close cooperation with the host country, guided by the principles of respect for its sovereignty and national ownership. Harnessing the capacities of regional and subregional organizations with approaches compatible with those adopted by the United Nations could further contribute to efforts to resolve crises. Noting the constructive steps taken to negotiate the draft resolution on the current item, he hoped that the final document would reflect the positions of all Member States.

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.10: Comprehensive review of special political missions

57. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

58. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) recalled that, at an earlier meeting, the Permanent Representative of Finland had orally revised footnote 6 of the draft resolution to refer to the revised report under agenda item 56, contained in document A/72/357/Rev.1. She said that Argentina, Australia, Denmark, Montenegro, Poland, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and Ukraine had joined the sponsors.

59. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.10, as orally revised, was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.