

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
FORTY-THIRD SESSION
*Official Records**



SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
Tuesday, 8 November 1988
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

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AGENDA ITEM 140: SCIENCE AND PEACE

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/43/SR.21
21 November 1988
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 140: SCIENCE AND PEACE (A/43/141; A/SPC/43/L.9)

1. Mr. GUTIERREZ (Costa Rica), explaining why his country had considered it necessary to request the inclusion of a new item in the agenda of the forty-third session of the General Assembly, recalled that in 1986, within the framework of the International Year of Peace, an international association of scientists, established on the initiative of mathematician Hendrick Bramhoff of the University of Hamburg, had proposed holding an International Scientists for Peace Week to encourage the use of scientific progress for the benefit of peace and the well-being of mankind.
2. The celebration of the Scientists for Peace Week had met with increasing success during its first two years: lectures, seminars and debates had been held, television programmes had been broadcast in many countries, groups and committees had been established to study such subjects as arms control, disarmament agreements, elimination of the risks of nuclear war, economic, social and psychological aspects of the arms race, the problem of hunger in the world and the protection of the environment.
3. In 1987, the association, which then comprised more than 30 organizations, had expressed the hope that the United Nations would officially celebrate Scientists for Peace Week and, to that end, had requested the co-operation of the Government of Costa Rica, which had been the originator of the proposal to proclaim an International Year of Peace and whose President had just received the Nobel Peace Prize. The President of Costa Rica, faithful to the mandate entrusted to him by the Costa Rican people to work for a world free from war and a firm and lasting peace had therefore submitted a request that the week of 11 November should each year be devoted to the topic "Science and peace".
4. The role of science was twofold: a theoretical role, that of describing and explaining observed phenomena, and a practical one, that of applying scientific advances. The two aspects were closely linked, the most striking example being the theory of relativity, the solution to a problem of pure physics whose technical applications had made nuclear war possible. Science could not therefore be viewed in isolation from its potential consequences and scientists were asking themselves for what purpose their research would be used. Similarly, societies were well aware that scientific progress, which helped to enhance human life, could also contribute to the destruction of all forms of civilization and of life itself. Scientific applications must therefore be monitored and controlled and, as the President of the French Republic had said in his address to the General Assembly, the ethical basis must be laid for the third millennium.
5. There was a direct relationship between scientific activity and development and there was reason to fear, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica had said during the general debate in the General Assembly, that the well-being derived from scientific and technological discoveries might benefit only a small group of

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

the Earth's inhabitants and that science and technology might serve only to promote mankind's extermination and the destruction of his property. What was especially alarming, however, was that the developing world had easy access to technological progress in the military sphere and that countries which did not have the necessary resources to feed their peoples were incurring military expenditures out of all proportion to the minute sums they spent on education or health. That was why scientific progress must be used for the benefit of the developing world.

6. The fact that the Association of Scientists for Peace had felt that that movement needed a United Nations resolution to give it world-wide legitimacy underscored the role which the Organization, as an international body for the establishment and maintenance of peace, must play in promoting science and its contribution to peace. Considering the relationship between science and peace was a logical follow-up to the proclamation of the International Year of Peace.

7. Introducing draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9, of which Brunei Darussalam and Romania had also become sponsors, he pointed out that the date for the celebrating of the International Week of Science and Peace each year had been chosen to retain the date of the first International Scientists for Peace Week, in order to establish a tradition and to increase each year the number of organizations participating in the Week's activities. The draft resolution urged Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to encourage the holding, during the Week, of activities conducive to the study of and the dissemination of information on the links between progress in science and technology and the maintenance of peace and security. Member States were also urged to promote international co-operation among scientists by facilitating exchanges of experts and information, and the Secretary-General was requested to draw attention to the importance of the International Week, to invite Member States to report to him on their activities and initiatives and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. The draft resolution had no financial implications for the programme budget.

8. In conclusion, he thanked all the delegations that had sponsored draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9 and hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

9. Mr. DHOUBHADEL (Nepal) said that in order to create favourable conditions for peace, it was necessary to redress the inequitable social and economic conditions which existed in many parts of the world and which gave rise to discontent, unrest and conflict. Science, by virtue of its universal nature, could play a positive role in that connection. Unfortunately, however, with the world currently divided into opposing blocs, scientific and technological resources were being used to meet the concerns and preoccupations of the industrialized countries. The two thirds of the world's population who lived in developing countries had access to only 5 per cent of the world's technological and scientific capability. A large proportion of the world's resources were being absorbed by military spending which amounted to one trillion dollars a year, 20 times the total amount of assistance provided to the developing world. The international community must ensure that scientific and technological achievements were used not for destructive purposes

(Mr. Dhoubhadel, Nepal)

but for the development of the large number of countries that were struggling to satisfy their societies' basic needs and other socio-economic development requirements.

10. Aware of the crucial role of science and technology as an instrument of social and economic change, his country had in 1982 established the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology to promote science and technology for the overall development of the country. Nepal strongly believed that peace and the peaceful uses of science were prerequisites for development and had therefore proposed that its territory be internationally recognized as a zone of peace, as a step towards the establishment of other such zones throughout the world.

11. Nepal was ready to co-operate with other countries in the region and with friendly developed countries in joint scientific and technological ventures, the development of water, mineral and natural resources, flood control, the production of new and renewable sources of energy, and irrigation. His country was equally ready to participate in any regional or international effort aimed at a better understanding of the crucial and often fragile linkage between man and the environment in the Himalayan region.

12. In recent decades, the United Nations had given increasing attention to the role which science and technology could play in attaining world peace. Yet in spite of their often innovative character, the activities carried out by the United Nations and its specialized agencies had not been highly successful and the efforts of the developing world to use the benefits of science and technology for development had been frustrated.

13. The United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, held at Vienna in 1979 had elaborated, following intensive deliberations in which the developing countries had played an active part, a Programme of Action which emphasized the strengthening of the scientific and technical capacities of developing countries; the restructuring of international scientific and technological relations; the strengthening of the role of the United Nations system in that field; and the provision of increased financial resources. The funds available to the Programme were clearly inadequate, however. Several member countries, particularly the rich ones, were withdrawing their support from certain specialized agencies and recent trends pointed to an erosion of the credibility of assistance provided through the United Nations system.

14. Science and technology must not be used for the purposes of domination or destruction. There was therefore an urgent need to intensify efforts to reach agreements on drastically reducing nuclear weapons, preventing the extension of the arms race to outer space, reducing conventional weapons and banning the use of chemical weapons. The ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries must also be narrowed. The developed countries in particular had a moral responsibility to ensure that those inequalities did not grow. Accordingly, international aid flows must be increased, better co-ordinated and tailored to national development objectives. The United Nations and its agencies had a key role to play in promoting indigenous capabilities, thereby encouraging the peaceful

(Mr. Dhoubhadel, Nepal)

uses of science and demonstrating its real value in the quest for world peace. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the appeal addressed by the participants in the Third National Congress of Chemistry of Romania (A/SPC/43/2) to chemical engineers and scientists the world over.

15. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union had supported the inclusion of the item entitled "Science and peace" in the agenda because it was of the utmost importance that scientists the world over should redouble their efforts to solve the problems facing humanity. The material progress of recent decades had made it possible to solve many problems in the areas of food, education, housing and health. However, the international community had not succeeded in integrating science into the search for solutions to global problems. The scientific and technical revolution had not kept pace with the spiritual and moral revolution. With regard to the international function of science, it was necessary to overcome the tendency to monopolize the results of scientific and technological progress, and to prevent the scientific revolution from dividing peoples in terms of their standard of living.

16. Other problems were caused by the existence of the scientific and technological means of mass destruction, which engendered a situation of political instability in the world. Moreover, even scientific resources of a non-military nature could reduce the current level of security, as accidents at nuclear power plants such as Chernobyl demonstrated such incidents affected the interests of many countries, created political instability and could sometimes have unforeseen consequences. His delegation therefore believed that international co-operation on problems concerning science and peace was of fundamental importance.

17. The fact that science was exerting a growing influence on politics should be taken into account in joint political efforts to strengthen world peace and security. It was thus necessary to establish a system of co-operation which made it possible to prevent or lessen on a scientific basis, the consequences of political errors in making choices for the future. At present, however, scientific co-operation was divided into a number of separate elements. In order to combat the instability of the world economy, the international community should develop an effective system in which the co-ordination of scientific and technological activities could play a decisive role.

18. Exchanges of information among scientists and scientific research objectives that were beneficial to mankind contributed objectively to the peace process. His country believed that consideration of the item on science and peace made it possible to grasp the importance of science for peace and security through disarmament. The United Nations should play a greater role in issues relating to science and peace. In that connection, it might be appropriate to establish, under the auspices of the United Nations, a world consultative council composed of intellectuals from all over of the world.

19. His country believed that it was necessary to revitalize United Nations activities in the field of science and technology so that international

(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

co-operation in that sphere, would respond to the growing needs of many countries. In that connection, the Soviet Union had proposed the elaboration, within the framework of the United Nations, of a world strategy for scientific and technical progress to the year 2000. Such a strategy was necessary because the nature of scientific and technological progress had changed dramatically in recent decades: there was a greater integration of science and production and scientific and technological activity had become more intensive and its priority elements had been strengthened. That process was also speeding up at the international level, as could be seen from the Comprehensive Programme to Promote the Scientific and Technological Progress of the Member Countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance up to the Year 2000, the EUREKA initiative and other programmes. The role of co-ordinating activities under the global strategy should be entrusted to the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, which could consider the basic provisions of the strategy in order to determine the priority goals of co-operation.

20. The Soviet Union had declared its intention of making the Krasnoyarsk radar station available to the world scientific community. To that end, UNESCO could set up an international group of scientists to determine the procedure to be followed in conducting space research on that basis. Soviet scientists were ready to enter into contact with international organizations to put that idea into practice. His delegation reiterated the proposal made at the preceding session of the General Assembly that a series of special meetings should be held on environmental security and hoped that the proposal would meet with the approval of other delegations.

21. Soviet scientists had supported initiatives for the adoption by the scientific community of co-ordinated measures to prevent nuclear war, solve world problems, promote co-operation on Earth and in space and use science and technology for humanitarian purposes for the benefit of civilization. His delegation also supported draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9 submitted by Costa Rica. The Soviet Union would continue to look actively for ways of uniting the efforts of all countries to make use of science and technology solely for peaceful purposes in order to find solutions to major economic and social problems. That approach was inspired by the words of Mikhail Gorbachev that it was essential to create a world-wide moral atmosphere in which the arms race, confrontations, military dangers and the militarization of society would be considered as defiance of the international community.

22. Mr. POUKRE-KONO (Central African Republic) said that the importance attached by the Central African Republic to agenda item 140 stemmed from its desire to join with other States which believed that the time had come to do everything possible to disprove the adage "if you want peace, prepare for war", the application of which had frequently led States into a frenetic arms race at the expense of the well-being of their peoples.

(Mr. Poukre-Kono, Central African Republic)

23. At the dawn of a new era which augured well for the establishment of a lasting peace based on justice, States must realize the need for increased scientific co-operation to stimulate the process of development and promote the cause of world peace.

24. Some applications of science continued to present grave threats to man and his environment, a fact which had prompted the international community to take measures to protect itself. The importance attached to items 75 and 78 of the Committee's agenda (Effects of atomic radiation and International co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space) showed that the international community took that threat very seriously.

25. Enormous quantities of nuclear weapons were currently stockpiled throughout the world, the proliferation of chemical weapons had become standard practice, there was apparently no prospect of an early end to nuclear testing and the dumping of toxic wastes had become a genuine menace. At a time when hunger, disease and natural disasters claimed many victims every day, it was difficult to understand why the enormous resources devoted by nations to establishing their supremacy were not used to save human lives, ensure the continued existence of civilization and defend such fundamental values as the right to life, peace and freedom.

26. The assistance provided by the industrialized countries to the poorer regions of the world should include increased scientific aid, for it was the peace and stability of those regions that were at stake. The reason why the effects of the hurricanes, floods, locust infestations, drought and epidemics afflicting the third world countries were so catastrophic was that those countries had no effective means of combating them. It was perhaps worth remembering the appeal made by the head of the Central African Republic's delegation to all men of good will to unite their talents and strength, to speak the language of peace and say "no" to war and poverty, and to demonstrate ever more clearly their faith in the Charter of the United Nations and a better mankind.

27. Mr. TANASIE (Romania) said that, both in the Special Political Committee and in other United Nations bodies, Romania had stated time and time again its firm conviction that international peace and security and the emergence of a world free of weapons were essential for the independent development of all countries, in accordance with the will and interests of their peoples. Consideration of item 140 provided a further opportunity to stress the close relationship between peace and science and the urgent need to use scientific and technological achievements for the economic development and welfare of all peoples, stability, understanding and co-operation among all nations of the world.

28. There were two myths on which the arms race was based. The first was the belief that a country's security could be ensured by the superiority of its military forces and those of its allies over those of its opponents. History showed, however, that arms races almost invariably ended in conflicts. The second myth was that military spending was economically beneficial since it created jobs

(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

and promoted the advance of commercial technology. That view was not shared by the majority of scientists, who felt that it was only by allocating all available resources to civilian activities that it would be possible to promote economic development, competitiveness and the welfare of nations. Moreover, military goods and services had a very considerable economic cost. In the short term, production of them was at the expense of consumer goods, while in the long term, the most serious sacrifice was that of productive capacity, since military spending diverted from the civil sector the scientists who were of paramount importance for technological development.

29. As the study on the economic and social consequences of the arms race and military expenditures (A/43/368) pointed out, the military sector consumed approximately 25 per cent of global research and development resources. Moreover, the launching of new major military projects could create a veritable internal brain drain from the civilian to the military sector.

30. In order to undo the untold damage created by that huge diversion of funds and human resources, Governments and the scientific community must adopt a new approach. Scientists could make an impressive contribution to the conversion of military into civilian activities. They could also play an active role in the process of disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, in such areas as arms control verification, as in the case of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the case of the Treaty on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles.

31. An encouraging development was the fact that a growing number of scientists, some of them members of military establishments, were currently challenging accepted ideas by arguing that the best way of ensuring security was through disarmament rather than a frenetic arms race. That attitude had been clearly expressed, for example, at the Third National Congress of Chemistry of Romania. The participants at that Congress had urged the international scientific community (see document A/SPC/43/2) to ensure that the fruits of scientific research were used for the peaceful development of all nations and to firmly oppose the production and improvement of chemical weapons.

32. The National Committee of Scientists for Peace, set up in 1981 by Romanian scientists and research-workers under the leadership of President Ceausescu, had been working tirelessly to make scientists aware of their responsibility and the contribution that they could make to the cause of disarmament, peace and mutual understanding. International co-operation in all scientific fields was the only way of ensuring that the enormous potential of science and technology was used in the service of economic and social development and of safeguarding the environment.

33. Within the framework of the unprecedented scientific and technological revolution taking place in the world, two considerations were of vital importance: on the one hand, there was a need to ensure that science and technology were used exclusively for the benefit of mankind, and, on the other hand, there was the belief that development and the maintenance of world peace required the speedy

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(Mr. Tanasie, Romania)

integration of all countries so that all the members of the international community might take advantage of the benefits of science. In that regard, the transfer of technology from the developed countries to the developing countries was of vital importance for the future of mankind. It was not only a question of knowing how to ensure that new technology no longer spurred on the frantic arms race; it was also necessary to establish a climate in which men no longer felt forced to invent, manufacture, purchase or use weapons.

34. The Romanian delegation supported draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9.

35. Mr. LAPITSKY (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that science had always played a leading role in the development of human society. Although the current scientific and technological revolution had enabled mankind to achieve substantial progress, it had also created the means to destroy civilization. In those conditions, just like statesmen and politicians, scientists had an important mission to carry out. The Ukrainian SSR noted with satisfaction that scientists were ever more frequently condemning the arms race and calling for a nuclear-weapon-free world. To that end, they had set up many national and international organizations, like the Pugwash movement or International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The representative international forum for a non-nuclear world and the survival of mankind, held the previous February in Moscow, had had a great impact and had led to the establishment of an international fund for the survival and development of mankind, designed to promote research projects in development, culture, disarmament and ecology. The proclamation by the United Nations of the International Year of Peace had been very important for the efforts of scientists to promote peace, efforts in which the scientists of the Ukrainian SSR were participating.

36. The contribution of science to international peace and security should be increased. Solving the major problems facing mankind required joint action by politicians and scientists and, particularly, those who knew the disastrous consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Scientists also had the task of promoting greater comprehension of the trends of peaceful development and the basic unity of the world and of peoples. In view of the danger of nuclear war, international relations must be made more humane and should have a moral dimension. The primacy of human values and the right of peoples to choose their social and political system must be affirmed. The Ukrainian SSR attached great importance to broadening contacts and the free exchange of ideas among the scientists of different countries. Co-operation between scientists aimed at strengthening peace and their positive influence on policy would largely determine whether scientific and technological progress would follow a peaceful path and whether that potential would be used to prevent ecological disasters and solve problems like underdevelopment, hunger and epidemic diseases.

37. The efforts undertaken within the United Nations to co-ordinate and stimulate co-operation between States in the field of science should be stepped up. In that regard, in the framework of the world strategy for scientific and technological co-operation up to the year 2000 proposed by the Soviet Union at the forty-second

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(Mr. Lapitsky, Ukrainian SSR)

session of the General Assembly, it would be possible to plan the establishment, under the auspices of the United Nations, of international scientific research groups to study the major problems impeding scientific and technological progress, taking into account the needs of the developing countries. An annual international week of science and peace, under the auspices of the United Nations, would strengthen those efforts. The positive trends in international relations gave rise to hope for the triumph of human reason and of efforts to save life on Earth. The United Nations should do everything to ensure that scientific thought actively contributed to achieving that objective.

38. Mr. RUDNIK (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that scientific and technological progress had reached a level previously unimaginable. By combining all the resources in that field, it was possible to eliminate illiteracy, malnutrition and disease. For that reason, the Byelorussian SSR expressed satisfaction at the initiative set forth in draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9 on science and peace and supported the draft resolution, hoping that it could be adopted without a vote.

39. Mr. GORAJEWSKI (Poland) said that the current session of the General Assembly was being held at a time when numerous signs were suggesting the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the deadly conflicts which were dividing the world. Peace, however, could only result from enormous efforts by both Governments and the public at large. The scientific community had been at the forefront of those efforts and the agenda item proposed by Costa Rica justifiably underscored the decisive contribution which it could make to that process.

40. His delegation fully subscribed to the objectives to be achieved through the consideration of agenda item 140 as set forth in the explanatory memorandum of Costa Rica. It was necessary to increase public awareness of the impact of scientific progress on international security, encourage scientists to work to achieve constructive objectives, and promote the dialogue between them and the citizens of the world concerning the important issues related to science, and peace and security in the nuclear era.

41. It was of paramount importance to direct scientific efforts towards developing technologies for peaceful purposes. In contrast to the resources used for weapons research, scant resources had been devoted to the research and development of technologies that contributed to the peaceful settlement of disputes, reduced the danger of accidental war, promoted peace-keeping and strengthened international disarmament machinery. As stressed by the Secretary-General during the Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations on "The role of the United Nations in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and global security", a considerable number of scientists were employed in military projects, when their talent could be enlisted to far better effect.

(Mr. Gorajewski, Poland)

42. After referring to the objectives of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9, of which Poland was a sponsor, he said that his delegation was convinced that the adoption of the draft resolution and the proclamation of the "International Week of Science and Peace" would promote co-operation among scientists in the pursuit of peace and broaden support for achieving that cherished goal.

43. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9.

44. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.9 was adopted without a vote.

45. Mrs. BARISH (Costa Rica) thanked all the delegations which had expressed their support for the important initiatives set forth in the draft resolution.

46. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 140.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.