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**GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE, 756th  
MEETING**



Friday, 15 October 1971,  
at 3.15 p.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mr. Cornelius C. CREMIN (Ireland).

**AGENDA ITEM 36**

**Effects of atomic radiation: report of the United Nations  
Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation  
(concluded) (A/8334, A/SPC/L.203/Rev.1, A/SPC/  
L.204)**

1. The CHAIRMAN stated that the sponsors of the draft resolution before the Committee, who now included Brazil and Indonesia, were submitting a text (A/SPC/L.203/Rev.1) that had been revised in the light of a number of suggestions made during the debate.

2. Mr. JACOVIDES (Cyprus) was pleased to note from the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/8334) that that committee had decided to work on the effects of the peaceful application of atomic energy and not to deal primarily, as it had in the past, with the risks of global contamination resulting from nuclear explosions in the atmosphere. The annual consideration of the report by the General Assembly served two useful purposes: it enabled the Committee to exercise constant vigilance over new dangers of contamination due to atomic radiation, and it afforded Governments an opportunity to voice their concern and thus to discourage those Governments whose activities might cause an increase in the level of atomic radiation. For those reasons, the Cypriot delegation was against any suggestion to discontinue the item or to review the report less frequently.

3. The Cypriot Government had always advocated the abolition of nuclear tests in all environments, both as a matter of principle and a matter of practical necessity. As early as the seventeenth session of the General Assembly,<sup>1</sup> it had adduced specific legal arguments concerning the responsibility of States, under international law, for damage caused to life or property outside their territory because of nuclear tests conducted by them on their own territory or in the high seas.

4. With regard to nuclear experiments for peaceful purposes, the risks involved should obviously be carefully balanced against their beneficial effects; the Scientific Committee had a role to play in that respect, just as it had an important contribution to make in protecting the human environment, which would be discussed at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, to be held at Stockholm in 1972.

5. He had listened with interest to the observations of the representative of Lebanon (755th meeting) regarding relationships between the Scientific Committee and the International Atomic Energy Agency and would like to hear the views of other delegations on the subject. The Cypriot delegation supported the draft resolution under consideration and considered that the amendment submitted by Jordan (A/SPC/L.204) added an important new element.

6. He wished to express his delegation's sincere appreciation of the constructive work carried out by the Scientific Committee.

7. Mr. GALLAGHER (Ireland) had noted with interest the remarks of the Lebanese representative with regard to the possible consideration of the report of the Scientific Committee by one or more United Nations bodies other than the General Assembly, particularly IAEA. In the debate on the previous IAEA report, the Irish delegation had called for close co-ordination between the Scientific Committee and that Agency.<sup>2</sup> It had further suggested to the Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly that the report of the Scientific Committee might be sent to IAEA in the first instance for evaluation of its practical implications rather than directly to the General Assembly (A/AC.149/L.5/Add.3<sup>3</sup>). Finally, the Irish delegation had proposed to the Special Committee and to the First Committee at the twenty-fifth session,<sup>4</sup> that the report might be considered in the context of the disarmament debate in the First Committee. These suggestions reflected a concern to avoid any duplication of work between the Scientific Committee and IAEA. The Irish delegation therefore felt that the suggestion made by the representative of Lebanon might usefully be considered at a later date.

8. Mr. BERNSTROM (Sweden) introduced the revised draft resolution (A/SPC/L.203/Rev.1) and said that he was happy that Brazil and Indonesia had joined its sponsors. Bearing in mind the remarks of the Lebanese representative, the last part of operative paragraph 8 had been modified and, in operative paragraph 5, the word "for" had been substituted for the word "of". With regard to the amendment (A/SPC/L.204) submitted by the Jordanian representative, he understood the latter's desire that countries should co-operate in supplying information regarding activities which caused atomic radiation. The Scientific Committee's report, however, indicated that such co-operation

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Twenty-fifth Session, Plenary Meetings, 1971st meeting, para. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Mimeographed, dated 17 May 1971.

<sup>4</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fifth Session, First Committee, 1751st meeting.

<sup>1</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, First Committee, 1259th meeting, para. 7.

already existed; pressing the matter further might result in raising issues that were already being dealt with in other bodies of the United Nations and might introduce an element of discord into the consideration of a technical item which should not be controversial. On behalf of the 19 sponsors of the revised draft resolution, he therefore appealed to the representative of Jordan to withdraw his amendment in a spirit of co-operation so that general agreement could be reached on the revised text.

9. Mr. NUSEIBEH (Jordan) said that it had at no time been his intention to introduce political issues into the debate or to hinder the Scientific Committee's work. He had merely wished to express his concern about a situation that might have serious repercussions not only in the Middle East and Africa but throughout the world. That was the reason he had drawn the Special Political Committee's attention to a problem that concerned all its members. However, since a number of Governments whose integrity he respected had indicated to him that the Committee was not the appropriate organ for a debate of that kind, he agreed to fall in with the wishes of his colleagues and withdraw his amendment. He hoped, none the less, that it would be possible to draw up texts at a later session that would enable the Scientific Committee to carry out fully the task for which it had been created.

10. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the spirit of co-operation shown by the representative of Jordan in withdrawing his amendment and expressed the hope that it would now be possible to reach agreement on the draft resolution.

11. Mr. JIMENEZ (Philippines) assured the Scientific Committee, whose work was beneficial for the whole of humanity, of the support of his delegation. His Government was opposed to the continuation of all nuclear bomb testing by any Power, particularly in the Pacific region. Those experiments had been found to be the main source of general contamination of the environment, and his Government had requested that they should cease. That position of his Government was consistent with the stand taken by the Asian and Pacific Council at Bangkok in July 1967.

12. Mr. SYKES (United Republic of Tanzania) supported the draft resolution before the Committee and hoped that the Scientific Committee would present a fuller report at the twenty-seventh session of the General Assembly. His delegation noted with regret that, despite the appeal made by scientists and persons concerned with preserving human life and the environment, many Member States had still not introduced the necessary safeguards to prevent lasting genetic and ecological damage.

13. He believed that Member States should volunteer more information to the Scientific Committee. He had therefore welcomed the amendment (A/SPC/L.204) proposed by the Jordanian delegation and had been somewhat taken aback when it had been withdrawn, although the practice of asking small countries to co-operate when major Powers wished to obtain something was quite common. Furthermore, he did not properly understand the purpose of the amendments to operative paragraphs 5 and 8 of the draft resolution.

14. Mr. STEWARD (South Africa) recalled that the Scientific Committee had been set up in 1955 in response to the widespread concern at the time about the biological consequences of nuclear-weapons testing. However, with the decline in atmospheric testing and the consequent risk of contamination, there had been a shift in the Scientific Committee's activities to the problem of contamination resulting from the peaceful uses of atomic energy. In that connexion, his delegation shared the views of the representative who had warned against a possible overlap between the Scientific Committee's activities and those of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That overlap could be avoided through co-operation—already in being—between the two bodies; in practice, the Scientific Committee had devoted itself primarily to investigating the biological consequences of radiation, while the Agency had concentrated on radio-activity in the environment caused by the peaceful uses of atomic energy. His delegation endorsed the suggestion made that the Scientific Committee's reports should be submitted to the Agency.

15. Mr. DOE (Liberia) felt that all those who were concerned about the harmful effects which atomic radiation might have on man, and especially on future generations, should support all the efforts to prevent it. His Government had always been categorically opposed to nuclear tests, which it would like to see completely transferred from the African continent. He urged that the draft resolution be adopted unanimously.

16. The CHAIRMAN announced that in the absence of any objections he would regard draft resolution A/SPC/L.203/Rev.1 as having been unanimously adopted.

*The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.*

17. Mr. PAYSSE REYES (Uruguay), explaining his vote, said that his delegation would have supported any more positive resolution. It hoped that in 1972 the Scientific Committee would be able, after 17 years' work, to reach conclusions which would enable the United Nations to establish, in the interests of mankind, an international system for controlling nuclear testing programmes.

#### *Organization of the Committee's work*

18. The CHAIRMAN noted that the Committee had completed consideration of the first item on its agenda. With regard to agenda item 37, concerning the policies of *apartheid* of the Government of South Africa, the report of the Special Committee on *Apartheid* would be distributed on 18 October. He therefore suggested that the Committee cancel the meetings scheduled for that day and meet on the afternoon of 20 October.

19. Mr. ABDILLEH (Somalia) announced that the Rapporteur of the Special Committee on *Apartheid* and the Chairman of the Committee of Trustees of the United Nations Trust Fund for South Africa would be able to present the report of those bodies on 20 October. In addition, the Chairman of the Special Committee would make a statement on 22 October, so that the debate on the question could begin on 25 October; the Committee members would thus have a full week to study the report.

20. He suggested that a presentation of the film "Dumping Grounds" be arranged for 20 October, after the Special Political Committee's meeting, the showing to be announced in the *Journal of the United Nations* so that as many representatives as possible could see that documentary, which was also of interest to the members of the Third and Fourth Committees. He also requested that all the relevant publications, and especially those of the Group on *Apartheid*, be made available to Committee members in the meeting room.

21. The CHAIRMAN recapitulated the Somali representative's suggestions, and said that in the absence of any objections he would take it that the Committee was adopting that time-table.

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 3.55 p.m.*