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FINAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL EVALUATING THE
SECOND UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
THE PEACEFUL USES OF ATOMIC ENERGY IN RELATION TO
THE HOLDING OF SIMILAR CONFERENCES IN THE FUTURE

1. In resolution 1344 (XIII) of 13 December 1958, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations Scientific Advisory Committee, in consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the interested specialized agencies "to undertake a thorough evaluation of the Second Conference in relation to the need, nature and timing of similar conferences in this field". The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit an interim report to the Assembly at its fourteenth session and to report to the fifteenth session on the results of the study made by the Scientific Advisory Committee.
2. The Secretary-General consulted with the Scientific Advisory Committee in October 1959 and submitted, with the concurrence of the Committee, an interim report to the fourteenth session of the General Assembly (A/4261). In presenting that report, the Secretary-General informed the Assembly that all of the members of the Advisory Committee were agreed on the desirability of holding a third international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and were of the view that 1962 would seem to be a desirable year for it, and that Geneva would seem to be the most likely site.
3. Since the submission of the interim report, the views of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the specialized agencies have been canvassed, and they were also consulted at the meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, held in Geneva on 28 April 1960. This report takes into account the views expressed by the members of the Advisory Committee, by the International Atomic Energy Agency and by the interested specialized agencies. It has the concurrence of all the members of the Advisory Committee.

Evaluation of the Second International Conference
on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy

4. In his report on the Second Conference to the General Assembly at its thirteenth session (A/3949), the Secretary-General stated that "the comprehensive nature of the Conference, which accounted for its size, led to a synoptic presentation of a vast and complicated area of science and technology, and thereby opened the door to a fruitful exchange of knowledge and ideas among specialists in numerous scientific and technical disciplines from many nations". There can be no doubt that the work of the Second Conference, recorded in its published Proceedings, represents a major contribution to the advancement of the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

5. In general, the United Nations conferences on the peaceful uses of atomic energy have three characteristics which set them apart from other scientific meetings. First, their intergovernmental status provides a strong incentive to Governments to exert serious effort towards presenting as much useful information as possible on a broad range of subjects and gives added authority to the reports which delegations make to their Governments on the proceedings of the conference. The incentive and opportunity to declassify hitherto secret information has also been a very valuable feature of the first two conferences.

6. Secondly, the broad and comprehensive nature of these conferences, although it may create certain practical difficulties, allows a world-wide survey of the whole complex field, as well as the opportunity for scientists from a wide variety of disciplines to meet and discuss their common problems and overlapping specialities, in a far broader context than is customary in normal scientific meetings. The resulting cross-fertilization of ideas and broadening of horizons is believed to have been of value generally to all concerned with the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy, an advantage outweighing any inconvenience of massive documentation and of very large attendance.

7. Thirdly, a periodic world-wide survey of the progress made in all the branches of the peaceful uses of atomic energy provides valuable guidance as to the trends in this highly complex field, and upon those aspects of it which may be particularly applicable to the special problems of a given country. This would be the case with regard to all countries, whatever their state of economic

development. In the highly developed countries, the assembling and presentation to the conference of comprehensive information on their own programmes has also proved useful. Moreover, as an enduring record of the papers and discussions of the Conference, the published Proceedings are especially valuable as a basic work of reference.

8. At the Second Conference a great deal of detailed information was made available and was discussed. In so far as larger developments are concerned, a realistic appraisal was made regarding fusion, whereby, owing to the exchange of information at the Conference, it became clear that a considerable amount of fundamental work had to be carried out before practical results could be expected. This realization has played an important part in promoting a co-operative effort by the countries engaged in fusion work to solve these problems, and this, in itself, is a considerable achievement. With regard to the process of fission, while many countries presented their programmes in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy, no precise information could be given at the Second Conference as to when fission reactors would be able to compete on a commercial basis with other sources of energy in different parts of the world. This reflects the fact that there is still not enough operational experience from nuclear power stations to reach positive judgements, and this must be kept in mind when the question of the timing of a new conference is considered. In general, the wide-ranging discussions at the Second Conference have been helpful in suggesting useful topics for subsequent smaller and more specialized meetings and in drawing attention to certain problems susceptible to an international approach.

9. The view has also been expressed that the very high attendance at the Conference and the small proportion of time allotted to discussion decreased the value of the Second Conference as an opportunity for personal contact and discussion. It has been suggested, however, that, in this context, a greater use of critical reviews of different aspects of a subject as a basis for discussion and increased opportunities for discussing such critical reviews might be helpful both to Governments in evaluating the proper distribution of scientific effort and to individual specialists requiring a broad view of the whole field.

10. It was generally agreed that the scientific exhibits at the Second Conference were of outstanding quality and made a very large contribution to the over-all value of the Conference.

Considerations relating to a third international
conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy

11. There are serious arguments for and against the holding of a third general conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Two of the specialized agencies consulted have expressed a lack of conviction as to the usefulness of a third conference from a scientific point of view, on the grounds that the subject seems now to be adequately covered by smaller, more specialized meetings and through ordinary channels of communication. It has also been said that one of the main achievements of the two previous conferences was to secure an international exchange of information on broad and important aspects of the peaceful uses of atomic energy, e.g., on reactors and the fusion process, and that at present there seems little likelihood of repeating another such break-through at a third conference. It has been further contended that the very impetus given by the First and Second Conferences to the organization of specialized conferences, symposia, seminars, panels and other forms of information exchange, decreases the need for a third conference, since smaller and more specialized meetings provide both for a speedier exchange of information and for closer personal contacts among scientists.

12. On the other hand, the constantly increasing range, specialization and complexity of the peaceful uses of atomic energy make a periodic critical review of the whole field highly desirable. An essential feature of the value of such a review is that it would be both simultaneous and world-wide. A review of this kind also serves to bring together scientists from various disciplines and to provide for the consideration of key problems that are on the borderline of two or more scientific disciplines. The great importance of the peaceful uses of atomic energy to future economic development and the desirability, from every point of view, of promoting international co-operation in the field are also strong reasons for periodic general conferences on the subject.

13. With these considerations in mind, and in view of the unquestioned success of the two previous conferences, the holding of a third international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy of a comprehensive character would seem, on balance, to be desirable. Moreover, Geneva would again seem to be the most suitable site for such a conference.

14. In choosing a date for the third conference, various factors must be borne in mind. It is essential to the success of the conference that there should be a body of significant new information to report, especially in the field of nuclear power, and it is also desirable to maintain continuity with the previous conferences. The timing of other international scientific meetings must also be taken into account. It is suggested that, in the light of all factors and particularly of the time at which significant new information is likely to be available, the year 1962 would seem to be preferable for the third conference, although the possibility of 1963 as an alternative date should be left open for the time being.

Organization of the conference

15. It is generally agreed that there is a tendency for general conferences on the peaceful uses of atomic energy to become so large in scope and numbers as to be unwieldy both in terms of the range of subjects covered, which finds reflection in the number of papers submitted by Governments, and of the very large numbers of persons attending the conference either as members of delegations or as observers. The Advisory Committee has given serious thought to this problem and has considered certain general ways by which the problem might to some extent be solved - the practical target being a conference similar in size, both as regards papers and participants, to the 1955 Atomic Conference.

Sponsorship

16. As indicated in the remarks made by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly when presenting the interim report on future conferences at the fourteenth session,^{1/} the Advisory Committee has discussed the question of the sponsorship of a third conference, and has come to the conclusion that the conference should be held under United Nations sponsorship with, of course, the fullest co-operation of and assistance from the International Atomic Energy Agency and the interested specialized agencies. Especially with a conference

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourteenth Session, Plenary Meetings, 838th meeting.

of such magnitude and complexity, divided sponsorship or executive responsibility would tend to create serious problems. On the other hand, it is recognized that the International Atomic Energy Agency, in particular, should play a very important role in the conference, especially in assisting in its scientific staffing and in the preparation of its detailed programme.

Recommendation

17. It is recommended that a third United Nations International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy of the same comprehensive character as the previous two should be held in Geneva in 1962, at a precise date to be determined later, on the understanding that the possibility of 1963 as an alternative date should be left open for the time being. The Conference should be sponsored and organized by the United Nations with the full assistance of the IAEA and of the interested specialized agencies.
