



Eighteenth session

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
ON THE EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION

1. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was established by resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955 at the tenth session of the General Assembly. It has the following members: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Republic, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America.

2. The Committee held its twelfth session at the European Office, Geneva, from 21 January to 30 January 1963. Dr. D. Beninson of Argentina and Dr. M.E.A. El-Kharadly of the United Arab Republic served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

CONSIDERATION OF SECTION I OF RESOLUTION 1764 (XVII)
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3. At this session, as requested by the General Assembly in operative paragraph 5 of section I of resolution 1764 (XVII), the Committee discussed its programme of work. The Committee considered its future activity under the following headings:

Subjects and scope of scientific study

Reporting practice

Sources of information

Relations with UN agencies and other organizations

Scientific assistance to the Committee

Subjects and scope of scientific study

4. The Committee noted that the General Assembly had requested that it continue the assessment of radiation risks and that this involved reviewing on the one hand the dose contributions from different sources of radiation, and on the other, the results of biological and medical studies which would lead to a better knowledge of the genetic and somatic effects of radiation and of the way in which the frequency of their occurrence depended upon radiation dose. Any significant change in estimates of the doses received by human tissues or in the evaluation of quantitative relationships between dose and effects might require revision of the estimates of radiation risks.

5. The Committee surveyed information that had become available since the adoption of its second comprehensive report to the General Assembly,^{1/} particularly regarding environmental contamination, and the somatic effects of radiation. The Committee was of the opinion that new information already available and data that were likely to be forthcoming within the next year might make it appropriate to undertake a further review of the dose contribution from short- and long-lived nuclides - particularly those introduced into the environment by nuclear tests - and also of the relationship between levels of radiation and the induction of malignancies in man, especially leukaemia. The Committee further felt that a general review of the factors influencing radiation sensitivity would throw much light on the induction of genetic and somatic effects and would therefore demand the Committee's attention.

Reporting practice

6. The Committee discussed the way in which it should report to the General Assembly and considered that the General Assembly would be effectively kept informed of the results of the Committee's continuing deliberations if the Committee submitted, at relatively frequent but not necessarily yearly intervals, short or specialized reports on any conclusions significantly affecting the estimates of radiation risk. The Committee left open the possibility of preparing a new general review of the whole field of study encompassed by its terms of reference at a time when scientific progress would, in its opinion, so require.

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventeenth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/5216).

7. The Committee expressed the hope that the data at its disposal would make it possible to prepare for submission to the nineteenth session of the General Assembly a short report dealing with such revised estimates of risks as might result from its consideration of the doses due to environmental contamination, and of its survey of advances in the knowledge of radiation-induced malignancies in man, including leukaemias. If appropriate at that time, the report would also embody a review of exposure from other sources of radiation and the conclusions of the Committee's discussions on radio-sensitivity, which might otherwise form the subject of separate reports at later dates.
8. The Committee noted that a progress report would, as in the past, be submitted to the General Assembly every year.

Sources of information

9. The Committee expressed the wish that States Members of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as also the agencies themselves and a number of non-governmental organizations, would continue to supply the Committee with the information it needed to carry out its task, in particular on radiation levels from various sources and on genetic and somatic effects of radiation. The Committee emphasized the importance of the submission of these reports at the earliest possible dates after the relevant information had become available.

Relations with United Nations agencies and other organizations

10. The Committee emphasized the importance for its work of the assistance that it expected to receive from the specialized agencies of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency and such non-governmental agencies as the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Commission on Radiological Units and Measurements. It noted the interest of the World Health Organization in studies in areas of high natural radiation and that of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the standardization of radioactive samples.
11. In the course of its discussion of environmental contamination, the Committee recognized that it would greatly benefit from a continued close co-operation with the Food and Agriculture Organization and discussed the way

in which data on dietary contamination and composition could be most appropriately presented by that organization so that they might be of the greatest value to the Committee in the preparation of its reports to the General Assembly.

12. The Committee recognized the importance of reviewing the information regarding the transport and distribution of radio-active debris in the atmosphere and requested that the World Meteorological Organization be invited to convene a small group of experts which should discuss with the Committee, during part of its thirteenth session, certain meteorological problems of interest to it.

Scientific assistance

13. The Committee requested that the Secretariat provide it with scientific assistance of the kind it had received in the past.

CONSIDERATION OF THE PLAN PREPARED BY THE WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION II OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 1629 (XVI)

14. The Committee gave detailed consideration to the plan proposed by the World Meteorological Organization (A/5253) for the implementation of section II of resolution 1629 (XVI) of the General Assembly. As a result of its deliberations the Committee adopted a statement containing a number of recommendations on those aspects of the plan which fell within the terms of reference of the Committee. The Committee requested that the statement be transmitted to the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization.

TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

15. The Committee recognized that in 1964 it would be necessary to hold two sessions, each of two weeks' duration, the one in March and the other in June or July, and it asked that arrangements should be made for one of the sessions, preferably the fourteenth, to be held at Headquarters, and the other at the European office.