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Effects of atomic radiation

Letter dated 18 May 2010 from the Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour, as Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, and in consultation with the officers of the Committee, to inform you that the Committee requires extra time to respond to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 64/85 of 10 December 2009 owing to force majeure.

You will recall that in paragraph 13 of resolution 64/85, the General Assembly reminded the Scientific Committee “to continue its reflection on how its current, as well as its potentially revised, membership could best support its essential work, including by developing, with the participation of the observer countries, detailed, objective and transparent criteria and indicators to be applied equitably to present and future members alike, and to report its conclusions by the end of June 2010”.

Since the adoption of the resolution, the Chair and Vice-Chair had consulted by electronic mail and individually by telephone with representatives on the Scientific Committee, and had prepared process papers for the Committee to address the issue before the end of June 2010. The papers proposed elements that could serve as possible criteria and indicators for discussion and agreement at the fifty-seventh session of the Committee, scheduled to be held from 19 to 23 April 2010. While there was basic consensus on the approach, it was clear that face-to-face debate and agreement within the Committee as a whole, best conducted in an open and collegial forum, was necessary to reach conclusions.

Regrettably, force majeure owing to worldwide flight disruptions following the April 2010 volcanic eruptions in Iceland interfered with the ability of almost all representatives, advisers, observers and consultants to reach Vienna for the scheduled session. We were faced with the prospect of insufficient numbers for a quorum to permit us to reach conclusions. Accordingly, in extensive consultations with representatives and delegations by e-mail and telephone during the days preceding the meeting, facilitated enormously by the secretariat, I took the decision at 7 a.m. on Sunday, 18 April 2010, to postpone the meeting. There has been strong support of this decision from representatives and essentially no disavowal.



By this timely response to the force majeure, the secretariat managed to retain sufficient resources to allow the fifty-seventh session of the Scientific Committee to be rescheduled. However, the unfortunate but inevitable consequence affects the ability of the Committee to reach conclusions on its response to paragraph 13 of resolution 64/85 before 30 June 2010. There were no logistic possibilities to reschedule the fifty-seventh session before 30 June 2010; however, the secretariat has managed to secure facilities for a rescheduled session from 16 to 20 August 2010 in Vienna.

The Committee is fully committed to responding to the General Assembly's request and recognizes the benefits that this process will bring to enhancing the efficiency of its work. I would emphasize that the Committee has reiterated its wish that its membership remain at about the present size. The development of criteria and indicators for membership is already well advanced, and I fully expect that the Committee can reach important conclusions at its rescheduled session.

Accordingly, I envisage that the Committee will be able to report its conclusions in response to paragraph 13 of resolution 64/85 after its rescheduled session to be held from 16 to 20 August 2010, and before the end of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Norman E. **Gentner**
Chair
United Nations Scientific Committee
on the Effects of Atomic Radiation