

**Seventy-sixth session**

Item 52 of the provisional agenda*

Effects of atomic radiation**Operational cost implications of increased membership of
the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of
Atomic Radiation****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 22 of General Assembly resolution [75/91](#), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to strengthen support for the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation within existing resources, particularly with regard to the increase of operational costs in the case of a further increase in membership, and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on those issues.

The report should also be considered in the context of paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution [73/261](#), in which the Assembly established a procedure for increasing the Scientific Committee's membership and stated that any further increases in membership were to occur only after financial aspects were fully reviewed and if the secretariat of the Committee was appropriately strengthened.

In 1955, when the Scientific Committee was established, it had a total of 15 members. Since that time, the General Assembly has increased the membership of the Committee three times, in 1974, 1986 and 2011, to the existing total of 27 States. The factors highlighted in making those changes in membership included enhancing the effectiveness of the Committee, scientific representation, contributions to the work of the Committee and equitable geographical distribution. On the most recent occasion, in 2011, the Assembly decided to increase the membership of the Committee on the understanding that the increase could be achieved from within existing resources for the biennium 2012–2013, and requested the Secretariat and Member States to use the budget and the meeting time allocated to the work of the Committee in the most efficient manner in order to best avoid additional budgetary implications of the increased membership in the future.

In 2017, the General Assembly, in its resolution [72/76](#), noted expressions of interest in membership in the Scientific Committee from Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Norway and the United Arab Emirates. The Assembly invited those four Member States to attend the Committee's sixty-fifth session as observers, and all four

* [A/76/150](#).



attended the annual sessions from 2018 to 2021. The Committee considered the past four years of participation by the four observer States at its sixty-eighth session, held from 21 to 25 June 2021, in line with the procedure for further increases in the membership of the Committee as set out in paragraph 21 of Assembly resolution [73/261](#). In its report on its sixty-eighth session (see [A/76/46](#)), the Committee reported its favourable advice on the admission of those observer States as members of the Committee. Should the Assembly decide to increase the Committee's membership, that would bring the total number of members to 31 States, more than doubling the Committee's original membership of 15 States from 1955, which would have concomitant implications for the Committee's operational costs.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in the context of paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution 73/261 and pursuant to paragraph 22 of resolution 75/91, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on measures to strengthen support for the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation within existing resources, particularly with regard to the increase of operational costs in the case of a further increase in membership of the Committee.

II. Background

2. By its resolution 913 (X), the General Assembly established the Scientific Committee in 1955 to undertake broad scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment.

3. For more than six decades, the Scientific Committee has conducted evaluations of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from natural and other sources, including its use in medicine, research, agriculture, industry and nuclear power production. During that period, a very substantial increase in the use of radiation has taken place, and two major nuclear accidents have occurred, with significant public impact. In addition, the Committee's work has been fundamental to the establishment and implementation of the international radiation safety regime, critically underpinning the global safety standards for protecting the public, workers and patients against ionizing radiation. In turn, those standards are related to important national and international policies, strategies, programmes and legislative instruments on radiation protection of the public, patients and workers, as well as for the environment. The mandate and essential work of the Committee are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1

Mandate and essential work of the Scientific Committee

<i>Element</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mandate	Increase knowledge and understanding of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources by undertaking broad scientific assessments of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment ^{a,b}
Essential work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Recommend and direct the Committee's programme of work; identify and review important questions in the field of ionizing radiation; reflect the latest developments and findings in the field of ionizing radiation^b (b) Consult with other bodies so as to avoid duplication of work and ensure effective coordination; consult with scientists and experts from interested Member States in the process of preparing scientific reports^c (c) Request from Member States detailed information needed to assist it in its work;^b recommend uniform standards for data requested^a (d) Provide reliable scientific information important for the programme of work^d (e) Conduct intersessional work: arrange for expert reviews; maintain surveillance on emerging issues; compile, evaluate, analyse, quality-assure and synthesize technical information on levels and effects of ionizing radiation^{a,b} (f) Interchange the results and experience of research conducted at the national level so as to improve knowledge of the hazards of radiation;^c indicate future research needs^a

<i>Element</i>	<i>Description</i>
	(g) Scrutinize draft scientific documents to ensure accuracy, usefulness, completeness and balance ^a
	(h) Agree on objective scientific findings based on analysis, ensuring clarity and independence; report thereon to the General Assembly ^a
	(i) In response to a request by the Government of a country situated in an area of nuclear arms testing or which considers that it is exposed to atomic radiation by reason of such testing, appoint a group of experts from among its members for the purpose of visiting that country, at the latter's expense, and of consulting with its scientific authorities and informing the Committee of the consultations ^f

^a Based on resolution 913 (X).

^b Based on resolution 65/96 and similar earlier resolutions.

^c Based on resolution 1347 (XIII).

^d In resolution 65/96, this activity is encouraged on the part of all Member States in general, and by implication it is expected of States members of the Scientific Committee.

^e Based on resolution 1629 (XVI).

^f Based on resolution 3154 C (XXVIII), para. 4.

4. The Scientific Committee convenes annual sessions, attended by over 160 scientific advisers from its 27 member States, together with observer States and observers from relevant international organizations. Session attendees scrutinize the scientific content of comprehensive and highly specialized documents and develop and implement the Committee's programme of work. Participation at the sixty-seventh and sixty-eighth sessions increased to over 200 attendees from 27 member States, 4 observer States and 12 international organizations.

5. The secretariat of the Scientific Committee, provided under arrangements with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and located in Vienna, organizes the annual sessions. Under the Committee's direction, the secretariat also coordinates the intersessional development of specialized reports by expert and ad hoc working groups, which are based on scientific and technical information provided by all members of the United Nations and other international organizations and derived from the peer-reviewed scientific literature.

6. In its resolutions,¹ the General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed the Scientific Committee's present functions and independent role as a United Nations voice and expressed the Assembly's desire that the Committee continue its important work. The Committee continues to work closely with its member States and observers, and with all States Members of the United Nations. The Committee also collaborates closely with its partner organizations within the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations. In addressing the Committee at its sixty-eighth session to mark the occasion of its sixty-fifth anniversary, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Ghada Fathi Waly, the Executive Director of UNEP, Inger Andersen, and the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Mariano Grossi, underlined the importance of independent and robust radiation science forming the core of the Committee's work.

7. At the same time, the General Assembly has repeatedly emphasized the "vital need for sufficient, assured and predictable funding" for the Scientific Committee, most recently in the sixth preambular paragraph of resolution 75/91. This need has been all the more apparent during radiological and nuclear emergencies in which the Committee's expertise has been required, as expressed in the annex to the letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station in 2011, in which the

¹ See, for example, resolutions 73/261, 74/81 and 75/91.

Secretary-General highlighted the need for the Committee to have “all the necessary capacity and resources to better undertake its work”.²

8. In recent years, the Scientific Committee has adopted several management and efficiency reforms to enhance its operational effectiveness. This includes the creation of its Bureau,³ the development of governing principles⁴ and strategic directions⁵ to guide its work, and the establishment of two ad hoc working groups, one on effects and mechanisms and one on sources and exposure,⁶ that support the development and implementation of the Committee’s programme of work for the period 2020–2024. In addition, the Committee continues to implement its public information and outreach strategy for 2020–2024, with a focus on reaching wider audiences (the scientific community, Member States, the diplomatic community, the public and the media), in line with the United Nations policies on multilingualism and digitization. However, the secretariat of the Committee remains heavily reliant on ad hoc, in-kind contributions of professional and general staff from its member States and on the general trust fund established by the Executive Director of UNEP, in lieu of more sustainable permanent increases in financial and human resources. The secretariat will continue to utilize such temporary solutions on an ad hoc basis in the short term. However, it is expected that the ongoing global digital transformation, in line with the Secretary-General’s Road Map for Digital Cooperation, which is particularly relevant for the Committee in the context of data collection on medical, public and occupational exposure, will take on increasing importance in the long term. The secretariat anticipates that those developments will therefore necessitate further strengthening of its human resources capacity to meet those future needs, in particular in the areas of improved and regular data collection on medical, public and occupational exposure, and public outreach. The development and evolution of the Committee’s work and evaluations in recent decades are summarized in table 2.

² A/C.4/66/8, annex, para. 27 (b).

³ The Scientific Committee elects the following officers every two years: a Chair; three Vice-Chairs; and a Rapporteur. The Bureau also includes, ex officio, the former Chair, the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary of the Committee.

⁴ Last amended in 2015. Available at www.unscear.org/unscear/en/about_us/governingprinciples.html.

⁵ Last amended in 2019, Available at www.unscear.org/unscear/en/about_us/strategic-directions.html.

⁶ In 2018 and 2019, respectively.

Table 2
Development of the scientific evaluations and related work of the Scientific Committee since the 1980s

<i>Area of work</i>	<i>1982–1988</i>	<i>2001–2008</i>	<i>2010–2021</i>
Prepare, conduct and follow up on annual sessions	73 delegates (from member States) 10 observers from international organizations 8 consultants 91 participants at the thirty-seventh session (1988)	82 delegates (from member States) 7 scientists from observer States, 11 observers from international organizations 6 consultants, 1 consultant for Chernobyl matters 107 participants at the fifty-sixth session (2008)	126 delegates (from member States) 4 scientists from observer States, 26 observers from international organizations 9 consultants 165 participants at the sixty-sixth session (2019)
Prepare highly technical documents and conduct meticulous scientific editing and publishing	Work by individual experts, with support from national institutes 1986 and 1988 reports (2 volumes) included more than 1,000 pages, with 4,797 references	Increasingly complex research projects in radiation science, involving groups of international experts; limited support from national institutes 112 sets of written comments on intersessional documents and responses thereto 2006 and 2008 reports (4 volumes) included more than 1,600 pages, with 5,085 references and 31 electronic attachments	Establishment of expert groups involved over 140 experts (e.g., 80 for the 2013 Fukushima report). Each report received several hundred peer review comments (about 1,000 comments were received on the 2020 report) and responses thereto 2012, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020/21 reports (with 16 annexes) included more than 2,853 pages, with 5,955 references and 61 electronic attachments
Enhance data collection from Member States		Increased information and data flows from States, institutes and experts	The secretariat of the Committee established and maintained a digital platform ^a for the submission of data on the global surveys on medical, occupational and public exposures
Data collection			
Occupational exposures	14 States; 10 occupation categories	52 States; some 30 occupation categories	57 States; about 60 occupation categories

<i>Area of work</i>	<i>1982–1988</i>	<i>2001–2008</i>	<i>2010–2021</i>
Medical diagnosis and therapy	13 States; 19 medical procedures	53 States; some 90 medical procedures	58 States; about 100 medical procedures
Exposure to natural radiation	25 States	56 States	99 States nominated national contact persons (ongoing survey until September 2021) ^a
Public outreach	Public information booklet entitled “Radiation doses, effects and risks” published in 1985 (updated in 1993)	The secretariat of the Committee managed the content of more than 90 web pages on the Committee’s website ^b and, in 2007 and 2008, responded to over 100 inquiries from the media, the public and the scientific community, many involving research	Public information booklet entitled “Radiation: effects and sources” updated in 2016 and made available in 12 languages. ^c The secretariat of the Committee has continued to manage the content of the Committee’s website (currently being updated), as well as many outreach activities, including the launch of the Fukushima report ^d

^a See www.survey.unscear.org.

^b See www.unscear.org.

^c See www.unscear.org/unscear/en/publications/booklet.html.

^d See www.unscear.org/unscear/en/events/ffup2-launch-2021.html.

9. The Scientific Committee's rigorous evaluations have repeatedly underpinned significant political actions, such as: (a) the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water; and (b) preparations for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in 1972, which established important principles of international environmental protection and led to the creation of UNEP. In addition, the evaluations have been used for: (a) substantial reductions in radiation exposure limits for workers and the public; (b) international action plans to improve the protection of workers, patients and the environment; and (c) recovery programmes or actions from the Chernobyl nuclear power station accident in 1986 and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station accident after the great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

III. Evolution of the membership of the Scientific Committee

10. The evolution of the membership of the Scientific Committee since it was established in 1955 up until the currently proposed increase is summarized in table 3.

11. In 2017, the Secretary-General provided the General Assembly with a list of Member States that had expressed their interest in becoming members of the Scientific Committee, namely, Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Norway and the United Arab Emirates (see final column of table 3).⁷ In its resolution 72/76, the Assembly invited each of those States to designate a scientist and become an observer to the sixty-fifth session of the Committee and requested that the Committee establish procedures for any future increases in its membership.

12. The observer States attended the sixty-fifth session of the Scientific Committee, held from 11 to 14 June 2018, and scientists from each observer State actively participated in each of the three subsequent annual sessions of the Committee.⁸ Therefore, the four observer States now seek to become members of the Committee, at the invitation of the General Assembly.

13. If the General Assembly invites the four observer States to become members of the Scientific Committee, its membership will have increased by 10 States in the past 10 years, representing an increase of over 47 per cent compared with its pre-2011 membership.

14. Pursuant to paragraph 21 (e) of General Assembly resolution 73/261, and as detailed in its separate report to the Assembly,⁹ the Scientific Committee considered the four observer States against the criteria for membership at its sixty-eighth session, held from 21 to 25 June 2021. The Committee gave due consideration to the degree of participation of the observer States and to the other matters outlined in the suggested framework of criteria and indicators for membership, as set out in detail in the report of the Secretary-General on membership of the Committee and the financial implications of increased membership (A/66/524, para. 16). In particular, the Committee:

(a) Acknowledged the consistent participation in and contribution to its work by the scientists from each observer State throughout the past four years, including in expert groups;

(b) Noted that the four observer States reflected the principle of equitable geographical distribution and it expected that each State would continue to make a valuable contribution to the Committee's work, as members, as they had demonstrated throughout the past four years as observers;

(c) Noted that the observer States' contributions would enhance the United Nations regional networks in Africa and Asia and support the Committee's work on

⁷ A/72/557.

⁸ Sixty-sixth (10–14 June 2019), sixty-seventh (2–6 November 2020) and sixty-eighth (21–25 June 2021) sessions.

⁹ A/76/46.

the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on exposure and levels of ionizing radiation and assist with mapping radionuclide concentrations in the environment, in accordance with its long-term strategic directions;

(d) Noted that the four observer States had been invited to attend, and that their scientists had actively participated at, each of the sixty-fifth to sixty-eighth sessions (2018–2021) of the Committee. All four observer States had submitted data to the Committee’s global surveys on medical and occupational exposure, were participating in the ongoing global survey on public exposure and had advertised the global surveys in their respective regions;

(e) Considered that the four observer States had demonstrated their active participation in and commitment to the work of the Committee.

15. Accordingly, the Scientific Committee advised the General Assembly that, in its opinion, all four observer States compared favourably against the framework of objective criteria for membership, noting that Committee membership was ultimately a decision for the Assembly.¹⁰

16. The Scientific Committee also expressed serious concern about its ability to successfully implement its future programme of work in a timely manner, in particular with regard to the increased number of experts involved in the ongoing evaluations, the need for enhanced data collection and outreach activities and the operational costs in the case of further membership increases. The Committee hence recalled paragraph 21 (g) of General Assembly resolution [73/261](#), in which the Assembly stated that any further increases in membership were to occur only after financial aspects were fully reviewed and if the secretariat of the Committee was appropriately strengthened, in accordance with conclusions drawn in previous reports of the Secretary-General.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 122.

¹¹ Ibid., para. 113.

Table 3
States members of the Scientific Committee (in bold) and States desiring to become members of the Committee

<i>Current regional groups^a</i>	<i>States designated by the General Assembly in 1955^b</i>	<i>States that expressed their desire to participate and ability to contribute in 1974;^c States subsequently admitted as members by the President of the General Assembly (in bold)^d</i>	<i>States invited to become members by the General Assembly in 1986^e</i>	<i>States that indicated their desire to become members in 2007^f and were admitted as members by the General Assembly in 2011</i>	<i>States that indicated their desire to become members in 2017^g and are now candidates for membership</i>
African States	Egypt	Central African Republic Sudan Zaire			Algeria
Asia-Pacific States	India Japan	Indonesia Philippines Thailand	China	Pakistan Republic of Korea	Iran (Islamic Republic of) United Arab Emirates
Eastern European States	Russian Federation^h Slovakiaⁱ	Poland Yugoslavia		Belarus Ukraine	
Latin American and Caribbean States	Argentina Brazil Mexico	Peru Trinidad and Tobago			
Western European and other States	Australia Belgium Canada France Sweden United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland United States of America	Denmark Germany Israel Italy New Zealand Norway Turkey		Finland Spain	Norway

^a For electoral purposes within the organs of the United Nations.

^b In resolution 913 (X).

^c Pursuant to resolution 3154 C (XXVIII), para. 2.

^d By the letter dated 6 May 1974 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Secretary-General (A/9531).

^e China was explicitly invited to become a member (see resolution 41/62 B, para. 2).

^f Pursuant to resolution 61/109, para. 14.

^g Having submitted notes verbales addressed to the Secretary-General by 11 September 2017 (see resolution 72/76, para. 19).

^h Originally the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

ⁱ Originally Czechoslovakia.

IV. Financial implications of increased membership

17. In the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly prior to the 2011 membership increase, the Assembly was informed that any additional members would give rise to additional financial costs for the secretariat of the Committee.¹² In the absence of a corresponding increase in its permanent financial resources for the additional administrative workload arising from the 2011 membership increase, the secretariat implemented the Committee's programme of work by increasing its reliance on ad hoc and in-kind contributions from Member States, made with experts or through the trust fund.¹³ However, the trust fund was established to cover the costs of: (a) accelerating the finalization and publication of delayed scientific reviews; (b) improving awareness of the Committee and its findings; and (c) preparing for the future programme of work.¹⁴ Experience to date shows that contributions to the trust fund are ad hoc, not predictable and not sustainable, as the fund often relies on limited and designated voluntary contributions (e.g., for a scientific evaluation on a specific topic, such as the Fukushima accident, or data collection from Member States). As noted with concern by the Committee at its sixty-eighth session, the regular budget of the Committee is relatively small, with increased demands and a declining tendency in the past 10 years, in particular for the core function of scientific evaluations. On this basis, it is estimated that additional regular budget resources will be required in the case of increased membership.

18. Should the General Assembly decide to increase the membership of the Scientific Committee by four States, additional financial resources from the regular budget, starting in 2023, and as detailed in table 4, would be required. As requested in paragraph 22 of Assembly resolution 75/91, this increase of operational costs in the case of a further increase in membership to include four new States could be provided for during 2022 within the existing resources of the United Nations. Given the Committee's small regular budget, the uncertainty regarding future voluntary funding and the defined objectives of the trust fund, it is not feasible to absorb the increase of operational costs resulting from four additional member States in the long term.

Table 4

Anticipated increase of the Committee's operational costs as a result of four additional member States

(United States dollars)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Estimated additional costs per year for four additional member States</i>
Travel for four State representatives to attend the annual sessions of the Committee	2 800
Additional peak workload for the secretariat of the Committee (including annual session servicing) ^a	8 600
Engagement of additional technical consultants from the four States for home-based technical evaluations	6 700
Supplies and materials for outreach activities	400
Total	18 500

^a It is estimated that the admission of a further four member States would give rise to an increase in the peak workload of the secretariat amounting to four person-weeks (calculated at the G-6 level) per year, consisting of added preparation, servicing and follow-up actions due to the participation of four additional delegations in the annual sessions.

¹² A/66/524, para. 18.

¹³ For example, the secretariat of the Committee has engaged a temporary team assistant at the G-4 level since November 2019 (until June 2022) and a United Nations Volunteer since September 2020, both through voluntary funding.

¹⁴ A/63/478, para. 32.

V. Conclusion

19. The independent scientific evaluations of the Scientific Committee remain widely recognized and highly regarded as the basis of radiation safety worldwide. As interest in the Committee's evaluations has grown, participation in its annual sessions has doubled since 2007. The four observer States (Algeria, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Norway and the United Arab Emirates) have participated in the Committee's work since 2018, and the General Assembly is invited to make a decision on whether to admit those States as members of the Committee based on the procedure established by the Assembly in resolution [73/261](#) and the advice provided by the Committee in its report to the Assembly ([A/76/46](#)).

20. The last time the General Assembly deliberated on the admission of new member States to the Scientific Committee, in 2011, the Assembly decided to proceed with the membership increase on the understanding that the increase could be achieved from within the Committee's existing administrative resources for the biennium 2012–2013. That was subsequently implemented, with some support from extrabudgetary resources through the general trust fund. The Assembly also requested the adoption and implementation of a number of budgetary and efficiency measures by the Secretariat and Member States in order to avoid additional budgetary implications arising from the increased membership in the future.¹⁵ Such measures, including extrabudgetary in-kind and financial contributions, have been successfully implemented to accommodate increased numbers of participants and experts in the annual sessions and to assist with the adoption of five scientific evaluations in the past three years. However, the Committee has grown increasingly reliant on ad hoc contributions to the trust fund and on in-kind expert contributions, which is not sustainable in the long term.

21. The Secretariat appreciates the interest of the four observer States in the activities of the Scientific Committee, while also noting the associated financial implications detailed in the present report. If the four observer States are admitted as members of the Committee, its membership will have more than doubled since 1955, with 10 States joining since 2011. The 2011 membership increase has continued to have an impact on the administrative budget of the secretariat of the Committee since the 2012–2013 biennium, while regular budget funding has continued to decline.

22. Having regard to paragraph 21 (g) of General Assembly resolution [73/261](#) and paragraph 22 of resolution [75/91](#), as well as the developments described in paragraphs 20 and 21 of the present report, if the Assembly invites all four States to become members, the additional annual operational costs for the Scientific Committee would be \$18,500, to be funded from the regular budget starting in 2023. With regard to the strengthening of the secretariat, it is important to note that the Committee also expressed serious concern about the Committee's ability to successfully implement its planned programme of work in a timely manner, in particular with regard to the increased number of experts involved in its ongoing evaluations, the need to enhance its data-collection and public outreach activities, and its operational costs in the case of increased membership. The Committee will consider those challenges when the implementation of its programme of work (2020–2024) and the initial preparations for its future programme of work (2025–2029) are discussed at its sixty-ninth session. The Committee will report to the seventy-seventh session of the Assembly on these matters.

23. Pursuant to the procedure set out in General Assembly resolution [73/261](#), the Committee's membership is expected to be considered again in 2027.

¹⁵ Resolution [66/70](#), para. 16.