

clearly premature. Several pieces of debris were found to be radioactive, and one piece, in particular, contained a high level of radioactivity and required very special handling techniques. This piece registered 200 roentgens an hour on contact. This level of radiation would have significant somatic effects for any person closely exposed to it for one hour, or could become lethal if the exposure were prolonged over three hours. This piece has been removed in a specially-constructed lead container. Within a total current search area of 50,000 square kilometres, debris has so far been located along the projected orbit track of *Cosmos 954* over a distance of approximately 750 km. The search-and-recovery operations have been hampered by severe winter weather conditions. The search by air and on the ground will be continued through the coming weeks, and is expected to be extended after the spring thaw into the summer months.

It is not yet known whether any parts of the irradiated fuel core survived re-entry. Extensive environmental monitoring of flora and fauna may be necessary to ensure against exposure of inhabitants in the area and to determine the extent of the contamination of the environment. Even small particles of such fuel, containing fission products, could result in contamination with long-term effects, taking into account the fact that some of these fission products have half-lives of many thousands of years.

On the basis of the information available, and in accordance with Article V, Paragraph 1, of the 1968 Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space, Canada formally notified the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government of the Soviet Union on February 8, 1978, of the discovery on Canadian territory of component parts of the space object. The text of the notification has, at our request, been circulated to member states as Documents A/AC.105/214 and 214/Corr.1.

Against this background, the Canadian Government considers it essential that various disturbing implications of this incident be carefully considered in the Outer Space Committee and its subcommittees. The implications are of concern to all members of the international community. This committee and its subcommittees can make a significant contribution to our understanding of the complex issues raised by the use of nuclear-power sources in space and of the follow-on action that would be appropriate.

Canada initiated last week a preliminary round of consultations with 37 members of this subcommittee. These consultations, which are still under way, are necessarily of an informal and exploratory nature, but we have been encouraged by the positive response of other governments to date. There appears to be strong support for our proposal for early consideration of the wider implications of this incident for the international community, including the scientific and technical as well as the legal implications. We received a number of useful comments and suggestions as to how the matter could be pursued in the committee and its two subcommittees. Until we have had a further discussion of the issues here, it would be premature for my delegation to make any specific proposals for follow-on action. Needless to say, we have no wish