

## Atomic Radiation\*

In the summer of 1955 the United States Government suggested that at its tenth session the General Assembly should take steps to establish procedures for the collection and the distribution of information on the effects of atomic radiation. In making this proposal the United States recognized the widespread interest throughout the world in the possible effects of the use of atomic energy on human health and safety. Many studies were being made by governments and national scientific bodies on this complex problem and the need for assembling and making available on an international basis the results of these studies was being increasingly felt.

The General Assembly readily concurred in the United States suggestion and on December 3, 1955, adopted unanimously a United States resolution, also sponsored by Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries, establishing a Scientific Committee to study the effects of atomic radiation. This Committee will be composed of scientists representing the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R. Under its terms of reference the Committee will receive and assemble radiological information furnished by states members of the United Nations of its Specialized Agencies on (1) levels of radiation and (2) scientific observations and experiments concerning the effects of ionizing radiation upon man and his environment. Yearly progress reports will be made by the Committee which is also called upon to develop by July 1, 1958 or earlier, if this is warranted, a summary of the various reports received. From time to time, the Committee will transmit as it deems appropriate documents and evaluations on information received to the Secretary-General for publication and dissemination to states members of the United Nations or of the Specialized Agencies. The Committee will recommend uniform standards with respect to sample collection and radiation counting procedures; at the same time it will furnish indications of research projects which might require further study.

## Human Rights and Self-Determination

The Committee on Human Rights, one of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, decided at its second session in December 1947, that the task of drawing up an international bill of rights should be carried out in three stages: A "Declaration", a "Covenant", and "Measures of Implementation". The first stage was completed on December 10, 1948 a day since known throughout the world as Human Rights Day when the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had been prepared by the Commission, by a vote of 48 in favour, none against with eight absentions (the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia and the Union of South Africa). Between 1949 and 1954 the Commission on Human Rights devoted six sessions to the preparation of two draft covenants, one on economic, social, and cultural rights, the other on civil and political rights. All participating governments were consulted, and the final drafts were submitted to ECOSOC, which at its 18th Session in 1954 transmitted them to the Assembly without taking any decision on their substance.

\* See statement by Mr. Martin, p. 336.

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