

8. There are as yet not many scientific studies identifying the biological cycle of dioxin from the soil into plant, species, into food, into animals and people.

Dioxin and decomposition products herbicides and defoliants have probably been carried to lowland areas in Vietnam and neighbour countries, and into the seas around Vietnam. Where will substances end up? How will they be decomposed? What danger will they cause? When will the dioxin be decomposed? These points could not yet be established. The opinions put forward at the symposium were only estimates which must be verified over a long period of time.

9. The evaluation of the long-term effects of herbicides and defoliants is a most difficult and complex task. It is therefore difficult to reach full agreement, since the conditions in which scientists work differ from one country to another. However, most of the conclusions of their reports have elaborated the results of experiments conducted by the majority of scientists in the world and Vietnam. Reports by Vietnamese scientists have suggested that herbicides and defoliants affected chromosomes and caused congenital abnormalities, molar pregnancies and chorio epithelioma. Vietnam war veterans exposed to toxic chemicals for a long time during the war years may pass on those abnormalities to their offspring. The rate of monsters in families of Vietnam war veterans seems to be higher than in others. Chemicals affect man's health and how they cause cancer. Herbicides penetrating into human bodies may cause long-term effects, even though the victims have already left the contaminated areas. Of course, such effects would be clearer for those who remain in the affected areas.

Many preliminary conclusions of Vietnamese scientists are new points, which were observed in the realities of Vietnamese society, and have never been dealt with or else have been only inadequately dealt with in foreign research works.

10. During the symposium scientists agreed that:

(a) Further studies should be continued for many years on the long-term effects of herbicides and defoliants used in the war on man and nature in Vietnam.

(b) International co-operation between Vietnamese scientists and their foreign colleagues is necessary to promote study and to determine the effects of herbicides and defoliants, and find measures to cope with them, in the interest of the Vietnamese people and other peoples. Thus, this international symposium in Ho Chi Minh City has had a humanitarian character, which is serving the interest of the people.

(c) Measures to cope with the effects of herbicides and defoliants are complicated and difficult. They involve many fields of science, technology, culture, economy and management and call for appropriate governmental policies. They require a high level of science and technology divorced from politics, the co-operation and commitment of the whole population, and significant investments of money and material. Unrestricted assistance from the international community in all fields related to this endeavour is an urgent necessity.