

External Affairs  
Supplementary Paper

No. 63/3 Speech by Ambassador Jean Chapdelaine in the  
Special Political Committee of the United Nations  
on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, October 30,  
1963.

Our organization is sometimes accused of being satisfied with words and of having degenerated into a forum of fruitless debates. These detractors would quickly change their minds if they were to examine closely the subject we are approaching today and the treatment it has received and will continue to receive in the General Assembly. For the taking up by the United Nations of the study of the effects of atomic radiations -- a study already undertaken by many national and international organizations -- shows the deep concern of world opinion which soon resulted in the organization taking up the conduct and co-ordination of this study.

We are aware that during recent years massive quantities of harmful atomic radiations were poured into the atmosphere. We know that these radiations affect all aspects of human life. Concern, and even deep anxiety, has developed, especially as radiations of this nature are long-lived and their effects have a continued impact on man and on the coming generations.

We must perfect our knowledge of these effects. This is the task of the Scientific Committee, which receives assistance from various agencies. The specific function of one of these bodies, the World Meteorological Organization, is to register data on fall-out movements and concentrations: its responsibility is therefore vital.

Radiations come from various sources, some of which are less important, though not to be neglected. The main source, without any doubt, has been and remains, nuclear testing.

The conclusion of a test-ban treaty on the cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water represents indeed an important step in reducing, if not eliminating, these radiations. United Nations action will have contributed to the conclusion of this treaty.

We should, however, remain alert. Radiations which could be qualified as normal continue to exist; so do the effects of past nuclear tests; and there are tests which are not covered by the Moscow Treaty. I shall give a concrete example of the need for our remaining on the alert by mentioning that, during June and July of this year, Canada registered a rise in the levels of atomic radiation. Such radioactive fall-out was the result of nuclear tests which had taken place almost a year before. You will easily understand the deep concern of all Canadians, and the concern which continues to be felt by several countries, at the thought that the movements of such radiation may eventually reach their territories.

There is no need to emphasize how necessary is the maintenance of a system which will enable us to record the movements of atomic radiation and to acquire a deeper knowledge of its effects, and of the precautions and other measures to be taken in order to minimize its harmfulness.

The system developed by the World Meteorological Organization for recording and distributing data concerning levels of atmospheric radiation, together with the study conducted by our Scientific Committee, will enable us to acquire scientific data which will help us in learning more about the effects and movement of radiation of any origin.

We believe more than ever before that international co-operation in this field is proving absolutely essential in order to prevent or at least to correct the harmful effects of radiation on nutrition, health, genetics, meteorology - in fact, on all manifestations of life.

We believe, therefore, that the development of the system for the recording and distribution of data concerning levels of atmospheric radio-activity -- a system which became evolved after long and close consideration by all appropriate bodies -- is a highly worthwhile achievement which must be kept up by the General Assembly. The majority of members in the Assembly, if not all members, are sharing this view, and 17 delegations, including Canada, have expressed it by preparing a draft resolution contained in Document A/SPC/L.97. The delegations of Brazil, Burma, Cameroun, Canada, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Japan, Mali, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Thailand, and of the United Arab Republic are presenting this resolution which was carefully drafted to avoid political overtones and restricts itself to the administrative, scientific and humanitarian aspects of the question. It is the hope of the co-sponsors that this draft resolution will receive full attention and full support by the Assembly.



We are aware that during recent years massive quantities of harmful atomic radiations were poured into the atmosphere. We know that these radiations affect all life. Concern, and even deep anxiety, has developed, especially among those who have lived and their effects have been passed on to future generations. We must perfect our knowledge of these effects. This is the task of the Scientific Committee, which receives assistance from various agencies. The specific function of one of these bodies, the World Meteorological Organization, is to register data on fall-out movements and concentrations. Its responsibility is therefore vital. Radiations come from various sources, some of which are less important, though not to be neglected. The main source, without any doubt, has been and remains, nuclear testing. The conclusion of a test-ban treaty on the cessation of nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water represents indeed an important step in reducing, if not eliminating, these radiations. United Nations action will have contributed to the conclusion of this treaty. We should, however, remain alert. Radiations which could be qualified as normal continue to exist; so do the effects of past nuclear tests; and there are tests which are not covered by the Moscow Treaty. I shall give a concrete example of the need for our remaining on the alert by mentioning that, during June and July of this year, Canada registered a rise in the levels of atomic radiation. Such radioactive fall-out was the result of nuclear tests which had taken place almost a year before. You will easily understand the deep concern of all Canadians, and the concern which continues to be felt by several countries, at the thought that the movements of such radiation may eventually reach their territories. There is no need to emphasize how necessary is the maintenance of a system which will enable us to record the movements of atomic radiation and to acquire a deeper knowledge of its effects, and of the precautions and other measures to be taken in order to minimize its harmfulness. The system developed by the World Meteorological Organization for recording and distributing data concerning levels of atmospheric radiation, together with the study conducted by our Scientific Committee, will enable us to acquire scientific data which will help us in learning more about the effects and movement of radiation of any origin.