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ATOMIC RADIATION

Text of Statement to be made by the Canadian Representative, Ambassador Paul Beaulieu, in the Special Political Committee, on Monday, October 16, 1967

UNSCEAR, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, has provided, in its twelve years of existence, a valuable service to the international community in assembling radiological information provided by United Nations Member States, in summarizing this information and reporting on the effects of radiation on man, as well as in evaluating and suggesting research projects meriting further study in the field of radiation.

The potential radiation hazard stemming from possible future development or use of nuclear weapons emphasizes the continuing need for the existence of UNSCEAR, comprising as it does a group of recognized scientists from various regions of the world.

At the June 1966 meeting of UNSCEAR in New York, the Secretary-General mentioned two problems to which the Committee should address itself and which still require consideration. Firstly, there is a need to take steps which will reduce the flow of information on world levels of radiation to that which is directly relevant to the assessment of radiation exposure of man. The Secretariat, Member States and the Specialized Agencies concerned could help this process, in accordance with agreed criteria, by predigesting and thereby reducing the data submitted to the Committee.

The second problem raised by the Secretary-General was that the Committee was running out of biological subjects needing review, and that therefore it was not advisable to prepare another comprehensive report for some time. Subsequently, at the 17th Session of UNSCEAR in Geneva, it was decided to make the next comprehensive report to the General Assembly in 1969.

During the 17th Session of the Scientific Committee at Geneva my delegation has noted that the following subjects were discussed:

(1) Radiation-induced Chromosome Anomalies in Man;

(2) Effects of Ionizing Radiation on the Central Nervous System;

(3) Measurements of Environmental Contamination from Nuclear Tests;

(4) Review of the Assumptions and Parameters used in Estimating Dose Commitments from Nuclear Tests.

We have also noted that the Committee began reviewing the information required to continue its assessment of world wide levels of radiation from nuclear tests; and that this review will be completed at its next session.

On the subject of future work it was decided that at the forthcoming session there should be some discussion of the metabolic information about long lived radionuclides required for the estimation of Dose Commitments.

My Delegation congratulates the Scientific Committee on its work and looks forward in particular to receiving the comprehensive report projected for 1969. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation concerning the assistance provided to the Scientific Committee by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Atomic Energy in Agriculture which collected and assembled data on radioactive contamination of the human diet.

Mr. Chairman, in recent years there has been a reduction of the activities of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. As long as there is no immediate threat of a serious radiation hazard, the scientific community is afforded a good opportunity to give further consideration to suggestions that the reporting requirements of UNSCEAR be revised.

My Delegation was pleased to note that at the last Session of the Scientific Committee Dr. Butler, a Canadian, was elected as Chairman for the 18th and 19th Sessions. Consequently, we particularly welcome the opportunity this year of introducing to the Special Political Committee a draft resolution dealing with the work of the Scientific Committee.

It is a draft resolution very similar to previous resolutions adopted unanimously by the Special Political Committee and the General Assembly. Its purpose is to reaffirm the concern of the General Assembly with the harmful effects caused by atomic radiation whatever its source and therefore to call upon the Scientific Committee to continue its work.

My Delegation considers it gratifying that again this year there is such a wide range of co-sponsors for this draft resolution which is to be found in document A/SPC/L.145. The co-sponsors are Argentina, Australia, Burma, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Japan, Mali, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Thailand, United Arab Republic.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, let me express the hope that all Member States will support this Resolution and give their full support to the future work of the Committee.