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Press Release No. 93

December 15, 1966.

Text of Statement to be made in the Special Political Committee by the Canadian Representative, Mr. Pierre-Elliott Trudeau, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, on Item 35 (Effects of atomic radiation: report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the effects of Atomic Radiation) on Thursday, December 15, 1966.

Mr. Chairman,

The Canadian Delegation is pleased to introduce the draft resolution in A/SPC/L.143 requesting the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to continue its programme of work. The co-sponsors of the resolution are the following: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Thailand and United Arab Republic.

There is no need for me to comment at length on the draft resolution. It is similar to previous resolutions adopted unanimously by the Special Political Committee and by 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.

It may be that some will question the need for the Committee to continue in being 11 years after its establishment in 1955 when atomic radiation was perhaps more of a cause for concern than it is today. It is true that there has been a continuing decline in the levels of environmental radiation from nuclear testing. Nevertheless, radiation levels are still high and all of us know that further atmospheric testing is likely to take place despite the partial test ban treaty. May I at this point renew the appeal which Canada has frequently made that all countries sign the partial Test Ban Treaty and express the hope that this treaty will soon apply to all nuclear tests wherever they may take place.

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The Scientific Committee, Mr. Chairman, has assembled a capable group of scientists from 15 countries who have succeeded in giving scientific answers to scientific questions and thus in producing a series of comprehensive and authoritative reports. It is the only international body able and ready to assess the effects of radiation on a regular basis. The Scientific Committee's latest report is a further valuable and useful contribution to scientific knowledge of the effects of radiation, especially the genetic risks of ionizing radiation. It will be invaluable to national and international authorities required to consider this subject.

Those considerations lead us to believe that the Committee deserves congratulations for its work and should be requested to continue it. In saying this we realize that the Committee may have reached a new stage in the study of the subjects committed to its charge. We understand, for example, that the Committee will discuss the scope of its future activities during its next session and will make recommendations on this subject. In particular it may wish to consider whether to recommend some change in the requirement for it to report annually to the General Assembly. We would welcome such a review of the Committee's activities and reporting responsibilities.

May I, in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, draw the attention of the Committee to the paragraphs of the resolution which commend the World Meterological Organization for its work in monitoring and reporting the levels of atmospheric radio-activity, express appreciation for the assistance rendered to the Committee by the Specialized Agencies of the U.N., the IAEA and the non-governmental organizations concerned, and request the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Committee with the necessary assistance for the conduct of its work. I am confident that representatives here of all members of the Scientific Committee would wish to join me in expressing our gratitude for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his staff in providing this assistance. Finally, Mr. Chairman, the co-sponsors hope that all member states will continue to give appropriate attention and full support to the work of the Committee in the future.