

STATEMENT BY MR AVINASH PANDE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT & MEMBER OF
THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 49 – EFFECTS OF ATOMIC
RADIATION AT THE SPECIAL POLITICAL & DECOLONIZATION [FOURTH]
COMMITTEE OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 25, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of India, I would like to once again congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to the 68th General Assembly. I wish you all the best of success, and assure you of my country's continued co-operation and support.

Mr. Chairman,

I would also like to compliment the Scientific Committee on its detailed assessment of the levels and effects of radiation exposure after the accident at the Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Power Plants in 2011. The Committee was ably assisted by experts from several Member States, and was provided voluminous critical data by the Government of Japan, TEPCO, other authenticated Japanese sources and international organizations. It is reassuring to note that in the assessment of the Committee, there was no significant adverse health effect observable in the exposed population so far.

The biological and health effects of this accident will be monitored for several decades to come. A Fukushima Health Management Survey has been initiated to monitor long-term health effects. India would urge the Committee to undertake periodic analyses of the emerging data.

While present estimates indicate that exposure of marine and terrestrial non-human biota was, in general, too low for acute effects to be observed, caution needs to be exercised. In the aftermath of a calamity of this proportion, it is only to be expected that certain shades of opinion would paint a gloomy picture of the consequences. However the world will have to depend on the non-partisan and scientifically sound assessments of UNSCEAR for a non-judgmental view. We would also like to stress that the Committee's projections of the risk of any health effect like cancer, based on use of certain models and data on collective dose, should not be wrongly interpreted to derive the number of likely deaths. There is need for utmost restraint in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

India commends the large-scale evacuation and other preventive as well as recovery and remedial measures taken by the Government of Japan, which ensured considerable reduction in the radiation dose received by the people.

Mr. Chairman,

India also congratulates the Scientific Committee for completing its evaluation of radiation exposure of children. It is an unfortunate fact that only in a few countries, is reliable data maintained on exposure of children and the population in general during various medical, diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. Notwithstanding this limitation, the analysis carried out by the Committee is revealing. While the Committee has concluded that for a given dose, children are generally at greater risk of tumor induction than adults, when examined by tumor types, it is seen that 25% of children are clearly more radio-sensitive, 15% have the same radio-sensitivity and 10% appear to be less sensitive than adults. However, in the case of the remaining nearly 50%, there is weak or no relationship between radiation exposure and age at exposure. For deterministic effects after high acute or fractionated exposure, the differences between a child and adult are complex. There are some instances of more, same and lower sensitivity of children vis-à-vis adults, for different deterministic effects. There is no evidence of increase in hereditary effects such as chromosomal instability, DNA mutation and congenital malformations in offspring of parents exposed to radiation, including high level natural radiation. India is happy to state that this inference is also strongly supported by the data published by Indian researchers based on the study of several thousand newborn children in the high level natural radiation area off the Kerala coast.

Mr. Chairman,

India would like to urge early publication of two very important scientific annexes that were finalized by the Committee in the 59th session, namely the “Ability to attribute risk and effects to ionizing radiation” and “Uncertainties in the risk estimates for cancer due to exposure to ionizing radiation”. These are of considerable interest from the social, economic and legal points of view, as they may impact the liability of an agency that provides services involving use of ionizing radiation or generation of nuclear energy.

India notes with satisfaction the progress made in the development of several other scientific documents undertaken by the Committee. Of special interest to India is the one on “Epidemiology of low-dose-rate exposures of the public to natural and artificial environmental sources of radiation”. In this context, India suggests evaluation of all available data on different biological end points, including cancer.

Mr. Chairman,

India would like to emphasize that international regulatory agencies use the risk assessments by UNSCEAR for arriving at the dose limits of radiation exposure, for the protection of occupational radiation workers and the general public. These limits are several fold lower than the doses that have actually been shown to cause significant harm. Of late there have been concerns about the public perception of these limits. In particular, these concerns get reflected in reservations with respect to recovery management in the case of radioactive contamination. People are concerned about the continuing exposure situation that would be created. Results of studies on biological and health effects in populations exposed to chronic high level natural radiation as carried

out in India and China, would reflect such a situation of continued exposure. Yet, they do not indicate any significant health detriment.

As regards Medical Radiation Exposure, India offers its full cooperation to facilitate the collection of relevant information. The Global Survey to be undertaken by the Committee is an essential but very challenging and difficult task, considering the ground realities in several countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Committee's new strategy of bringing out its reports with scientific annexes in a shorter time than the earlier cycle of 5-6 years, is yielding commendable results. Its efforts to address emergent issues on priority, should be appreciated and supported by UNEP, with adequate resources as and when necessary.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that as a founder member of UNSCEAR, India is proud to be associated with its deliberations.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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