

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR MANJEEV SINGH PURI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON AGENDA ITEM 50 - EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION AT THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE [FOURTH COMMITTEE] OF THE 67<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 13, 2012

**Mr. Chairman,**

I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to the 67th General Assembly, as also the members of the Bureau on their election. I assure you of my delegation's full co-operation and support. I would also like to congratulate former Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Romania, Ambassador Simona-Mirela Miculescu for the way she conducted the work of this committee during the 66<sup>th</sup> session.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) is the only Scientific Committee in the UN system, and we acknowledge the continued high quality work of the Committee (UNSCEAR) as reflected in its report to the 67th General Assembly.

**Mr. Chairman,**

A few years ago, UNSCEAR had initiated a new programme of work. Foremost among its deliberations were those related to the issue of attribution of health effects to radiation, and understanding of the uncertainties in the risk assessment for cancer due to exposure to ionizing radiation. India notes with satisfaction the progress made towards the finalization of the scientific annexes on these two very important topics.

The other important issue is that of discharges during nuclear electricity generation. The intended constitution of an expert group to collect and compile data from different countries and its analysis, is a step in the right direction.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The last decade has witnessed a revival of global interest in nuclear energy. India considers nuclear energy as an essential energy source.

The most unfortunate accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi NPP in March 2011, has once again raised concerns about nuclear safety, which must be addressed to restore public confidence that nuclear energy would be pursued conforming to the highest international standards. It is, therefore, essential to critically analyze the events of Fukushima, including subsequent data on releases of radioactive elements, and exposure to workers and general public using time honoured scientific

methodology of UNSCEAR to allay public fears. It is heartening to note that the Scientific Committee has begun this exercise in right earnest. India has also provided data, based on its independent measurements, for this purpose.

The Fukushima accident has in a way diverted the Committee's attention from its original plan of work envisaged and approved 2 years ago. It has also strained its budgetary resources, though many countries have offered expert services free of cost to the Committee. It is, therefore, important to strengthen the Committee's resources to complete these assessments. Since there are several bodies in the UN system which are actively involved in assessment of the aftermath of the Fukushima accident, an overlap in data collection and analyses is inevitable. There is therefore an urgent need for well thought out coordination among different UN agencies.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The two scientific annexes to the report to the UNGA which Member States, the scientific community, policy makers, regulators and the international legal community are eagerly looking forward to, are on attributability of health effects radiation, especially at low doses, and uncertainties in risk estimation. From the summary of discussions on attributability provided in UNSCEAR's report to the 67th session of the UNGA, it is clear that only tissue injury like deterministic effects can be attributed to acute radiation exposure of high doses.

As a Committee of the world's leading experts in various aspects of radiation biology, physics, epidemiology and other related disciplines of science, it is imperative that the Committee addresses the question of mechanism of radiation action at low doses and dose rates. The Committee should periodically review developments in basic sciences and assess their impact on risk assessments or in terms of causal relationship. Such reports, when published for public information, would do a great service to the scientific community.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents have raised the issue of radiation effects in children. The world is also witnessing increased exposure of children during medical procedures. It is satisfying to note that the committee will be undertaking the assessment of radiation effects in children as a part of its ongoing programme of work.

Collection of data on medical exposure is one of the most difficult tasks, as it is apprehended that in most countries information may not be easily available. UNSCEAR has to, therefore, join hands with IAEA, WHO and national health authorities to obtain this information through a global medical exposure survey. The data on radiation workers may be relatively less difficult to obtain. India assures its full cooperation in facilitating collection of this data.

A major source of the UNSCEAR's risk estimates are the epidemiological studies. There are very few studies on human populations exposed to very low level chronic radiation. Epidemiological and genetic studies carried out in India in the population living in high level natural radiation areas of Kerala is one of them. Indian studies indicate no significant increase in the incidence of cancer. Further, recently published Indian studies on incidence of congenital malformation in over 140,000 new born and case control study on cleft lip and mental retardation do not indicate the association of high natural radiation level with Down's syndrome or other malformations detectable at birth. It is heartening to note that UNSCEAR has initiated the preparation of a scientific document on the epidemiological studies on low level chronic radiation exposures from natural as well as artificial sources of radiation. It goes without saying that these studies will have significant implications for addressing public concerns.

UNSCEAR's future programme includes some of the issues mentioned by me hereinabove. In addition, it is noteworthy that it will continue work on internal emitters and public information.

**Mr. Chairman,**

As in preceding years, India is happy to co-sponsor the resolution proposed by Germany on the subject of Effects of Atomic Radiation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I would like to conclude by reiterating that India will continue to contribute in every manner possible to the work of UNSCEAR.

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

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