

**STATEMENT BY MR. A. GOPINATHAN, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE ON AGENDA ITEM 81: EFFECTS OF ATOMIC RADIATION
AT THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH
COMMITTEE) OF THE 58TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
OCTOBER 14, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,

India has been co-sponsoring the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) over the past years. India is happy to co-sponsor the resolution sponsored by Brazil, this year too. We recognise the significance, importance and the scientific implications of the work of UNSCEAR whose critical and unbiased assessment of effects of radiation at various levels in different living systems, especially human beings, have guided the regulatory agencies in setting up safe limits of exposure for occupational workers and the general public.

The Scientific Committee has representatives from 21 member states of the UN. The work, however, is done on behalf of all the member states. The Committee has been meticulously collecting and evaluating information on the various sources of ionising radiation and radionuclides human population is exposed to, and their possible effects on human population and the environment.

At its 51st session, in addition to the contributions made by representatives and delegates from member states, UNSCEAR also reflected upon the official collaboration established with scientists of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. This is a welcome development which will facilitate a scientifically correct and critical analysis of Chernobyl accident related data.

It is also equally reassuring to note that the Scientific Committee has begun, in right earnest, its new programme of work as approved by the United Nations General Assembly. This programme is based on the theme of "sources to effects" of atomic radiation. India is satisfied that this programme has some new and interesting topics of contemporary interest e.g. radioecology, epigenetic (due to non-mutational events/factors) effects of ionizing radiation and dose response of diseases other than cancer.

The Committee has also continued its discussions on the epidemiology of radiation and cancer. It is expected that new data will become available in the near future on the atomic bomb survivors, Techa River and the Semipalatinsk region, nuclear workers and second malignancies in radiotherapy patients. In India, a study on the incidence of cancer

in the high background radiation area of Kerala had been undertaken and its findings would interest the Committee when they are published in the near future.

Among the health effects of radiation, India's programme in the High Background Radiation Area which focuses on congenital malformation would also prove to be useful to the Committee as it presents a different picture – lack of any significant deleterious effects – of chronic low level radiation exposure. India calls upon the Committee to take note of the data emerging therefrom.

Mr. Chairman,

The present budget of the Scientific Committee is just half of what it used to be in 1992-93 and 2/3rd of its 1994-95 quantum. Last year India had strongly advocated the need to enhance the Scientific Committee's budget so as to facilitate holding its annual sessions and help it in preparation of its report with the services of highly professional and competent consultants. We hope that pursuant to UNGA resolution No.57/115 of December 11, 2002, the United Nations Environment Programme will make adequate provisions for UNSCEAR's work for the biennium of 2004-2005 and subsequent biennia. Without this, we feel that the Committee's work would remain incomplete.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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