

International co-operation was essential to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, but it also gave the world community a unique opportunity to consider how to prevent further potential calamities of that kind. With the increasing use of nuclear power, studies on the subject were now of paramount importance. Japan commended the efforts being made by IAEA in response to the Soviet Union's proposal concerning work at the Chernobyl International Research Centre and the activities of the International Advisory Committee.

Japan considered that the Research Centre could help considerably in enhancing the safety of nuclear power plants and it therefore intended to participate actively in its establishment. To that end, it planned to send several Japanese experts to join a survey team that was to visit the affected areas. It welcomed the fact that the International Advisory Committee was to be presided over by a Japanese authority on the effects of radiation and hoped that that Committee would successfully carry out the task entrusted to it.

According to information recently provided by the Soviet authorities, the consequences of the accident had been very extensive, even affecting such vital areas as agriculture and forestry and jeopardizing the living conditions of the rural populations concerned. In particular, the supply of food to the population of the affected areas would be a matter of increasing concern.

In order to provide effective assistance, the competent organizations would have to take co-ordinated and concerted action, avoiding duplication of effort. It was no less important that the Soviet Union should provide clear directives for the future. His delegation hoped that a practical plan would be formulated on the basis of the results achieved, with a view to mitigating the consequences of the disaster.

Shortly after the accident, Japan had extended assistance to the Soviet Union, particularly in the form of medical co-operation. It had since responded favourably to that country's requests for exchanges of experts and joint research. Having accumulated special expertise in that area over the past 45 years, Japan intended to continue such co-operation and explore other areas in which it might provide assistance, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Mr. KOLOKOLOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, since 26 April 1986, the name Chernobyl had come to be a warning to all of mankind about the possible consequences of a nuclear disaster. The accident at the Chernobyl power plant had brought tragedy to millions of persons living in the

territories of three Republics of the Soviet Union. It had also been an occasion on which to call for international co-operation, since no one was sheltered from the effects of such disasters.

At Chernobyl, it had been necessary to deal with a number of scientific, social, economic, political, environmental and genetic problems which had never before arisen on such an enormous scale. The problem of eliminating the consequences of the accident had taken on a world-wide dimension. The Soviet Union was grateful to the international community for having shown its readiness to collaborate in that task and it intended, of course, to participate in implementing the recommendations of the international experts. It had spared no effort to control the effects of the disaster with its own resources. In the early stages, special measures had had to be taken affecting practically all aspects of life and calling for considerable resources, the assistance of eminent scientists and specialists and the heroic efforts of thousands of persons.

The in-depth study of information collected on the spot had brought to light far more complex problems than had been foreseen. Like the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Governments, the Government of the RSFSR had therefore adopted a programme for the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. That programme, whose importance and topicality had been reaffirmed following the declaration of the sovereignty of the Federation, formed part of the Soviet Union's central programme of action. Co-operation among the authorities of the three Republics was directed at the single objective of the health of the population. In 1988, 116,000 persons had been evacuated from the contaminated areas and relocated.

On the proposal of IAEA, an international scientific centre was to be established in 1990 in the immediate vicinity of the Chernobyl site. The topics of its research work had already been decided and efforts were being made to prepare the material and technical infrastructures to receive foreign scientists. Twenty-five countries had already expressed their interest in seconding specialists to the centre. In his delegations view, the co-ordination of the scientific and technical work to be undertaken by international organizations in the territory of the USSR with a view to eliminating the consequences of the accident might be ensured by IAEA.

Measures had been finalized for providing medical assistance to contaminated persons. Those affected were being cared for in a new network of medical hospital establishments. Health establishments would shortly have to

be re-equipped with medical and data processing equipment, modern dosimetric, radiometric and spectrometric installations and supplies of medicines. Experience had shown the usefulness of seconding Soviet specialists to foreign centres and organizing counterpart courses in the USSR. An examination of the country's resources had shown the need for giving treatment abroad to irradiated children. The Soviet Union was ready to use the experience of foreign scientists and doctors to develop a training system for medical staff and improve the medical knowledge of the population of the contaminated areas.

The memorandum of understanding signed in 1990 between the USSR Ministry of Health and WHO should be useful in that regard. It was directed at the implementation of a long-term international programme to follow up and mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster which would include the establishment of an international centre on radiological and medical problems. In view of its high level of competence and material resources, WHO could co-ordinate the medical aspects of the programmes of co-operation with the Soviet Union carried out by United Nations agencies with a view to eliminating the consequences of the accident.

The material costs of the accident were already considerable. Over the past three years, nearly 10 billion roubles had been allocated for eliminating its consequences. The social and human effects of the disaster were no less extensive than the medical, environmental and economic effects. The evacuation of a large part of the population had disorganized the economy and all other sectors of activity in several regions.

In view of the extent of the tragedy and the country's real capacity, the Supreme Soviets of the USSR, Russia, the Ukraine and Byelorussia had appealed to the parliaments of all countries and relevant international organizations for their co-operation. The Soviet Union was deeply grateful for the spirit of co-operation shown on that occasion. It expressed appreciation for the collaboration and support given by the international organizations and, in particular, for the important report on the subject submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In response to the international community's request, the USSR had provided the Council with information on the economic and social consequences of the accident. The draft resolution before the Council was based on the idea that close co-operation by all States would once again help to reaffirm the universal humanitarian principles that had guided the founders of the Organization.

Mr. VAN BRAKEL (Canada) stressed that it was not until four years after the accident that the world was coming to realize the full extent of the tragedy which continued to affect the populations of the disaster-stricken territories. The complexity of the tasks to be undertaken to safeguard their health and restore the environment to productive use would require extensive resources and co-ordinated efforts by many bodies of the United Nations system. In co-sponsoring the draft resolution on the subject, his delegation had sought to express its solidarity with the Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Soviet peoples.

Canada had participated in the international efforts to deal with the consequences of the accident, particularly through IAEA, other United Nations agencies and the International Red Cross. IAEA had played a prominent role in international co-operation in that regard. It was currently co-ordinating a major international radiological assessment to review and corroborate independently the scientific measurements taken by the Soviet authorities since the accident and to evaluate the protective measures taken to date and proposed for the future.

In considering the draft resolution, account should be taken of the highly technical nature of much of the work required. It was also important to call upon the best independent expertise available and to entrust the co-ordination of the work to the body with the necessary technical expertise, namely, IAEA. In addition, it was important to draw up and implement a careful communications strategy to ensure that complex technical data could be presented in a form that was understandable both to national decision-makers and to laymen. His delegation hoped that the follow up to the resolution would strengthen the central role of IAEA and make it possible to avoid duplication in the use of the United Nations system's resources and in the assistance provided to the affected areas. It urged the Governments of those regions to take account of the results of the ongoing radiological assessment to define precisely the nature and scope of assistance which the international community might provide.

Mrs. OPELZ (International Atomic Energy Agency) said that, for the sake of brevity, the IAEA contribution to the report of the Secretary-General (E/1990/97) on the question under consideration was confined to a description of the international assessment of the radiological consequences of the accident, as referred to in paragraph 2 of draft resolution E/1990/L.21/Rev.1.

IAEA had, however, carried out a number of other activities related to the Chernobyl accident and those activities would be continued after the publication of the assessment.

In view of its competence, IAEA had naturally assumed the functions of co-ordinator of the international co-operation established immediately following the accident. It was nevertheless aware of its limitations. Since the authorities in the affected area had variously turned for advice to WHO, FAO and other specialized agencies depending on the field in which they sought such advice, there had been a need for harmonization, in response to which the Inter-Agency Committee for the Response to Nuclear Accidents (IAC/RNA) had been established, initially for a two-year period. The organizations participating in the work of the Committee (IAEA and the organizations listed in paragraph 5 of document E/1990/97) had already established practices and modalities of co-operation in the matter and it had seemed to them entirely natural to co-ordinate the action undertaken in response to the more recent appeals of the Republics affected by the accident. Since the Inter-Agency Committee was an open-ended body and the requests for assistance in mitigating the effects of the accident had involved many organizations, it was anticipated that additional participants would attend the next Inter-Agency Committee meeting.

The international assessment of the radiological consequences of the accident would no doubt lead to recommendations that should be followed up by various organizations in their respective fields of competence. It was obvious that the scarce resources, including human resources, available to meet that challenge should be used effectively. IAEA would continue its own assistance efforts and strengthen its co-operation with other United Nations agencies through the Inter-Agency Committee. It would also extend its fullest support to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the report requested by the Council.

Mr. MACEDO (Mexico) said that the question under consideration was important not only in its humanitarian aspects, but also because of the serious implications it could have for the future use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

When the Chernobyl accident had occurred in 1986, the international community had shown its solidarity towards the Governments concerned by providing substantial medical and technical assistance. It had been thought at that time that, once the immediate consequences of the accident had been

eliminated, the problem would be solved. Unfortunately, recent reports showed that the disaster was one of unprecedented magnitude whose total effects on the health of the population and on agriculture in the disaster areas had not yet been assessed.

The alarming information provided by the Governments of the Republics concerned and by various United Nations bodies showed that there was still much to be done in the humanitarian and environmental fields to restore the situation to normal. His delegation expressed its full solidarity with the efforts being made to assist the three Governments concerned and firmly supported increased co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations system in that regard. It was in that spirit that it had co-sponsored the draft resolution before the Council, which it hoped would be adopted by consensus.

The Chernobyl accident confirmed the validity of Mexico's position in favour of nuclear disarmament and the use of atomic energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. The consequences of the accident, extremely serious though they were, were nothing compared to the effects a nuclear war would have. His delegation therefore wished to reaffirm its steadfast conviction that the atom's enormous power should be used solely in the interest of mankind and not for the destruction of civilization. From that standpoint, it was essential to ponder deeply on the Chernobyl accident and learn from it so as to ensure that atomic energy never again escaped from human control.

Mr. ANDREEN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that, while the Chernobyl accident had had particularly serious consequences for the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, other countries, including the Nordic countries, had also been affected. They therefore urged all countries using nuclear energy to ensure that the highest safety standards were achieved in their national programmes. In order to reduce current risk levels, it should be mandatory to re-examine periodically all existing nuclear reactors and their degree of safety, choosing the most recent standards as criteria, and to prescribe corrective measures whenever necessary.

The Nordic countries supported the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency in developing international safety principles, regulations and guidelines applicable to the whole of the fuel cycle and all categories of nuclear waste. They urged all countries to continue to use IAEA's services to enhance the safety of nuclear installations.

In that context, the Nordic countries wished to refer to the Bergen Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Development in the ECE region, in which the Ministers of 34 countries of the region had, *inter alia*, agreed to strengthen co-operation in the prevention and control of transboundary impacts of industrial accidents and, in particular, to aim for the rapid formulation of the relevant ECE legal instrument. The Ministers had also decided to urge Governments and international organizations to provide assistance in overcoming the consequences of industrial accidents, in particular those with transboundary effects such as the Chernobyl accident. In that connection, they had stressed the need for taking account of the proposal for the establishment of a centre on emergency assistance in the event of an accident affecting the environment and for the identification of possible gaps in existing response networks.

In view of their considerable interest in the question, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden were among the many States that had co-sponsored the draft resolution.

Mr. SCHLEGEL (German Democratic Republic) said that the attention of the people of his country had once again been drawn to the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster when several hundred children from the disaster area had arrived there recently to spend a four-week holiday financed by the Red Cross and religious institutions and by private donations from persons in the German Democratic Republic. It was above all the long-term effects on human health and on the environment that made it a moral challenge to strengthen international co-operation in studying and mitigating the highly complex consequences of the accident. United Nations bodies could play an important role in that regard, as indeed they were already doing.

His delegation was convinced that the international community would take up the challenge before it and that its response would be commensurate with the magnitude of the disaster. In view of the transboundary impact of the Chernobyl accident, it was in the interest of persons in all European countries and also in other continents to draw the necessary conclusions and help improve the situation of the victims of the accident. The German Democratic Republic therefore supported the measures envisaged in draft resolution E/1990/L.21/Rev.1, of which it was a sponsor.

Mr. de RIEDMATTEN (Observer for Switzerland) said that, in addition to the measures designed to remedy the effects of the accident, the fullest possible information should be provided to the population living in the Chernobyl area in order to explain the events and their consequences and allow the inhabitants to learn more about radioactivity.

The scale of radioactive contamination, the international repercussions of the accident and the complexity of the problems and their financial implications made international co-operation essential. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on the question (E/1990/97), he said that Switzerland intended to participate in the work of the International Research Centre on the consequences of the accident and on the formulation of methods for eliminating possible future radioactive contamination. It also supported the study on health and the environment and the evaluation of protective measures organized by IAEA.

His delegation supported the draft resolution, which it considered to be fully in line with the strengthening of co-operation. It attached particular importance to paragraph 5, which in spirit, if not in letter, called for the mutual co-ordination of assistance or, at least, for a regular exchange of information.

Lastly, he noted that the Swiss authorities would continue to make a thorough assessment of the situation and would in due course study the modalities for their participation in international co-operation on the basis of the results of the various studies.

Mr. ARMERDING (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the question of the international assessment of the radiological consequences of the Chernobyl accident had been on the agenda of the last meeting of ACC, held in Vienna on 2 May 1990. At that meeting, a number of organizations, including UNESCO, which had not at that time been associated with the assessment project organized by IAEA, had expressed their readiness to join in it. The Director-General of UNESCO had also taken the opportunity to announce that, at the request of the three Soviet Republics affected by the accident, he had sent a mission to those countries to develop a project having two essential components: a scientific research and assistance programme and related awareness-building and fund-raising activities. The project had been discussed at a session of the Inter-Agency Committee for the Response to Nuclear Accidents and it had been decided to include it among the overall activities proposed by the United Nations system for remedying the consequences of the accident.

As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (E/1990/97, para. 27), UNESCO and the Government of the USSR had signed an initial agreement, endorsed by the two other Governments concerned, with a view to the establishment of a programme of assistance within UNESCO's fields of



competence. Under that programme, it was also envisaged that UNESCO, would work together with the other United Nations agencies concerned and in close co-operation with the relevant Soviet institutions to prepare a report which would be based on all completed or ongoing work and serve as the basis for a conference which could be organized at the end of 1991.

As an immediate measure, UNESCO and the Soviet authorities had jointly agreed on a programme to enable child victims of the accident to spend their summer holidays in Western Europe. The programme had been organized in the USSR by the Children's Fund and in Western Europe by the World Scout Bureau and Pro-Victims, a foundation based in Geneva.

On behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, he assured the representatives of the three countries affected by the disaster that UNESCO would vigorously pursue the activities undertaken and would take part, within its fields of competence, in the implementation of the draft resolution. In that connection, he said that UNESCO would have liked to be mentioned, in operative paragraph 1, as one of the organizations associated with the efforts to remedy the consequences of the accident of Chernobyl, as it had been in the original draft resolution.

Mr. GROZDANOV (Bulgaria) said that, as a country in the immediate vicinity of the accident zone, Bulgaria considered that the action taken by the international community to eliminate the consequences of the accident at Chernobyl would make it possible not only to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims, but also to accumulate experience and establish the necessary scientific and technological potential for preventing and combating such accidents.

Bulgaria was ready to join in efforts to co-ordinate action to eliminate the consequences of the accident and to formulate the most suitable and effective approaches possible for the prevention of such accidents. His delegation fully shared the ideas set forth in the draft resolution, of which it was a sponsor.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take a decision on draft resolution E/1990/L.21/Rev.1.

The draft resolution was adopted by consensus.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council had concluded its consideration of agenda item 5.