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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 11 May 1990, at 10.30 a.m.

President:

Mr. GHAREKHAN

(India)

CONTENTS

Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (continued)

International co-operation in the elimination of the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (continued)

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INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACCIDENT
AT THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT (continued) (E/1990/64)

Draft resolution E/1990/L.21

Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian SSR), introducing draft resolution E/1990/L.21 on behalf of Algeria, Bulgaria, the Byelorussian SSR, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, the German Democratic Republic, Guinea, India, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico, Nicaragua, the Ukrainian SSR, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Venezuela, Zaire and Zambia, said that, according to scientific calculations, the radioactive effects of the Chernobyl accident were equivalent to the explosion of 90 atomic bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima. At the time of the disaster, it had not been possible to assess its dimensions or foresee its consequences. Chernobyl had affected the lives of millions of people in various countries, and the ecological repercussions of the disaster required a solution of new and exceptionally complex problems relating to practically all aspects of human life.

The USSR, with the assistance of international organizations, had sought to mitigate the disastrous effects of the radioactive contamination of its population and to reduce the scale of environmental pollution. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had made a significant and timely contribution to the mitigation of the accident's effects. An international group of experts organized by IAEA was currently studying the situation in the Chernobyl area and would issue recommendations for the protection of the population living in contaminated areas. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and a number of international non-governmental organizations, charities and individuals had also been of great assistance.

The consequences of the nuclear accident required international co-operation, and his delegation hoped that the United Nations would act as co-ordinator of concerted efforts to deal with the effects of the disaster. The experience of international co-operation in eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster could later be used for the protection of man and the natural environment from possible future nuclear accidents.

(Mr. Oudovenko, Ukrainian SSR)

The draft resolution was short and its provisions were self-explanatory. His delegation hoped that the Council would adopt by consensus the draft resolution at its current session.

Mr. BRADY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the twelve States members of the European Community, said that the Community welcomed the addition of the item to the Council's agenda. In the spirit of co-operation, it had worked together with the peoples affected and their Governments to alleviate the terrible consequences of the disaster. Such joint efforts in the area of humanitarian relief and scientific co-operation, including evaluations by European experts of the scope of the accident, would most certainly continue. Account must also be taken of the efforts of IAEA, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) and the other relevant United Nations bodies. The item warranted further consideration at the Council's session in July 1990.

Mr. KIRSCH (Canada) thanked the delegation of the Ukrainian SSR for its frank and comprehensive review of the efforts to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident and also associated his delegation with the sentiments expressed by other delegations in face of the challenges posed by such an event.

His Government was working closely with all the international organizations involved to develop an effective multilateral programme of assistance to the Soviet Union. It was also evaluating a request from the Soviet Government for medical equipment and supplies for victims of the accident. The 1989 Canada-USSR nuclear co-operation agreement would provide a valuable framework for Canadian bilateral assistance to the USSR.

In the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, IAEA had played a leading role in galvanizing international co-operation. It had provided immediate assistance at the time of the accident and had co-ordinated the negotiation of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. The Agency had also established and incorporated into its regular programme a Special Nuclear Safety Programme (SNSP). In 1989, the Soviet Government had proposed a joint agreement between the USSR and IAEA on a framework for on-site post-accident international research at the Chernobyl Research Centre. Several United Nations agencies and

(Mr. Kirsch, Canada)

individual Member States, including Canada, were expected to participate and a proposal for the research centre would go before the IAEA in June 1990.

While supporting the importance of international co-operation in eliminating the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, his delegation hoped that the nature and scope of international assistance could be more precisely defined, thus strengthening the guiding role played by IAEA and avoiding duplication of effort.

Mrs. DIEGUEZ (Mexico) noted that it was often said that the Council did not fully exercise its co-ordinating function. In acting as co-ordinator of international co-operation to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, the Council would have an excellent opportunity to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Mr. MARKS (United States of America) said that his delegation wished to express its sympathy at the extent and seriousness of the tragedy which had occurred in the Ukrainian SSR and to applaud the frankness with which the subject had been discussed.

While acknowledging the important efforts already made to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, he emphasized the importance of current activities. IAEA was in the process of conducting an international assessment of the radiological consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The project, which would involve a team of international experts and various international organizations, included a survey of the health and environmental effects of the Chernobyl accident, corroboration of Soviet data and an evaluation of protective measures that had been taken. It would also make recommendations with respect to future actions in the affected regions. The implementation phase was scheduled to begin in May 1990 and to be completed towards the end of the year. The results would be published by IAEA.

IAEA and its collaborators should be permitted to complete their work before new efforts in that area were initiated.

Mr. DUHS (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the tragic accident at Chernobyl had had serious consequences not only for the peoples of the Soviet Union but for other populations. Such an accident reminded the international community that modern technology was acceptable only if full consideration were given to its effects on human health and the environment.

(Mr. Duhs, Sweden)

The Nordic countries urged all States to ensure the highest standards of safety for their national nuclear energy programmes. To reduce present risk levels, there should be mandatory periodic reviews of all existing nuclear reactors and their safety performances based on current standards.

The Nordic countries supported the work of IAEA in developing internationally acceptable safety regulations which included the entire fuel cycle and all categories of nuclear waste. They urged all countries to make further use of IAEA services to enhance the safety of their nuclear installations. Finally, he expressed the sympathy of the Nordic countries for the victims of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. MATNAI (Observer for Israel) said that his country appreciated the frankness of the Soviet Union in addressing the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Disasters of that magnitude should enhance international solidarity and co-operation. Israel had responded immediately to the tragedy with offers of co-operation, just as it had responded in the past to requests for assistance from the Soviet Union. In that same spirit, it offered its continuing co-operation in any endeavour to aid the victims of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. ANDEMICHAEL (International Atomic Energy Agency) said that IAEA was organizing a major project with the participation of experts from FAO, WHO, UNSCEAR and the Commission of the European Communities. The survey, which would be conducted by a team of independent international experts, would cover health and environment effects and evaluate the protective measures taken by the Soviet authorities. IAEA would publish the findings of the survey later in the year and would arrange for open meetings at which the results of the survey could be examined.

A preliminary meeting between officials of the USSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR and IAEA had been held in Moscow from 7 to 9 February 1990 to outline a plan of action to carry out an assessment of the concept which the USSR had evolved to enable the population to live safely in areas affected by radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl accident, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the steps taken in those areas to safeguard the health of the population. A preparatory mission of international experts had been subsequently

(Mr. Andemicael, IAEA)

organized to identify the major assessments to be made. The experts had visited the affected areas and had drafted a work plan based on the information collected.

The results of the preparatory mission had been submitted to an international advisory committee which had met at Kiev and Minsk from 23 to 27 April 1990. The committee had approved the work plan.

Approximately 100 international experts would be involved in the implementation of the project which would comprise five major tasks: historical portrayal of the events leading to the current situation and description of the current status; corroboration of assessments of environmental contamination; corroboration of individual and collective dose assessments; clinical health effects from radiation exposure and evaluation of the general health situation; and evaluation of protective measures. In addition to the five major tasks, specialist meetings involving international and local experts in medical and agricultural sciences would be arranged. After the completion of the project in late 1990, an authoritative report would be prepared by the international advisory committee and published by IAEA. The report would form the basis for subsequent follow-up studies.

Mr. IWASAKI (World Health Organization) said that WHO had already participated in a mission to the affected areas and would produce a detailed evaluation of the health situation in those areas.

In April 1990, the Ministry of Health of the Soviet Union and WHO had signed a memorandum of understanding calling for the establishment, under the auspices of WHO, of a long-term global programme to monitor and mitigate the health effects of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. ARABIAT (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country had been a co-sponsor of the draft resolution currently before the Council. Jordan, too, was exposed to the danger of a nuclear accident owing to the existence in Israel of nuclear weapons. That country, in order to demonstrate clearly its good intentions, should have stated that it was prepared to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The PRESIDENT said that, in the light of the statements just made, he wished to propose that the Council should return to the item at a later date. In the interim, he planned to be in contact with interested delegations with a view to arriving at a consensus decision.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued) (E/1990/L.20)

Draft resolution E/1990/L.20

The PRESIDENT drew the Council's attention to the draft resolution entitled "Revival of the Ancient Library of Alexandria" and said that the following delegations wished to become co-sponsors: Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Italy, Jamaica, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Niger, Poland, Spain, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.