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Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009

Financial and administrative implications of increased membership of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, staffing of the professional secretariat of the Scientific Committee and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 62/100, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive and consolidated report to the Assembly at its sixty-third session, to be prepared in consultation with the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, as appropriate, addressing the financial and administrative implications of increased membership of that Committee, staffing of its professional secretariat and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding.

Several States have expressed a desire to become a member of the Committee, which comprises scientists from 21 States Members of the United Nations and undertakes broad scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment. The Committee is fundamental to the international radiation safety regime. The Committee has expressed its view that, considering the support it requires from the secretariat, the current critical financial and resource issues should be addressed prior to reaching a decision on the question of membership. The Committee has meanwhile suggested flexible arrangements whereby, for reasons of efficiency, the maximum number of members would remain at about the present level.

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In order to provide up-to-date and continuing high-quality assessments in a timely manner, to improve dissemination of the findings and to ensure the technical infrastructure to support the Committee effectively, the current staffing of the Secretariat of the Scientific Committee would need to be strengthened with an additional Professional post at the P-4 level (estimated at $169,600 per biennium). Although the Committee has recommended that its membership remain at about the present number, if the membership were to be increased by six members, it is estimated that additional resources of $90,000 in non-posts requirements per biennium would be required.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/100, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive and consolidated report to the Assembly at its sixty-third session, to be prepared in consultation with the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, as appropriate, addressing the financial and administrative implications of increasing the membership of the Committee, staffing of its professional secretariat and methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding.

2. The report has been prepared following consultations with the Scientific Committee during its fifty-sixth session, held from 10 to 18 July 2008 in Vienna.[1]

3. The General Assembly established the Scientific Committee by its resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955 to undertake broad scientific reviews of the sources of ionizing radiation and its effects on human health and the environment. Since 1955, the Committee has played an important role in improving international scientific understanding of the levels of exposure to ionizing radiation and its health and environmental effects. The evaluations of the Committee have often underpinned significant actions at the governmental level, such as (a) the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water; (b) the preparations for the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, which established the first global principles for environmental protection and led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); (c) substantial reductions in the radiation exposure limits for workers and the public;[2] (d) international action plans to improve protection of workers, patients and the environment; and (e) recovery from the 1986 Chernobyl accident.

4. The Committee's assessments are conducted on behalf of all Member States and are used for evaluating the effects of using radiation in medicine, research, agriculture and industry and of nuclear power production. Moreover, the Committee's scientific consensus is fundamental to the international radiation safety regime, critically underpinning the international standards[2] for protecting the public, workers and patients against ionizing radiation. In turn, these standards are linked to important national and international programmes and legislative instruments.

5. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 53/44 and 62/100, has reaffirmed the desirability of the Committee continuing this work and the decision to maintain the present functions and independent role of the Scientific Committee.

6. For the annual sessions, more than 100 scientific advisers from the 21 States members of the Committee and observers from relevant international organizations scrutinize the scientific content of several lengthy, highly specialized documents.

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[1] The report of the Scientific Committee is contained in the *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 46* (A/63/46).

[2] International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources, International Atomic Energy Agency Safety Series No. 115 (Vienna, 1996), jointly sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Labour Organization, the Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization. Other standards are linked to the Basic Safety Standards.

The secretariat, provided under arrangements with UNEP and located in Vienna, arranges the annual sessions and coordinates the development of these documents, which are meticulously based on scientific and technical information obtained from Member States and the scientific literature, according to the Committee's requests. Historically, the Committee has approved a substantive report supported by several detailed scientific annexes every four to five years. The secretariat arranges for the dissemination of the Committee's findings to the General Assembly, the scientific community and the public.

7. In the past decade there has been a marked acceleration in the pace of global communication and of specialized scientific developments (such as in molecular biology and genetics). Moreover, there is growing interest in the Committee's work, in part because of (a) renewed consideration of nuclear power in response to concerns about energy security and global warming; (b) apprehension about the potential human and environmental impact of accidents and of radioactive waste; (c) threats related to nuclear and radiological weapons; (d) new applications of radiation in medicine, research, agriculture and industry; and (e) the effects of radiation at low rates of exposure. In addition, more States are submitting information for the Committee's assessments and several have expressed interest in becoming members.

Strategic plan and future programme of work for the period 2009 to 2013

8. At its fifty-sixth session the Scientific Committee adopted a strategic plan to provide the vision and direction for its activities during the period 2009 to 2013, to facilitate results-based programming by the secretariat, to help foster management of sufficient, assured and predictable resources and to improve planning and coordination among the various parties involved.

9. The Committee considered that its strategic objective for the period was to increase awareness and deepen understanding among authorities, the scientific community and civil society with regard to levels of ionizing radiation and the related health and environmental effects as a sound basis for informed decision-making on radiation-related issues.

10. While still conducting comprehensive oversight and evaluations consistent with its overall mandate, the Committee identified the following thematic priorities for the period: (a) medical exposures of patients, radiation levels and effects of energy production; (b) exposure to natural sources of radiation; and (c) improved understanding of the effects from exposure to ionizing radiation at low dose rates.

11. In order to implement the strategic plan, the Committee assumed that its intersessional work would increase and that actions would have been taken to address its concerns about staffing and funding.

12. For its future programme of work, the Committee decided to initiate work immediately on (a) assessments of levels of radiation from energy production and the effects on human health and the environment; (b) uncertainty in radiation risk estimation; (c) attributability of health effects to radiation exposure (in response to General Assembly resolution 62/100); (d) updating its methodology for estimating

exposures resulting from discharges from nuclear installations; (e) a summary of radiation effects; and (f) improving data collection, analysis and dissemination.

13. Depending on the availability of resources, specifically in the Committee secretariat, other work might be undertaken on the biological effects of key internal emitters, medical exposures of patients, enhanced exposures to natural sources of radiation due to human activities, public information and development of a knowledge base on radiation levels and effects.

II. Background on support to the Committee

14. Resolution 913 (X) requested the Secretary-General to provide the Committee with appropriate assistance in organizing and conducting its work and to provide a Secretary of the Committee. Subsequently, in addition to the Secretary, a number of scientific staff were recruited on a rotational basis to the secretariat, then based in New York, who were responsible for presenting, in a form suitable for consideration by the Committee, the large body of information submitted by Governments.

15. In 1974, the secretariat of the Scientific Committee was transferred from New York to Vienna and in 1976, the organizational responsibility for servicing the Committee was transferred from the office of the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs to UNEP. From then onwards, the General Assembly in its annual resolutions on the subject has requested UNEP to continue providing support for the effective conduct of the Scientific Committee's work and for the dissemination of its findings to the Assembly, the scientific community and the public. The staffing and operational resources of the Scientific Committee are provided under section 14 of the programme budget of the United Nations. Since 1979, local administrative services have been provided by the United Nations Office at Vienna.

16. In contrast to when the Scientific Committee was established, the present secretariat of the Committee comprises 1 Professional post at the D-1 level for the Secretary of the Committee and 2 General Service posts (1 principal level and 1 other level). The responsibilities of the Secretary of the Committee are as follows: (a) to provide the strategic direction, programmatic and day-to-day management of the secretariat, including oversight of the staff, and to supply the scientific, technical and administrative assistance for the Committee to discharge its responsibilities and mandate; (b) to direct the preparation, conduct and administrative follow-up of the annual sessions, including the preparation of relevant parliamentary documentation; (c) to coordinate the preparation of several extremely technical documents for timely scrutiny by the Committee; (d) to develop and maintain communication networks for liaison and coordination with the Committee, scientists, the diplomatic community, UNEP headquarters and other relevant organizations, as appropriate; (e) to prepare strategic papers for consideration by the Committee and/or Member States; (f) to maintain systems for collecting, reviewing and disseminating relevant scientific information; (g) to represent the Committee at relevant scientific and diplomatic forums (the General Assembly, conferences, seminars, meetings etc.), including presenting the Committee's detailed scientific findings; and (h) to prepare correspondence, promotional and public information material, respond to inquiries from the public and scientific community and manage the overall (and in particular the administrative) content of the website of the Scientific Committee.

17. The General Service (principal level) post provides for an Editorial/Administrative Assistant. The incumbent (a) arranges consultant contracts and travel of representatives in connection with yearly sessions; (b) fulfils the responsibilities of the secretariat regarding the programme budget, monitoring of the programme of work, expenditure certification and budget/programme performance reporting and administers its human resources; (c) provides general administration and office management support; (d) assists in the finalization of detailed scientific documentation (tables and figures) for scrutiny at the annual sessions of the Committee; and (e) directly assists the Secretary of the Committee in drafting of correspondence and papers of a non-routine nature and raising awareness of the Committee's work (preparing briefings and promotional activities and materials). The General Service (other level) post provides for a Reference Assistant. The incumbent is responsible for (a) the organization and accuracy of extensive bibliographic citations of scientific papers in the reports of the Committee; (b) filing and retrieval of references from the Committee's reference collection (over 10,000 physical volumes); (c) reformatting and word-processing of detailed scientific documents for scrutiny by the Committee; and providing secretarial support to the Secretary of the Committee.

18. The assessments prepared by the Scientific Committee have increased dramatically, nearly seven times greater in size over the years, from just 230 pages in the 1958 report of the Scientific Committee to some 1,600 pages for the 2006 and 2008 reports. To illustrate the increased workload, table 1 compares key work elements for developing the most recent 2006 and 2008 reports of the Committee to those for developing similar reports 20 years earlier, in 1986 and 1988.

Table 1
Indicators of key work elements for development of the 1986 and 1988 reports and the 2006 and 2008 reports

	Development period	
Work element	*1982-1988 (covering 1986 and 1988 reports)*	*2001-2008 (covering 2006 and 2008 reports)*
Prepare, conduct and follow-up annual sessions, including preparation of relevant parliamentary documentation.	73 delegates, 10 observers from international organizations and 8 consultants attended the thirty-seventh session (91 in total).	82 delegates, 11 observers from international organizations, 6 consultants, 1 specific focal point for Chernobyl matters and 7 observers from Member States attended the fifty-sixth session (107 in total).
Coordinate preparation of highly technical documents (typically more than 1,000 pages for a session) and conduct meticulous scientific editing and finalization.	Direction of work usually by single experts, but often supported by a national institute.	Scientific developments are increasingly complex and diverse. Increased coordination of groups of specialists. Limited support from national institutes.
	The 1986 and 1988 reports in 2 volumes amounted to some 1,000 pages, including more than 710,000 words, 4,797 references, 370 tables and 162 figures, were prepared between	Coordination of intersessional reviews of documents in 2007-2008, involving some 112 sets of written comments and responses to them. The 2006 and 2008 reports in 4 volumes amount to some 1,600 pages, including some

Work element	Development period	
	1982-1988 (covering 1986 and 1988 reports)	*2001-2008 (covering 2006 and 2008 reports)*
	1982 and 1988 and were published in 1986 and 1988.	810,000 words, 5,085 references, 406 tables, 243 figures and 31 electronic worksheets. They were prepared during 2001-2008 and were partly published in 2008. They are expected to be fully published only in 2009.
Maintain systems for collecting, reviewing and disseminating data:	Principal information derived from specific scientific journals and 83 national reports submitted by States.	Principal information derived from vast literature available electronically. Increased information and data flows from States, institutes and experts.
Discharges from nuclear facilities;	13 States; 232 facilities	31 States; more than 430 facilities
Occupational exposures;	14 States; 10 occupations	52 States; some 30 occupations
Medical diagnosis and therapy;	13 States; 19 procedures	53 States; some 90 procedures
Exposure to natural radiation;	25 States	56 States
Scientific reference collection.	About 5,000 volumes managed.	Over 10,000 volumes held.
Prepare correspondence, promotional and public information material; respond to inquiries and manage website.[a]	Public information booklet on “Radiation doses, effects and risks” published 1985 (and updated in 1993).	Secretary manages content of some 90 web pages constituting the Committee’s website[a] and in 2007-2008 responded to some 100 inquiries from the media, public and scientific community, many involving research.

[a] http://www.unscear.org.

19. The resources approved for the Scientific Committee under the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for non-post costs amount to $446,400 (including $155,400 for travel of representatives) as compared with $301,800 (including $92,400 for travel of representatives) in final expenditure approved for the biennium 2006-2007. Regarding the resources for the activities of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee itself (excluding the provision for travel of representatives), as can be seen from table 2, the total non-post resources of $544,900 appropriated for the period 2002 to 2007 were much lower than the appropriation of $699,300 for the period 1982 to 1987. While the magnitude, diversity and complexity of the workload of the Committee has increased significantly over the years, there has not been a commensurate increase in the level of resources available to it. Moreover, the staffing strength of the secretariat was reduced by one staff member when the P-5 post was abolished in the biennium 1994-1995, consistent with the redeployment measures instituted in the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, when the post was redeployed to the Department of Political Affairs in line with the treatment of vacancies in force at that time.

20. Moreover, in the 1990s some national scientific institutes assisted the secretariat on a cost-free or cost-sharing basis. However, budgetary constraints in many States have prevented institutes from offering assistance on such a basis and magnitude. This downward trend has an impact on the ability of the secretariat to deliver its programme of work, as well as on the level of extrabudgetary resources at the disposal of the secretariat. In this regard, additional resources were approved by the General Assembly in the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for the Scientific Committee relating to consultants and printing requirements.

Table 2
Comparison of available resources at the time of preparation of the 1986 and 1988 reports and the 2006 and 2008 reports
(United States dollars)

	Development period	
Item	**1982-1988**	**2001-2008**
Staffing	1 D-1, 1 P-5[a] 2 GS (1 PL, 1 OL) Secretary's term of office was unbroken 1980-1988	1 D-1 2 GS (1 PL, 1 OL) Continuity[b] problems owing to staff changes and medical-related absences
Programme budget	**1982-1987**	**2002[c]-2007**
Consultants	381 100	387 700
Other staff costs	26 600	30 100
Staff travel	44 900	69 700
Contractual expenses, general operating expenses, furniture and equipment	246 700	57 400[d]
Miscellaneous		
Subtotal	**699 300**	**544 900**
Travel of representatives[e]	375 100	262 200
Total	**1 074 400**	**807 100**
Contributions in kind	National institutes provided significant cost-free contributions.	National institutes provided limited cost-free contributions.

[a] Post was abolished in the biennium 1994-1995.
[b] Continuity is to be interpreted as the maintenance of operational capability of the secretariat to adequately service the Committee and to fulfil its administrative functions, in the short, medium and long term.
[c] No session was held in 2002 owing to insufficient financial resources (see General Assembly resolution 57/115).
[d] Excludes $49,000 made available to the Scientific Committee by UNEP.
[e] Resources for travel of representatives reflected separately in order to allow realistic comparison of secretariat operational requirements.

21. The level of resources for the preparation of the Committee's 2006 and 2008 reports, in particular in the light of the increased workload, contributed to the following:

(a) Delays in producing the 2006 and 2008 reports, parts of which were originally estimated for completion and publication by 2005 (see A/56/46, para. 10),[3] are, for example, affecting the revision of the international Basic Safety Standards,[4] and media reporting in 2006 on the twentieth anniversary of the Chernobyl accident led to considerable confusion over projections of numbers of deaths caused by the accident, some of which could have been avoided by timely availability of the Committee's assessments;

(b) Lack of spare capacity to maintain or overhaul some of the technical infrastructure that supports the Committee's work in the long term (for example, over 10,000 physical volumes of scientific references are no longer being actively managed and the Secretary has minimal time to develop further the functionality, content and usefulness of the Committee's website or to enhance data collection, analysis and dissemination), to respond adequately to unforeseen events or opportunities that may arise, or to prepare papers for scientific journals, make presentations at conferences, develop public information material and respond adequately to media interest, as part of fulfilling the mandate to disseminate the findings of the Committee;

(c) An increased risk of errors that might fundamentally damage the Committee's reputation for authoritative scientific evaluations.

22. Starting in 2002, the Committee has conveyed its concern about the inadequate provision of support funds in its annual reports to the General Assembly, most recently in the report of the Committee on its fifty-fifth session (A/62/46). The Assembly, in its resolution 57/115 and subsequent resolutions, the latest of which is resolution 62/100, has urged UNEP to review and strengthen the funding of the Scientific Committee. A proposal submitted for the establishment of a P-5 post in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, to provide additional specialized scientific capacity to support the ongoing work programme (see A/56/6 (sect. 14)/Rev.1, para. 14.32), was not endorsed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and was not approved by the Assembly. The Advisory Committee at the time was of the view that requests for additional resources should be made only after full account had been taken of whether additional capacity could be found through new technologies, more efficient work processes or redeployment as a result of reprioritization or reorganization (see A/58/7, para. 81 and part IV, para. IV.64).

23. While the level of resources was increased under the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 for the Scientific Committee to carry out its work with regard to non-post resources, this did not address the need to strengthen the staffing capacity of the Committee secretariat.

24. In response to General Assembly resolution 61/109, in which the Assembly urged UNEP to continue to seek out and consider alternative funding mechanisms to

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[3] The first of two volumes of the 2006 report was eventually published in July 2008; the second volume is now envisaged to be published at the end of 2008. The 2008 report will not be published before 2009.

[4] See International Atomic Energy Agency resolution GC(51)/RES/11 of 21 September 2007.

complement existing ones, the Executive Director of UNEP established a general trust fund for voluntary contributions in respect of the Scientific Committee.

25. In its resolution 62/100, the General Assembly took note of the establishment of the general trust fund and again urged UNEP to continue to seek out and consider such temporary funding mechanisms to complement existing ones. It also noted the deep concern of the Scientific Committee (see A/62/46) that reliance on a single post at the professional level in its secretariat had left the Committee seriously vulnerable and had hampered the efficient implementation of its approved programme of work. The Assembly appealed to the Secretary-General to take appropriate administrative measures so that the secretariat could adequately service the Scientific Committee in a predictable and sustainable manner and effectively facilitate the use of the invaluable expertise offered to the Committee by its members in order that the Committee might discharge its responsibilities and mandate.

26. Although UNEP is organizationally responsible for servicing the Committee and has taken reasonable steps within its authority to support the programme of work, there have been difficulties in addressing staffing and funding issues of the Committee within the resources provided to UNEP. Moreover, the Committee's mandate covers additional issues other than environment, such as radiation exposures at work, radiation for medical purposes and radiation health effects.

III. Professional staffing of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee

27. Reliance on a sole Professional post has hampered the work of the Committee and left the Committee vulnerable to continuity problems on a daily and long-term basis. Bearing in mind the current workload of the secretariat as detailed in table 1 above, it is estimated that an additional Professional post of a Scientific Officer at the P-4 level would be needed to: (a) support increasingly extensive, complex and diverse assessments, ensuring their timeliness without compromising on quality; (b) improve dissemination of the Committee's findings and coordination with other international organizations; and (c) develop and maintain support infrastructure for the longer term. Taking into account the Committee's proposed strategic plan and programme of work, for which some additional work months are anticipated, it is considered that the additional staffing capacity is further justified.

28. In response to issues previously raised by the Advisory Committee (see A/58/7, para. 81 and part IV, para. IV.64), consideration has been given to whether new technologies could reduce the effort needed. However, while these may be used to make some of the support processes more efficient, the limiting factor remains the need for additional capacity for thorough professional review, analysis and editing in the Committee's secretariat.

29. The functions of the Scientific Officer post would be (a) to assist the Secretary of the Committee in developing the programme of work, programme monitoring and general trust fund promotion and fund-raising; (b) assist in the technical preparation, conduct and follow-up of the annual sessions, including the preparation of relevant parliamentary documentation; (c) coordinate the preparation of several extremely technical documents for scrutiny by the Committee (in particular on the biological

effects of radiation exposures), maintaining the Committee's high standards of academic and scientific excellence; and (d) recommend the engagement of and provide support to consultants with first-class expertise, conduct scientific editing of the documents and prepare complex graphics. The Scientific Officer would also (a) help to liaise and coordinate work with the Committee, scientists, the diplomatic community, UNEP headquarters, and other relevant organizations, as appropriate to avoid duplication of effort and inconsistencies; (b) help to prepare strategic papers for consideration by the Committee and/or Member States; (c) develop and help to maintain systems for collecting, reviewing and disseminating relevant scientific information; (d) prepare regular reviews of new data and information; (e) represent the secretariat at relevant general and scientific forums (General Assembly, conferences, seminars, meetings etc.); (f) prepare correspondence, promotional and public information material, related in particular to the biological effects of radiation, respond to inquiries from the public and scientific community and manage the technical pages of the website; and (g) act as a back-up to the Secretary of the Committee.

30. In addition to the proposal for a new P-4 post, there is a need to engage consultants with the highest levels of expertise to conduct complex work over several years. Additional resources for consultants have, however, already been provided in the context of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

IV. Methods to ensure sufficient, assured and predictable funding

31. Since 2002, the General Assembly had urged UNEP to review and strengthen the present funding of the Committee. In response, the following steps have been taken:

(a) In November 2006, UNEP provided $49,000 on an exceptional basis for publishing the 2006 substantive report;

(b) In May 2007, UNEP established a general trust fund for voluntary contributions in respect of the Scientific Committee.

32. The terms of reference of the general trust fund have three objectives: (a) accelerate the finalization and publication of delayed scientific reviews; (b) improve awareness of the Committee and its findings; and (c) prepare for the future programme of work. In the initial appeal for contributions to the fund, an amount of $250,000 over two years was requested from the 21 States members of the Committee. The target of $90,000 for the year 2007 was reached in December 2007. However, in 2008 the amount pledged by 1 July was only $30,000 (8 per cent of the target). Given the voluntary nature of the funds, these contributions are not sufficient, assured or predictable.

33. The contributions to the trust fund are intended to provide for the implementation of projects approved by the Committee that it may not otherwise be able to undertake. The Committee has authorized its secretariat to take appropriate action to implement the strategic plan and programme of work. Accordingly, the Secretary will adjust resource requirements in line with detailed workplans and consult with the Committee's officers regarding the appropriate level of voluntary contributions to the trust fund. Subsequently, the Secretary would invite Member

States to consider contributing to the trust fund to accelerate the implementation of the strategic plan and the programme of work. However, these efforts require additional work for the Secretary to prepare and execute fund-raising plans.

V. Committee membership

A. Background to Committee membership

34. The founding General Assembly resolution 913 (X) established the Scientific Committee with a fixed membership, consisting of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Each Government was to designate one scientist, with alternates and consultants, as appropriate, to be its representative on the Committee.

35. The General Assembly, in its resolution 3154 (XXVIII), decided to increase the membership of the Scientific Committee to a maximum of 20 and invited Governments that desired to participate in the Committee and were able to contribute to its work to inform the President of the General Assembly. Subsequently, the following States were appointed Committee members: Federal Republic of Germany, Indonesia, Peru, Poland and Sudan.

36. In its resolution 41/62 B the Assembly expressed that it was conscious of the continued need for the Governments of Member States to commit themselves to giving to the Scientific Committee the greatest possible cooperation in order that its work might be more effective. It emphasized, in that connection, that the five permanent members of the Security Council were in a position to make particularly valuable contributions to the work of the Committee. The Assembly was convinced that the participation of China would enhance the effectiveness of the Scientific Committee, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee to a maximum of 21 and invited China to become a member.

37. Between 2002 and 2005, the General Assembly has annually noted with satisfaction that some Member States have expressed particular interest in becoming members of the Scientific Committee, and has expressed its intention to consider the issue further at each successive session. However the issue was not addressed formally until 2006, when the Assembly, in its resolution 61/109, invited Member States that desired to join the Scientific Committee to inform the President of the General Assembly, before 28 February 2007, of their interest. The Assembly decided to consider further the question of membership of the Scientific Committee in all its aspects, including financial implications, at its sixty-second session.

38. In its resolution 62/100 the Assembly welcomed that Belarus, Finland, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Spain and Ukraine had declared their desire to become members of the Committee and invited each of those six Member States to designate one scientist to attend, as observers, the fifty-sixth session of the

Committee. Subsequently, all six[5] countries nominated scientists to attend the session (10-18 July 2008) as observers.

39. The views of the Scientific Committee expressed during consultations held during its fifty-sixth session are recorded in the annex to the present report. Its stated views are (a) that the matter of staffing and financing should be addressed before questions of membership; and (b) that the maximum number of members should remain at about the present number in order to assure scientific quality, effectiveness and efficiency. The Committee offered two proposals for consideration of new members.

B. Financial and administrative implications of increased Committee membership

40. For the fifty-sixth session of the Committee, participants from the six countries mentioned in paragraph 38 above were considered observers. This generated minor requirements related to additional printing and similar costs, which were accommodated within resources already approved under the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (see A/C.4/62/SR.12, paras. 62 and 64).

41. If all six States were to become new members of the Committee, the membership would be increased by about 29 per cent and about 24 new participants would attend the annual sessions (an increase of about 24 per cent). The travel costs for six new representatives to attend the annual session amounts to an additional $32,000 per biennium.

42. In order to accommodate an estimated additional 24 participants at the annual sessions, a larger conference facility would probably be needed, which could be provided within the capacity of the United Nations Office at Vienna. Considering the view of the Committee (see annex) that a larger Committee would reduce the time available for adequate scientific discussion, it is assumed that the length of the annual sessions would be extended from five days to six days, which would lead to additional costs of $50,000 per biennium. It is also estimated that there would be an increase of some 25 to 30 per cent in the photocopying and printing costs for the annual session, estimated at $8,000 per biennium.

43. As can be noted from paragraphs 41 and 42 above, should the membership of the Scientific Committee be increased the total additional requirements would amount to approximately $90,000 per biennium.

44. In addition, increased membership of the Committee would mean additional work for the secretariat to manage additional correspondence, additional submissions of scientific data and references for review and additional written comments on drafts of the technical documents.

45. The United Nations Secretariat concurs with the Committee's view that a larger Committee would be likely to require lengthier discussions to achieve consensus on interpretation of scientific information. To address this, there would be a need to (a) hold longer and/or more complex sessions; (b) prepare more discussion papers in advance of the session; and/or (c) develop more formal arrangements than

[5] Pakistan's nominated scientist did not attend; a minister from its Permanent Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna observed the session.

the current rather informal, collegiate and very efficient methods of reaching consensus. This would entail a workload of about 1.5 person-months at the P-4 level, which could be added to the workload of the additional P-4 post proposed in paragraphs 27 and 29. It could not, however, be absorbed into the workload of the current staffing without significantly impeding the implementation of the Committee's programme of work. It should be noted that there would be only minor additional costs incurred for accepting observers to the sessions, whose travel costs would not be provided, yet who would be considered to provide many of the benefits for the Committee's work.[6]

VI. Conclusions

46. The work of the Scientific Committee is fundamental to the international radiation protection regime as its work affects decisions on the energy debate, waste management, radiation medicine and protection of the public, workers and the environment. Its expertise is also highly relevant in the case of possible deployment of nuclear or radiological weapons.

47. In 1958, the Secretary of the Committee and a small number of Professional staff serving on a rotating basis supported a Committee with 15 member States, which published some 230 pages; the present Secretary supports a Committee with 21 member States, which publishes significantly more complex and diverse reports with some 1600 pages. The work of the Committee has a reputation for being highly efficient in producing high quality assessments. However, the increasing magnitude, complexity and diversity of the workload has not been matched by commensurate resources; this mismatch is seriously reducing the effectiveness of the Committee's work.

48. In response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 62/100 that it be advised as to what further strengthening in the capacity of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee would be needed, it should be noted that in order to (a) support the timely production of increasingly extensive, complex and diverse evaluations; (b) enable the secretariat to consistently engage consultants with the highest levels of expertise; (c) improve dissemination of the Committee's findings; and (d) assure the support infrastructure for the longer term, an additional Scientific Officer at the P-4 level would be required at an estimated biennial cost to the programme budget amounting to $169,600 (current rates).

49. Although six countries have declared their interest in becoming members of the Committee, the General Assembly may wish to consider the Scientific Committee's stated views that (a) the matter of staffing and financing should be addressed before questions of membership; and (b) the maximum number of members should remain at about the present number in order to assure scientific

[6] It should be noted that: (a) the Scientific Committee has engaged in official collaboration with Belarus and Ukraine to assist in work on the Chernobyl accident and experts from those two States have participated in the relevant technical discussions at several past sessions; and (b) scientists from some States that are not members of the Committee regularly participate as members of delegations of States members of the Committee. Moreover, for the observer countries themselves, observer status may provide many of the same benefits as full membership (for example, interaction with world-class experts at the annual sessions, ensuring key national data are not overlooked and participation in the technical discussions).

quality, effectiveness and efficiency together with the two proposals of the Committee for consideration of new members in the annex to the present report.

50. The financial implications of an increase in membership of the Committee by the six States who have declared their interest is estimated at $90,000 per biennium in addition to the secretariat support identified in paragraph 48 above.

51. Accordingly, should the General Assembly decide on both the strengthening of the secretariat of the Scientific Committee and the increase in the membership of the Committee, the total estimated biennial requirement would amount to $259,600 (current rates).

Annex

Views of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation on membership, staffing and financing as expressed in consultations held during its fifty-sixth session (10-18 July 2008)

1. The present United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation is composed of 21 member States with representatives and their accompanying scientific advisers. At the fifty-sixth session, there were over 100 participants, including observers from an additional 10 international organizations and from the six States that have expressed interest in membership on the Committee. The Committee is aware of similar interest by other States in addition to the present six.

2. The Committee has functioned very effectively over more than 50 years with essentially its current membership and size and has been able to discharge its mandate successfully. The Committee is concerned, for a number of reasons, about increasing its size. The primary issues concern efficiency and quality. A larger committee with additional advisers would reduce the number of topics able to be considered, reduce the time available for adequate scientific discussion and reduce the quality of the Committee's reports. Additional concerns include increased expenses, which would reduce the resources available to engage critical scientific consultants. Addition of more members would reduce available meeting dates and also require a larger meeting room, likely an auditorium format, which also would reduce efficiency.

3. While in principle the Committee welcomes the interest shown by six States in becoming members of the Committee, it must first recall and re-emphasize its previous statement (see A/62/46, para. 9) where it "stressed that a solution should be found to the financial and resource issues before any discussion took place in the Assembly in relation to the possibility of expanding the membership of the Committee".

4. Moreover, the Committee believes that solutions can be found to the membership issue without necessarily increasing the size of the Committee. The development of this proposal requires a brief recapitulation of the historical requirements for membership as set by the General Assembly. The Committee was formed in 1955 with a requirement in its founding resolution (Assembly resolution 913 (X)) that Governments of States members of the Committee were to designate one scientist, with alternates and consultants, as appropriate, to be their representatives on the Committee.

5. Subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly relating to membership included the following elements:

(a) That those Governments which desire to participate in the Scientific Committee should be able to contribute to its work (resolutions 3154 (XXVIII) and 41/62);

(b) That extending membership to China would increase the effectiveness of the Committee (resolution 41/62).

6. The Committee considers that the principal objective of membership is the contribution that can be made to the work of the Committee and re-emphasizes (see A/62/46, para. 10) that "in a spirit of effectively contributing to the work of the Committee, States members of the Committee need to field active scientists as representatives, alternates and advisers, so that the Committee could fulfil its mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 913 (X). In this regard, essential elements for the Committee were: sustainable knowledge on a broad range of issues in the field of radiation levels and effects; the capability to compile, prepare and evaluate scientific reports; competent assessment of draft scientific documents; and capability to summarize and synthesize the material for the Assembly, the scientific community and the public".

7. With the resurgence of nuclear power, global concerns about nuclear weapons and significantly increasing radiation exposure of the world's population, the Committee does recognize the reasons why States desire to be members. The Committee would like to respond to that desire while maintaining quality, scientific integrity and efficiency. The Committee is developing evaluation criteria reflecting the foregoing elements, the availability of expert scientists in the fields of the Committee's work and (for present States members of the Committee) attendance and participation at Committee sessions, contributions to work of the secretariat and contributions in kind. The criteria would be applicable, as far as possible, to both existing and potential future members.

8. The Committee suggests that the maximum number of members should remain at about the present number, in order that the scientific quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Committee are not compromised. However, this should not be seen as a constraint, in itself, to consideration of new members.

9. The Committee therefore offers two proposals. The first is to replace some existing States members of the Scientific Committee with new permanent members (the Secretary-General may wish to consult with existing members that have not been attending the Committee's sessions regularly on their interest in continuing to be members, with a view to their replacement with other interested States). The second proposal would be to designate some member States with permanent status and a number of others with rotating status. Selection of the member States, in either case, should rest upon the aforementioned evaluation criteria.

10. The Committee recognizes that the General Assembly will make the final decision and appreciates the opportunity to provide its input.