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Chairman: Mr. Miguel Rafael URQUIA (El Salvador).

AGENDA ITEM 25

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening and widening of scientific activities in this field

GENERAL DEBATE (concluded)

1. Mr. AMADEO (Argentina) said that his delegation had welcomed the report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (A/3838) with deep satisfaction, first because international co-operation had once again been achieved in scientific matters, and secondly because Argentina, as a member of the Committee, had directly contributed to its work. The National Commission for Atomic Energy of Argentina, with the help of other scientific bodies, had established, at various points in Argentine territory, stations for measuring the intensity of radio-active fall-out and the information gathered had been transmitted to the Scientific Committee. Argentina had also submitted a number of technical reports to the Committee, which were mentioned in annex I of the Committee's report, and had contributed directly to its work by making the services of a number of experts available to it.

2. The Argentine delegation agreed with the representative of Sweden (1011th meeting) that the widest international co-operation was imperative, including the co-operation of all the organs and bodies actively concerned in the matter.

3. The Argentine delegation shared the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/3864) and in the statement he had made to the Committee (1012th meeting) on the work of the Scientific Committee, the manner in which co-ordination had been achieved with the specialized agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and national scientific institutions, and the need to improve that co-operation in order to avoid duplication of effort.

4. His delegation also noted with satisfaction that the Committee had carried out a strictly scientific task, without allowing itself to become involved in political digressions.

5. Convinced that it was desirable that the Scientific Committee should continue its work, his delegation had co-sponsored the twelve-power draft resolution (A/ C.1/L.227 and Corr.1).

6. Mr. CORREA (Ecuador) said that his delegation also wished to congratulate the Scientific Committee on the work it had accomplished. Its report showed that the eminent scientists composing the Committee had, with the collaboration of the competent international and national institutions and bodies, carried out highly technical work in an atmosphere of international co-operation. The information thus provided was of vital importance not only to Governments, but also to scientists, industrialists and others, in a matter which involved the safeguarding of man's future. It was remarkable that fifteen eminent scientists from different regions of the world had reached virtually unanimous conclusions on such complex problems, leaving aside any political implications their conclusions might have.

7. The danger of exposure to atomic radiation would always be a subject of concern to the peoples of the entire world. The Scientific Committee's statement that any present attempt to evaluate the effects of sources of radiation to which the world population was exposed could produce only tentative estimates with wide margins of uncertainty did not detract from the seriousness of the warning to be found at the end of chapter VII, paragraph 54, of its report.

8. It was clear that the work started by the Committee should be continued and intensified; his delegation supported the Secretary-General's suggestions on that point. In its view, the Committee should be continued for an indefinite period and should retain its essentially scientific character, whatever additional activities it might be given to perform.

9. Furthermore, it would be extremely helpful to scientific and professional circles in the countries where nuclear science was least advanced if the Committee published the information it had collected and evaluated, as suggested by the Secretary-General in paragraph 10 of his report (A/3864).

10. Finally, it was desirable that the Committee should continue to co-ordinate activities in that field and to use the resources offered it by the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations.

11. The Ecuadorian delegation hoped that the twelve-power draft resolution would be adopted unanimously.

12. Mr. HALSTEAD (Canada) said that Canada had been glad to assist in the important work of the Scientific Committee by making available some of its scientists and submitting reports on various problems.

13. Although the Committee’s report provided much information on what was known to science about radiation levels and effects, a great deal still remained to be done, particularly with regard to the effects on the human organism. There were also many gaps to be filled in the knowledge of the biological effects of small doses of radiation.

14. Under the terms of the draft resolution before the Committee (A/C.1/L.227 and Corr.1), a primary task of the Scientific Committee would be to bring up to date at intervals its comprehensive report of 1958, or parts of it, in the light of new knowledge. The Canadian delegation hoped that the Scientific Committee would continue to point out those areas requiring further research. It would like to see the Committee continue its task in substantially its present form and with its present terms of reference. However, as a measure of flexibility was essential in scientific work, the Committee should itself determine its specific activities within its terms of reference.

15. With reference to a wider participation by Member States in the work of the Scientific Committee, he recalled operative paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 913 (X). For the success of the Committee’s future work, it would become increasingly important for States to undertake studies in the areas indicated in the 1958 report and communicate the results to the Scientific Committee. It was on that understanding that the Canadian delegation had co-sponsored the draft resolution.

16. Mr. RODRIGUEZ FABREGAT (Uruguay) said that the draft resolution before the Committee was a faithful reflection of the two ideas which had emerged from the general debate. On the one hand, humanity had rejoiced in the new scientific conquest which enabled man to widen his horizons and extend the area of his knowledge and, on the other hand, it feared that the new era might not serve progress, but might contain destructive elements which must be combated.

17. It was appropriate to pay a tribute, as the draft resolution did, to the Scientific Committee for its outstanding work and to congratulate it on its excellent report, which put before all the peoples of the world a summary of scientific knowledge on the question.

18. He drew attention to the corrigendum circulated as document A/C.1/L.227/Corr.1, deleting the word "specialized" after the words "United Nations" in operative paragraph 2 of the draft resolution, and said that it met the objections which had been made to that paragraph.

19. His delegation would vote for the draft resolution, which requested the Committee to continue its work, so that the General Assembly might receive information on the new knowledge acquired in that sphere.

20. Mr. SCHIFF (Netherlands), recalling the comment he had made at the 1012th meeting regarding the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said that, following the statements made by various members of the Committee, he had decided not to submit an amendment to include a specific reference to the IAEA in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.

21. His delegation would therefore vote for the draft resolution, although it agreed with the representative of Austria (1012th meeting) that the point should be raised again if it became apparent that insufficient attention was being paid to the responsibilities of the IAEA.

22. Mr. MURRAY (Secretary of the Committee) informed the Committee, in accordance with rule 154 of the rules of procedure, of the financial implications of the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.227 and Corr.1).

23. The additional budgetary credits required for the continuation of the Scientific Committee would be those set out in document A/3854/Add.1. However, the estimate for meetings of the Committee could be reduced by $13,000, as it would appear that five weeks of meetings instead of ten would suffice.

24. Accordingly, the additional costs in 1959 would be $213,000, of which $43,000 would be for the meetings of the Committee, $100,200 for salaries of Professional and General Service staff, $18,600 for common staff costs, $1,000 for books and periodicals, and a lump sum of $50,000 for the further activities of the Committee.

25. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the draft resolution submitted by Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, the United Arab Republic, the United Kingdom and the United States (A/C.1/L.227 and Corr.1).

The draft resolution was adopted unanimously.

AGENDA ITEM 63

Question of Algeria (A/3853)

GENERAL DEBATE

26. Mr. SLIM (Tunisia) regretted that France had seen fit not to participate in the debate on the question of Algeria and urgently appealed to it to reconsider its decision. An open and sincere discussion with France would certainly help to solve the problem.

27. He reviewed the situation as it had been at the end of the twelfth session of the General Assembly, at which the French delegation had declared that peace had returned to the greater part of Algeria and that France was on the point of applying a loi-cadre (basic law), granting Algeria a measure of self-government within the French framework (913th meeting), Resolution 1184 (XII), which the Assembly had adopted on 10 December 1957, had given rise to great hopes.

28. He regretted that he was unable to report to the Committee on the manner in which his country and Morocco had carried out the mission of good offices with which the General Assembly had implicitly entrusted them, since France had refused to respond to the offer made to it.

29. Early in January 1958, world public opinion had learned from French sources of the recrudescence of
military action in Algeria, a fact subsequently confirmed by inquiries undertaken by journalists from widely different countries. Mr. Jacques Chaban-Delmas, the Minister of National Defence of France, had published some highly significant figures in that respect in the 25 March 1958 issue of Le Monde. There could be no doubt that Algeria was the scene of a real war, both because of the size of the forces involved and because of the number of losses on both sides.

30. The reason why military activities had slowed down in the last months of 1957 was that the rejection of the first draft of the loi-cadre had given rise to the hope that France was going to change its policy, particularly since Tunisia and Morocco had just offered their good offices and highly placed French officials instructed by the Government to undertake an investigation in Algeria had submitted a report calling for recognition of the fact that Algeria was destined to achieve independence. The slowing-down of military operations demonstrated both the political consciousness and the discipline of the Algerian nationalists.

31. The resumption and intensification of military operations at the beginning of January 1958 was due to the attitude of France, which had shown its resolve to take into account neither enlightened French opinion, which recommended negotiation and recognition of a free and independent Algerian State, nor international opinion, nor United Nations resolutions. The French Government persisted in ignoring the two realities that Algeria was not France and that the Algerian people was determined to reconquer its dignity as a free people, master of its own destiny.

32. The military action, which was covering increasingly large areas of Algeria, had spread beyond that country. Large numbers of refugees, fleeing the war, were crossing the Moroccan and Tunisian frontiers in search of asylum. In France itself, a state of emergency had been proclaimed in certain departments where there was a large number of Algerians. The French army had not hesitated to violate the territory and air space of Tunisia, and the bombing of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef was only the most spectacular of a series of acts of aggression to which Tunisia had been subjected and which France had tried to justify by arguments absolutely contrary to international law.

33. In those circumstances, it could not be alleged that the Algerian war fell exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of France. Its duration and its extent were a cause of grave concern to the international conscience, and to the conscience of France in particular. Accordingly, the General Assembly should clearly express its views on the seriousness of the situation and should propose the solution which would be the most appropriate and the most consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Apparently, various factors were preventing France from finding and applying an adequate solution; it was therefore an elementary duty of friendship to that country honestly to help it to break the deadlock.

34. The primary cause of the Algerian war was the conflict between two positions: on the one hand, the Algerian people, rallying behind the leaders of the National Liberation Front (FLN), was demanding its political independence and its right to self-determination; on the other hand, France persisted in regarding Algeria as an integral part of its territory and maintained its policy of reforms granted mainly on the basis of its own interests and those of its nationals who had settled in Algeria.

35. At the eleventh session, France had proposed the famous threefold aim of a cease-fire, elections in Algeria to the French National Assembly and discussions with the persons so elected with a view to introducing reforms in Algeria (531st meeting). The FLN had rejected that plan because it refused to lay down its arms before the aspirations of the Algerian people were realized and because it could not believe in the bona fide character of elections prepared by the French administration for the purpose of appointing representatives to a French parliament. It had proposed recognition of the independence of Algeria and negotiation on that basis.

36. At the twelfth session, France had maintained its threefold aim, but had specified that the bona fide character of the elections could be proved by the presence of neutral observers. It had also stated that it had prepared a loi-cadre, providing for regional assemblies and an Algerian Central Assembly, and that negotiations could take place two years after the institution of those assemblies, if they expressed the wish to negotiate. The FLN, for its part, had proved its good faith by agreeing beforehand to renounce the recognition of independence on accepting the Moroccan and Tunisian offer of good offices.

37. Unfortunately, the draft of the loi-cadre had been amended and corrected to such an extent that, by the time it was discussed by the French National Assembly, it had become absolutely indecipherable for any uninhibited person. Meanwhile, as appeals for a more humanitarian policy had kept pouring in, an attempt had been made to find someone responsible for the war. Tunisia had been chosen for that purpose, and the Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef incident had taken place. That was a proof that international complications, representing a dangerous threat to world peace and security, might arise out of the Algerian war.

38. After the incidents in Algiers of 13 May 1958, it had been thought that General de Gaulle would be able to settle the question of the Algerian conflict. Subsequently, in order to facilitate negotiations which might lead to an equitable and just solution to the question, the Algerian nationalists had made a fresh effort and, on 19 September 1958, had established the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic. But apparently recent political events had not adequately met the hopes and aspirations of the Algerian people.

39. Having recalled the manner of the establishment of the FLN, from which the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had derived, he observed that, in its proclamation of 26 September 1958, that Government had declared its willingness to negotiate with representatives of the French Government and had stated that all guarantees compatible with Algerian sovereignty would be provided for French interests in Algeria. In the opinion of the Tunisian delegation, it could not be denied that the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic represented the Algerian people or that it effectively exercised power in Algeria, since certain areas in the interior were entirely controlled by the Liberation Army, under the authority of the Provisional Government. He therefore could not see why France refused to negotiate with that Government,
since it clearly had authority to commit the Algerian people and had made no preliminary conditions for negotiations.

40. The results of the referendum of September 1958 could not be cited in that connexion, for in Algeria that referendum had been organized by the army and had been held under its control. The referendum propaganda had been conducted by French officers, who held all the powers, especially since 13 May 1958, and no current of opinion opposed to an affirmative vote in the referendum had been tolerated in Algeria. The fact that General de Gaulle had stated, in an instruction given to General Salan, delegate-general of the Government, before the elections to the National Assembly had been held in Algeria, that the elections must be sincere proved that he had the most serious doubts as to the bona fide character of the referendum. Thus, one could hardly use that referendum in Algeria as an argument to show that the Algerian people had accepted the French Constitution. In that connexion, it might be asked why Algeria had not been given the same right of option as the other African territories. If the alleged reason was that Algeria was an integral part of France, it was difficult to explain why all the propaganda carried on before the referendum had been based on the theme of integration.

41. The Algerian elections in November 1958 had taken place under the same conditions as the referendum, i.e., under the control of the army, which, contrary to General de Gaulle's instructions, had not respected the principle of bona fide elections and had allowed only lists of which it approved to pass. That had been confirmed by a statement by a former Director in the Government general of Algeria. In those circumstances, no one could validly recognize the right of the Algerians who had been elected to speak on behalf of the Algerian people.

42. Accordingly, the hopes that had arisen after General de Gaulle had taken power had not been realized. It was particularly regrettable that, at his press conference on 23 October 1958, the head of the French Government had apparently closed the door to negotiations by calling on the leaders of the FLN to raise the white flag of truce, which would really have given the cease-fire the form of a surrender. Apart from a victory by armed force, which was impossible in the circumstances, the only solution was to undertake political negotiations, without which the hostilities could not be brought to an end. On the other hand, he did not think that the integration which was being carried out in Algeria was compatible with the peaceful, democratic and just solution that the General Assembly had recommended in its resolution 1012 (XI).

43. In view of the fact that the situation prevailing in Algeria threatened international peace and security in the Western Mediterranean, the United Nations was in duty bound to indicate the method which it thought most appropriate for achieving a real solution of the problem in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. In the opinion of the Tunisian delegation, the United Nations could not rest content with a general and vague recommendation, which would be open to all kinds of interpretations, even that of continuing a so-called war of pacification; its duty was to counsel negotiation and to indicate the basis for a solution compatible with the natural right of peoples to freedom and independence.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.