



30 May 2006

Vienna Rathaus

UNSCEAR 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Closing remarks by Chairman of UNSCEAR, Peter Burns

Mr. Andreas MAILATH-POKORNY, Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science and representative of the Mayor and Governor of Vienna

Mr. Antonio Maria COSTA, Director General of the United Nations Office at Vienna;

Mr. Hans BLIX;

Distinguished representatives from the Government of Austria and the City of Vienna

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Other distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

When UNSCEAR was formed 50 years ago there was a limited awareness of the effects of ionizing radiation and a limited understanding of how to assess radiation exposures. Today we know a lot more about these issues, thanks in no small part to UNSCEAR and the dedicated scientists who have contributed to the development of the reports to the General Assembly.

It is not, however, a case of the job being finished. Although many of the issues that were of concern in the 1950s have been resolved to some degree there are others to take their place as many radiation practices have become an integral part of modern society.

One of today's concerns is the assessment of chronic low-level exposures to ionizing radiations both to humans and to non-human species, particularly when assessing the impact of radioactive waste, the consequences of radiation accidents and the malevolent use of radioactive materials. Recent developments in medical practices mean that population exposures from this source are likely to exceed those from natural sources in the near future in many developed countries.

I would like to thank all those previous Secretaries and Members of the Committee, as well as the consultants and the many other reviewers who contributed to the production of documents over the last fifty years. Many of these people were leaders in their fields and their scientific expertise and objectivity made the documents they produced a valuable and trusted source of accurate scientific assessments of radiation exposures and their effects.

Over the years much of this work for UNSCEAR has been performed on a voluntary basis at little or no cost. This situation has proven to be difficult to maintain in today's economic environment, particularly with respect to consultants who make a substantial commitment in time to produce draft documents. It will be a challenge for UNSCEAR to maintain its programme of work within its present resources.

I would like to thank Dr Sasaki, the previous Chairman of UNSCEAR, the Japanese Government and Dr Kusumi for their continued support for UNSCEAR and in particular for the work done in converting historical documents to an electronic format that will ensure their preservation.

One of the challenges facing UNSCEAR is the dissemination of its work. The recent practice of placing documents on the internet makes them available to a much wider audience, rather than to a specialised few.

On behalf of the present Committee I would like to express our thanks to all our speakers and especially to Mr. Costa and to Mr Blix for their inspiring words this evening.

I would also like to thank the Mayor and Governor of Vienna for hosting this function and to all of you for coming to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCEAR.