

ADG speech at the UNSCEAR 50th Anniversary Vienna, 30 May 2006

Distinguished delegates,

I would like to cordially thank you for this minute of silence in memory of Dr LEE.

To describe his personality very briefly, I would like to quote the words of his son at the funeral of Dr Lee.

"He loved his work and his colleagues and those whom he hoped to help 100%, while loving his family also 100%. This was the only way he could have accomplished all he did in his career, predicated on helping others,.... Even as a doctor he gave 100% to his patients, equally through his work in WHO.... He had a lot to give and he did give it all."

The sudden and sad death of Dr Lee last week put the whole organization under shock. The tragic news that he passed away arrived just before the opening ceremony of the 59th World Health Assembly, and, being here in Vienna, I would like to thank the Wiener Philharmoniker, invited by Dr Lee for the opening ceremony of the 59th World Health Assembly, for their musical tribute to our Director-General.

Today, we are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the **United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation**.

WHO has been enjoying close cooperation with the Committee and has an observer status with UNSCEAR for many years.

WHO considers UNSCEAR as a source of valid information on the biological and health effects of exposure to ionizing radiation.

WHO uses UNSCEAR evidence as a valuable contribution when developing recommendations and guidelines, or conducting scientific reviews on special topics, such as health effects of depleted uranium in post-conflict zones, effects of natural or man-made sources of radiation, or the health effects of a radio-nuclear accident.

Preparedness for and response to environmental emergencies (both technological accidents and natural disasters) are priority areas for the future work of WHO.

Prior to taking up his new appointment as Secretary of UNSCEAR, Malcolm Crick worked closely with WHO staff on radiation emergency issues providing his expertise and advice.

He is seen as a good friend of WHO and will enhance our relationship with UNSCEAR even further over the years.

There are important areas for concrete collaboration between WHO and UNSCEAR. We would like to deepen our collaboration on risk assessment in the following three areas:

1. Natural resources of radiation

2. Medical exposures by diagnostics and therapeutics
3. Radio-nuclear emergencies, like accidents and incidents

One topic regarding the natural sources of radiation on which we should focus the collaboration is the assessment of the risks of exposure to radon gas.

Another very important area is medical exposure to ionizing radiation. UNSCEAR have been gathering and contributing enormous amount of knowledge on the assessment of risk coming from the rapidly developing field of diagnostic and therapeutic radiation applications, and by doing so the Committee is helping WHO in its work to understand where lays the border between cure and harm.

The Chernobyl accident urges us to better work together to improve the preparedness for and the response to radio-nuclear emergencies and their health and environmental implications. To avoid such an accident ever happening again, we must establish an improved global culture of safety, and be open and transparent about the risks.

Let me end by conveying WHO's sincere congratulations to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation - UNSCEAR on its 50th anniversary and all the best wishes for the future, and for a continued fruitful collaboration with WHO.

Thank you very much.