



UNSCEAR

United Nations Scientific Committee
on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

Newsletter #2



Evaluating Science for Informed Decision Making

Mandate and vision

The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) was established by the General Assembly on 3 December 1955 to undertake broad assessments of the sources of exposure to ionizing radiation and the effects on human health and the environment.

The Committee collects and analyses the latest scientific information,

and reports on the scientific basis that underpins radiation protection at national and international levels. The vision is to maintain and enhance credible, independent and up-to-date evaluations and remain an authoritative United Nations source of information for policymakers, regulators, licensees, the research community and other stakeholders worldwide.

Continuing progress amid COVID-19 pandemic challenges

Despite the extraordinary circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee upheld its commitment to its programme of work and achieved significant milestones since the sixty-sixth session in 2019. In particular, it held its first online session (sixty-seventh session); approved three new evaluations and its Future Programme of Work for the period 2020–2024 and published two evaluations on lung cancer due to radon exposure and selected health effects and inference of risk due to exposure.

The Chair, Ms. Gillian Hirth (Australia), expressed her gratitude to the delegations,

the UNSCEAR Bureau, which held fifteen (mainly online) meetings in the past year, and the secretariat for continuing to uphold its high standards of scientific excellence and professional commitment. Ms. Borislava Batandjjeva-Metcalf, UNSCEAR Secretary, appreciated the hard and dedicated work of the experts despite the challenges, which was essential for the successful deliberations of the Committee at its sixty-seventh session. The Committee also thanked the Rapporteur of the previous sixty-sixth session, Mr. Ingemar Lund (Sweden) and welcomed the newly elected Rapporteur, Mr. Anssi Auvinen (Finland).



UNSCEAR Bureau. Top-left to right: Ms. A. Friedl (Germany), Ms. J.-K. Lee (Republic of Korea), Ms. J. Chen (Canada); bottom-left to right: Ms. G. Hirth (Australia), Mr. A. Auvinen (Finland), Mr. H. Vanmarcke (Belgium); Small photos bottom right corner: Ms. B. Batandjjeva-Metcalf and Mr. F. Shannoun (UNSCEAR secretariat)

Message from the Rapporteur



Mr. A. Auvinen – newly elected Rapporteur

An honour and privilege to serve the Committee

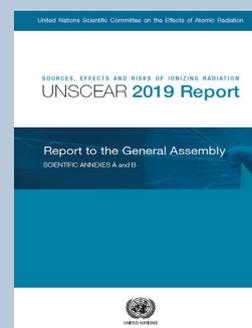
It is an honour and privilege to be elected as Rapporteur for the sixty-seventh session. I have been involved with UNSCEAR for nearly a decade and gained experience both at the Committee and various expert groups. This has allowed me to recognize the scope and importance of the work of the Committee. This task involves considerable effort and responsibility, but it clearly deserves a high priority, owing to its global impact. The extensive effort of large numbers of

members in expert groups over several years is amalgamated in the UNSCEAR reports, and these are finalized and approved at the Committee sessions. Inability to follow the usual procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the dire economic situation of UNSCEAR has made the functioning of the Committee even more challenging than before. Being able to contribute to the work of the Committee is a worthy goal and as Rapporteur, I am doing my best to facilitate it.

UNSCEAR 2019 Report published online

The UNSCEAR 2019 Report containing two scientific annexes were published online in December 2020 ([link](#)). Annex A (*Evaluation of selected health effects and inference of risk due to radiation exposure*) provides an evaluation of selected health effects and inference of

risk due to radiation exposure describing five scenarios for risk evaluation. Annex B (*Lung cancer from exposure to radon*) evaluates lung cancer from exposure to radon and provides information to assess recent developments in risk estimates of lung cancer and radon exposure.



Highlights from the sixty-seventh session (2–6 November 2020)

It was an unusual, yet fruitful sixty-seventh session in 2020. Instead of delegates going from one discussion to another, and meeting colleagues, the session took place online. The secretariat is proud to note, that even though the session could not be held in Vienna as usual due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the sixty-seventh session took place online and was well attended by over 210 participants from 27 States members of the Committee, four observer countries and 11 international observer organizations. The session facilitated fruitful discussions among the Committee and experts around the world and concluded successfully despite the unprecedented situation and the related challenges.

The Committee deliberated and approved three scientific reports during the session:

- Evaluation of medical exposure to ionizing radiation;
- Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station: implications of information published since the 2013 UNSCEAR Report;
- Biological mechanisms relevant for the inference of cancer risks from low-dose and low-dose-rate radiation.

The Future Programme of Work for the period 2020–2024 was adopted, and it is envisaged that the Committee will review and approve a report on the evaluation of occupational exposure and launch a new study on diseases of the circulatory system from radiation exposure in 2021.

In the last year, the Committee launched three new projects:

- Second primary cancer after radiation therapy;
- Epidemiological studies of radiation and cancer;
- Public exposure due to ionizing radiation.

The work of the Committee's two ad hoc working groups on (i) effects and mechanisms and (ii) sources and exposures continued focusing on the improvement of data collection and preparing the launch of the new [UNSCEAR Global Survey on Public exposure](#).

A [press release](#) summarizing the proceedings is available online.

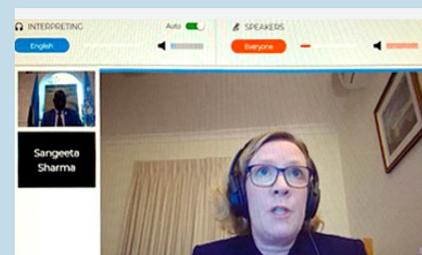
Report of the Chair to the seventy-fifth United Nations General Assembly

In a departure from the norm imposed by the COVID-19 travel restrictions, most United Nations activities moved online. The Chair, Ms. Gillian Hirth (Australia) submitted a report on the intersessional activities by means of a note ([A/75/46](#)) and an oral report during the virtual meeting of the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on 9 October 2020. On that basis, the United Nations adopted a resolution on the effects of atomic radiation on 10 December 2020 ([A/RES/75/91](#)).

During the Business meeting, which was held in July 2020 prior to the report to the General Assembly, the UNSCEAR Secretary highlighted that the General Assembly welcomed the Committee's scientific evaluations, data collections on medical, occupational and public exposures, cooperation with international organizations,

and implementation of the outreach strategy for the period 2020–2024. For the latter in particular, the enhancement of the website of the Committee and the publication of information for the general public in all the official languages of the United Nations was defined as a priority. Importantly, the General Assembly encouraged Member States in a position to do so to make voluntary contributions to the UNSCEAR General Trust Fund established by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and also to make in-kind contributions, in order to support the work of the Committee, and the dissemination of its findings, in a sustainable manner.

The press release of the Chair's note can be accessed [here](#).



Ms. G. Hirth, Chair,
at the seventy-fifth United Nations
General Assembly

2021 session to mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of UNSCEAR

The next sixty-eighth session will be held online from 21–25 June 2021. This year is also a landmark year for UNSCEAR as it celebrates its sixty-fifth anniversary in 2021.

The sixty-seventh Report to the General Assembly ([A/76/46 Part 1](#)) is available online and can be accessed [here](#)

UNSCLEAR outreach activities

Launch of the UNSCEAR 2020 Fukushima Report on 9 March 2021

The UNSCEAR secretariat presented an advance copy of its UNSCEAR 2020 Report titled “Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station: implications of information published since the UNSCEAR 2013 Report” to a well-attended event on 9 March, held online.

The Chair and lead writers presented some of the key findings of the report to over 180 attendees, in the areas of health effects and exposure, and answered questions from a number of scientists and diplomats.

In his [message](#) to mark the tenth anniversary of the great-east Japan earthquake and tsunami, United Nations Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres welcomed the “reassuring findings of the Scientific Committee”.

This year, the report was the focus of the regular UNSCEAR presentation to Permanent Missions which aims to engage with the diplomatic community and share information on the Committee’s programme of work and reports.

The report was widely covered in leading media worldwide and is available on the [UNSCLEAR website](#).



United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres sent a video message on the 10-year mark of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

UNSCLEAR contributes to the International Conference on Radiation Safety at the side events on “Young Professional Development Paths” and “UNSCLEAR’s Global Survey on Public Exposure”



Ms. B. Batandjjeva-Metcalf, UNSCEAR Secretary and Mr. R. Grossi, Director General, IAEA at the IAEA event “Young Professional Development Paths”

Even with the limitations on travel and gatherings, outreach activities to disseminate scientific evidence to the scientific community and the public continued. Notably, the UNSCEAR secretariat successfully held an online side event on the Public Exposure Survey at the [International Conference on Radiation Safety](#), attended by over 200 participants around the world. Click [here](#) for further information. Ms. Borislava Batandjjeva-Metcalf, Secretary of UNSCEAR, also joined a panel with Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the IAEA side event on Young Professional Development Paths. The recordings can be accessed [here](#).

UNSCLEAR’s Global Survey on Radiation Exposure at the 15th International Congress of the International Radiation Protection Association

The UNSCEAR secretariat in collaboration with the [International Radiation Protection Association \(IRPA\)](#) organized an event on the UNSCEAR Global Survey on Radiation Exposure. The event was held online during the [IRPA 15th International Congress](#), Seoul on 22 January 2021. During the event, the Korean version of the [UNEP Booklet Radiation: Effects and Sources](#) was launched.



Cover UNEP Radiation Booklet (Korean)



From left to right: Ms. B. Batandjjeva-Metcalf, Ms. J. Chen, Ms. J.-K. Lee, Mr. CW. Cho, Ms. J. Brown, Mr. S. Niu, Ms. M. Perez and Mr. F. Shannoun

Involvement of young experts in UNSCEAR’s work

The UNSCEAR secretariat is working with young scientists worldwide through six month [internships](#), the [UN Volunteer Programme](#) and in-kind contributions from Member States. Next intern applications will open in May 2021.

Flash forward

The 35th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident: existing and future research of radiological and medical consequences	14–15 April 2021, Ukraine
Sixty-eighth annual UNSCEAR session (online)	21–25 June 2021, Vienna
UNSCEAR outreach activity in Japan	October 2021, Japan (TBC)
IAEA International Conference on a Decade of Progress after Fukushima-Daiichi: Building on the Lessons Learned to Further Strengthen Nuclear Safety	8–12 November 2021, Vienna

Flashback to key events

The Chair's note to the United Nations General assembly (online)	16 October 2020, New York
Sixty-seventh annual UNSCEAR session (online)	2–6 November 2020, Vienna
UNSCEAR Virtual Side Event “UNSCEAR Global Survey on Public Exposure”	13 November 2020
Third International Conference on Advances in Radiation Oncology (ICARO3) (online)	16–19 January 2021
IRPA15 International Congress of the International Radiation Protection Association	18–27 January 2021, Seoul
Fukushima Medical University International Symposium on the Fukushima Health Management Survey	2–3 February 2021, Shirakawa, Japan
21st Regular IACRS meeting (online)	16–18 February 2021
Launch of the UNSCEAR public exposure survey	1 March 2021
ECR 2021 conference (online)	3–7 March 2021
28th IACRNE meeting (online)	17–19 March 2021

Did you know?

- Mr. Rolf Sievert (1896–1966, Sweden) was said to be the “father of radiation protection”. Mr. Sievert served as the Chair of UNSCEAR (1958–1960) for three sessions; and his student, Mr. Bo Lindell (1922–2016, Sweden), another pioneer in radiation protection, served as Chair of UNSCEAR for four sessions (1970–1971 and 1987–1988). Most recently in 2019, Mr. Ingemar Lund was the Rapporteur for the sixty-sixth session and retired in 2020.
- Thirty-five years ago, the Chernobyl accident occurred (26 April 1986). UNSCEAR has been evaluating the levels and effects of this tragic event with the first publication of the UNSCEAR 1988 Report “Exposures from the Chernobyl accident” and the latest White Paper 2017 “Evaluation of data on thyroid cancer in regions affected by the Chernobyl accident” (click [here](#) for more details).
- UNSCEAR has about 100 national contact persons for data collection on medical, occupational and public exposure (click [here](#) for more details).

The commitment of UNSCEAR to the Sustainable Development Goals

In developing its strategic directions, UNSCEAR contributes to the achievement of four Sustainable Development Goals, i.e. Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 14 (Life below Water), Goal 15 (Life on Land) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

