

Date: 24 October 2014

To: Members of the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly 69th Session,
Members of UNSCEAR, and
Members of the UN General Assembly:

Re: Civil Society groups request revision of the recent United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) Report: “Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and tsunami.”

The 2011 Fukushima disaster made UN oversight of the adverse effects of ionizing radiation an issue of utmost global importance. The goals and criteria of oversight should be the protection and promotion of the human right to health and well-being, which encompasses an environment as free from exposure to man-made ionizing radiation as possible. We, the undersigned, urge the 4th Committee to examine critically both the scientific conclusions in the UNSCEAR reportⁱ and the scientific evidence omitted from the report.

Physicians from 19 national affiliates of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), including Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA) and IPPNW Germany, have authored/issued/published a Critique of the UNSCEAR reportⁱⁱ which calls into question the presumptions and data used by UNSCEAR, and the consequent interpretations and conclusions. This Critique demonstrates how UNSCEAR systematically underestimates and downplays the health effects of the Fukushima disaster.

We appreciate the significant efforts made by UNSCEAR committee members to evaluate the extensive and complex data concerning the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe. However, their conclusion that there is “no discernable effect”, now or in the future, defies common sense and undermines the credibility of UNSCEAR. The Critique notes that based on the UNSCEAR report itself, it can be expected that about 1,000 excess cases of thyroid cancer and between 4,300 and 16,800 other excess cancer cases would occur in Japan due to Fukushima radioactive fallout. We believe that these are very discernable effects for the individuals, families and communities experiencing these cancers, as well as those individuals who will experience other form(s) of radiation induced illness.

Furthermore, the conclusion by UNSCEAR of ‘no discernible health effect’ is misleading the Japanese government to not implement countermeasures for individuals to avoid additional exposure and to have thorough monitoring of health effects, thereby causing serious human rights violations.

This catastrophe was not a singular event that has come to an end, but rather it is an unfolding event with an unknown endpoint. Radioactive elements continue to leak into the biosphere and individuals continue to be exposed to ionizing radiation because they live in contaminated areas, consume contaminated food and water and inhale contaminated air. Additionally, most of the health effects from Fukushima will take decades or generations to be expressed. Thus the UNSCEAR report at hand should be considered a preliminary or initial assessment of the health effects of Fukushima. Ongoing and improved monitoring and updating of the assessment is required for a long time to come. The 2014 UNSCEAR report is a beginning, not an end.

We ask that the Fourth Committee take two actions regarding the UNSCEAR report:

- 1) Return the report to UNSCEAR for revision based on the Critique, taking into consideration the points of concern raised in the Critique, and that UNSCEAR broaden the composition of the committee to include as full-fledged members scientists who are critical of nuclear activities.

- 2) We also ask that the Fourth Committee urge the General Assembly to pass a new resolution reframing the 1955 UNSCEAR founding mandate to ensure that the UNSCEAR's primary scientific mission is to promote and protect public health and the right to health of the most vulnerable individuals. The Precautionary Principle should be employed to address the short-term and long-term effects of ionizing radiation upon present and future generations as well as the environment. Likewise, the Precautionary Principle should be employed when determining exposure, cleanup and decontamination regulations and activities after a nuclear disaster, educational measures to minimize and mitigate the risk of individual exposure, and the long-term monitoring of contaminated sites. A new UN mandate is critical for UNSCEAR Committee members to be able to fully utilize their expertise for the purpose of protecting the lives and health of the global community.

This request is supported by the following organizations:

Physicians for Social Responsibility, USA

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War – Germany, Germany

Human Rights Now, Tokyo, Japan

Peace Boat – US, USA

Niji to midori no kai, Japan

Greens Fukushima, Japan

Workers' Executive Committee For Anti-nuclear Power Movements, Japan

Kai Fukushima Downwind, Japan

The Nature Conservation of Fukushima, Japan

Friends of the Earth Japan, Japan

Showa Shell Labour Union, Japan

Chernobyl Health Survey and Health-care Support for the Victims - Japan Women's Network, Japan

Nuclear Disaster Information Center, Japan

Japan International Volunteer Center, Japan

Campaign for Nuclear-free Japan, Japan

Fukushima Network for Denuclearization, Japan

Hairo Action Fukushima, Japan

Fukushima Women Against Nukes, Japan

People in Fukushima-NPP 30km area, Japan

Refugee Living with Fukushima in Niigata Prefecture, Japan

Shinshu 3.11 Network, Japan

National Network of Parents to Protect Children from Radiation, Japan

The Civil Forum on Nuclear Radiation Damages (CFNRD), Japan

Takagi School, Japan

AEEFG - Association de l'Education Environnementale pour les Futures Generations, Tunisia

NGO of “Ecolife”, Azerbaijan

Women in Europe for a Common Future International, Netherlands

Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany

Women in Europe for a Common Future, France

Irish Doctors' Environmental Association (IDEA), Ireland

Nuclear Information and Resource Service, USA

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, USA

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, New York, USA

Nukewatch/The Progressive Foundation, USA

Nuclear Watch New Mexico, USA

Georgia WAND - Women's Actions for New Directions, USA

Physicians for Social Responsibility – Kansas City, USA

Gray Panthers, USA

Center for Safe Energy, USA

Nuclear Energy Information Service, USA

[Responses to this request may be directed to:

Physicians for Social Responsibility USA

Alfred Meyer, Board Member

alfred.c.meyer@gmail.com

+1-202-215-8208]

ⁱ UNSCEAR report “Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and tsunami” at: http://www.unscear.org/docs/reports/2013/13-85418_Report_2013_Annex_A.pdf

ⁱⁱ Critical Analysis of the UNSCEAR Report “Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and tsunami: www.fukushima-disaster.de/information-in-english/maximum-credible-accident.html
