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## **UNSCEAR (United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation)**

The UNSCEAR is a Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Committee was established in 1955 in response to widespread concerns regarding the effects of radiation on human health and the environment. At that time, nuclear weapons were being tested in the atmosphere, and radioactive debris was dispersing throughout the environment, reaching the human body through the intake of air, water and food. Treaties now ban atmospheric tests, but many other exposures to radiation occur from other sources, both natural and man-made.

The Committee collects and assesses global data on the sources and effects of ionizing radiation. Detailed reports to the General Assembly are produced every few years and are made widely available as United Nations sales publications. The latest editions were 1988, 1993, 1994,

1996 and 2000. The reports review exposures from natural radiation sources, from man-made practices and events such as nuclear power production, nuclear tests, Chernobyl and other accidents, from medical radiation uses and occupational radiation exposures. Methods of exposure evaluation and extensive data compilations are included. The reports also review results of epidemiological, radiobiological and genetic effect studies in order to estimate risks of exposures. Other biological topics are addressed to improve understanding of mechanisms involved in radiation effects and to interpret modified features of exposures, e.g., dose rate, age/tissue sensitivities, adaptive responses, interactions with other agents. The assessments are recognized to be scientifically accurate and authoritative, and they serve as the basis for national and international standards for radiation protection.

The Committee is comprised of 21 member countries. Its Secretariat is located at the Vienna International Center, P.O. Box 500, A-1400 Vienna, Austria.

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