

President Yoshiharu Yonekura Delivers Presentation at United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR)

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National Institute of Radiological Sciences

The 58th session of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) took place in the Vienna International Centre, Vienna, Austria, from 23 to 27 May 2011. The seven participants from Japan included President Yoshiharu Yonekura and Senior Researcher Shin Saigusa from the National Institute of Radiological Sciences and Dr. Shizuyo Kusumi, a Commissioner of the Nuclear Safety Committee of Japan, who was a special guest speaker.

The role of UNSCEAR is to provide experts from its 21 member nations with the opportunity to spend time investigating the latest scientific information and findings on the level, risk, and effects of radiation and produce reports to the United Nations General Assembly. In a typical year, UNSCEAR brings together about 100 people for discussions made up of delegates from the 21 member nations as well as interested people from United Nations agencies. This year, however, the high level of interest in the “Fukushima Session” described below resulted in an attendance of 140 which forced some of the participants to attend via monitor from a separate room.

The “Fukushima Session” covering the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant was the first item after the opening session on the first day of the meeting and Mr. Yonekura acted as joint-chairperson together with Dr. Wolfgang Weiss of Germany who holds the post of Chairman for this meeting as well as the next one. Following a summary of the accident by Dr. Kusumi of the Nuclear Safety Committee of Japan, Mr. Yonekura described the effects of the accident including the results of radiation level monitoring. He then took questions from the audience for over an hour.

UNSCEAR was established in 1955 in response to fears about the environmental effects of radioactive material produced by atmospheric nuclear weapons testing during the cold war era. Its 21 member nations have a high level of interest in the nuclear disaster and this prompted UNSCEAR to start work on preparing a report shortly after the earthquake struck. At the current session, scientists from various countries

gathered for a series of side meetings during breaks from the conference program and the views exchanged in these were further considered during the main sessions.

The final decision was to establish expert groups to look at four different areas (data collection, release and dispersion of radioactive isotopes, assessment of dosage and risk for both humans and others, and worker exposure and health effects) and prepare preliminary reports in time for the 59th session of UNSCEAR next year with more complete reports to be submitted in two years' time (2013).

Details of President Yonekura's presentation are available below.

[Report to UNSCEAR](#)