PRESS RELEASE

The Seventh International Symposium

Natural Radiation Environment (NRE VII)

The works of the Seventh International Symposium Natural Radiation Environment (NRE VII) were concluded on May 24, 2002 at the Convention Center of "RODOS PALACE" Hotel, in Rodos. This Symposium is being organized approximately every six years either in Europe or in the United States. Three hundred participants from forty-four countries attended the Symposium and dealt with the issues of the Radioactivity in our natural environment. The contributions presented were relevant to depleted uranium in the natural environment, the occupational exposure of aircrews to cosmic radiation, radon, radioactivity of building materials, radioactive materials transportation, radioactive pollution due to the operation of non-nuclear industrial installations etc. A total of 280 contributions were presented in 10 plenary sessions and 22 parallel sessions, by 250 participants. It was encouraging that many of the attendees were young scientists; a significant number of them were Greeks. The Symposium organizers Professor S.E. Simopoulos, National Technical University of Athens, Greece, Professor F. Steinhaeusler, University of Salzburg, Austria and Professor J.P. McLaughlin, University College Dublin summarized the Symposium Conclusions as it follows:

1. The issues of assessing the distribution, implementing cost-effective mitigation and evaluating the health impact of radon inhalation are still being tackled scientifically in several countries. There is also an increased awareness regarding the studies of the consequences of thoron, which in certain areas of our planet, occurs in significant concentrations with potentially significant of health effects.

2. Several aviation companies are now monitoring systematically the exposure of their crews to dose due to cosmic radiation during flights.

3. Special care is needed regarding the use of building materials, which due to natural causes or due to human activities might contain significant levels of natural radioactivity.

4. Care is also needed as far as the monitoring of natural environment is concerned around non-nuclear industrial installations, from which naturally radioactive solid,

liquid or gas wastes might be released. Consequently, much attention should be paid during decommissioning of such installations and the safe and maintenance free disposal of their contaminated components .

5. Research should continue on the evaluation of the health impact of exposure to low level of ionising radiation, especially when one should not expect long term effects.

6. Regarding the use of DU in conventional weapons, there is no scientific proof at the moment that reported cancers in personnel might be correlated with the exposure to DU ammunition. However, ordinance impact sites have been identified where there is very localized soil pollution with DU, in areas of YUGOSLAVIA where such weapons where employed.

During the Symposium Round Table Discussion, held on Friday May 24, just after the end of all the scheduled presentations, it was decided that an International Scientific Association under the title ***"Natural Radiation Environment Association"*** *(acronym: NREA)* should be formed. The Association will aim to the promotion of natural environmental radiation studies and activities. Relevant information regarding the Association will be soon released through its web site currently under construction, to be reached at present at http://www.nrea.ntua.gr/.