

# General Conference

**GC(64)/RES/3**

Date: September 2020

**General Distribution**

Original: English

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## Sixty-fourth regular session

Item 8 of the agenda

(GC(64)/19)

# The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic

## Resolution adopted on 22 September 2020 during the fifth plenary meeting

### The General Conference,

- (a) Offering condolences to and expressing solidarity with the Member States that have suffered or continue to suffer loss of lives and livelihoods on account of the COVID-19 pandemic,
- (b) Expressing profound condolences to and solidarity with the families and societies whose people have lost their lives to the COVID-19 disease, those who are battling for their survival and those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the crisis,
- (c) Recalling the message conveyed by the Secretary General of the United Nations that the COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most dangerous challenges this world has faced in our lifetime and it is, above all, a human crisis with severe health and socio-economic consequences, which requires an unprecedented global response, and that now is the time for unity and for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences,
- (d) Recognizing that the pandemic created unprecedented challenges for the Agency due to travel restrictions, lockdowns and disruption of supply chains across the world,
- (e) Acknowledging the efforts of the IAEA to maintain its operations across all domains of its mandate during the COVID-19 pandemic,
- (f) Welcoming the reports by the Director General to the General Conference in GC(64)/INF/4 “IAEA Support to Member State Efforts in Addressing the COVID-19 Pandemic”, GC(64)/INF/5 “IAEA Implementation of Safeguards during the COVID-19 Pandemic”, and in GC(64)/INF/6 “IAEA Activities related to the Performance of Nuclear and Radiological Facilities and Activities during the COVID-19 Pandemic”,
- (g) Taking note of briefings provided by the IAEA on the nature of COVID-19 and possible preventive measures,

- (h) Acknowledging the utility and reliability of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques in the detection and management of zoonotic diseases, including COVID-19, and important role of the VETLAB network,
  - (i) Recalling with appreciation the technical guidance and support provided by the Joint FAO/IAEA Division for detecting COVID-19, based on their long-term experience and proven success in response to zoonotic outbreaks such as Ebola, Avian Influenza and Zika and the publication of *COVID-19 Pandemic: Technical Guidance for Nuclear Medicine Departments* by the IAEA Secretariat in July 2020 as well as the conduct of COVID-19 webinars for healthcare providers,
  - (j) Welcoming the provision of assistance to Member States upon their request, through the interregional technical cooperation project INT0098 “Strengthening Capabilities of Member States in Building, Strengthening and Restoring Capacities and Services in Case of Outbreaks, Emergencies and Disasters”, which provided detection equipment, including real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (real time RT-PCR) machines, and associated kits and personal protective equipment, to Member States to assist national efforts to combat the pandemic,
  - (k) Acknowledging the Agency’s support to Member States, upon their request, on the operation, safety and security of nuclear and radiation facilities and related activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, and
  - (l) Highlighting the Agency’s commitment in ensuring an uninterrupted implementation of the IAEA’s safeguards and its most time-critical in-field verification activities during the COVID-19 pandemic,
1. Expresses appreciation for the leadership of the Director General and for the professionalism of the staff of the IAEA;
  2. Requests the IAEA to continue carrying out its functions during the COVID-19 pandemic in all domains of its mandate with a view to:
    - (a) Ensure the continuity of the work done by the Agency in nuclear energy and nuclear applications in support of interested Member States to enhance their capabilities and thus contribute to maximizing the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear science, technology and applications;
    - (b) Assist Member States in timely identification of actions to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operation, safety and security of nuclear and radiation facilities, and continue facilitating the exchange of information among Member States, including through the newly developed pilot peer-to-peer COVID-19 OPEX Network and the maintenance of readiness of the IAEA’s Incident and Emergency Centre;
    - (c) Ensure business continuity for the Agency, including the uninterrupted implementation of safeguards under the relevant safeguards agreements, while underlining the importance of all Member States continuing to provide essential cooperation to this end;
    - (d) Quickly adapt to the limitations imposed by pandemic-related public health and safety measures, including through remote operation of the staff, organizing training webinars for Member States (and providing online information material on COVID-19 through a dedicated page on the Human Health Campus) as well as by making the necessary arrangements and adaptations for holding virtual and hybrid technical briefings and meetings of the Board of Governors;

- (e) Ensure business continuity for the Agency in the implementation of the Technical Cooperation Programme;
3. Commends the IAEA for quickly mobilizing and providing assistance to Member States in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, through technical cooperation project INT0098 which involved the provision of equipment and diagnostic kits, as well as necessary guidance and training;
  4. Supports the Director General's initiative on resource mobilization by building and promoting new partnerships with a broader range of players including the private sector in relation to the Agency's efforts in assisting Member States in combatting COVID-19;
  5. Appreciates the Member States whose extra-budgetary and in-kind contributions enabled the Agency to provide assistance to other Member States in need and encourages those Member States in a position to do so, to support or continue supporting the IAEA in its efforts to continue assisting Member States to combat COVID-19;
  6. Takes note of the longstanding collaboration of the IAEA with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the World Health Organization (WHO), welcomes the IAEA's membership of the COVID-19 UN Crisis Management Team (COVID-19 CMT), comprised of 15<sup>1</sup> agencies, which is recognition of the IAEA's important work and acknowledges the importance of partnerships and collaborations with international/UN organizations with complementary expertise and mandates to enhance service delivery and support to Member States in the handling of COVID-19 and other diseases;
  7. Encourages the Agency to maintain its institutional resilience to effectively cope with similar challenges in the future, taking into account the lessons learned and experience gained during these challenging times; and
  8. Requests the Secretariat to report to the Board of Governors at its June 2021 meeting and to the General Conference at its sixty-fifth (2021) regular session on all matters related to the IAEA in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the work of the Agency, as well as the impact of the Agency's COVID-19 response.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (lead organization), United Nations Development Coordination Office, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, International Maritime Organization, United Nations Department of Safety and Security, United Nations Children's Fund, International Civil Aviation Organization, World Bank, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Department of Global Communications, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs/Department of Peace Operations, Department of Operational Support.