

General Conference

GC(67)/OR.3

Issued: June 2024

General Distribution

Original: English

Sixty-seventh regular session

Plenary

Record of the Third Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Tuesday, 26 September 2023, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

Later: Mr LI Song (China)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹	Paragraphs
7 General debate and Annual Report for 2022 (<i>continued</i>)	1–235
Statements by the delegates of:	
Belgium	1–10
Bangladesh	11–16
Cameroon	17–27
Sudan	28–35
Qatar	36–43
Poland	44–53
Mexico	54–66
Brazil	67–79
Switzerland	80–93
South Africa	94–104
Germany	105–113

¹ GC(67)/24

Contents (continued)

	Paragraphs
Statements by the delegates of:	
Chile	114–122
Israel	123–132
Kyrgyzstan	133–138
Mongolia	139–150
Italy	151–163
Lithuania	164–173
Sweden	174–190
Latvia	191–198
Honduras	199–203
Nigeria	204–214
Holy See	215–225
Togo	226–235

Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ARASIA	Co-operative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COMPASS	Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EPR	emergency preparedness and response

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

EU	European Union
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
GW	gigawatt
ICTP	Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INSARR	Integrated Safety Assessment of Research Reactors
INSServ	International Nuclear Security Advisory Service
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
MW	megawatt
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSF	Nuclear Security Fund
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Quadripartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
R&D	research and development

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

RBMK	high-power channel-type reactor
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCDC	technical cooperation among developing countries
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2022 (*continued*) (GC(67)/2)

1. Ms VERLINDEN (Belgium) said that more than a year and a half had passed since the Russian Federation had launched its war of aggression against Ukraine. Belgium had remained steadfastly by Ukraine's side since the start of the conflict. The safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine remained precarious and a source of grave concern. As a supporter of the efforts of the Director General and his team to maintain the integrity of Zaporizhzhya NPP and avoid a nuclear incident, Belgium had decided to contribute further financial resources to the cause, in particular in the form of a €1 million donation to fund the Agency's continued presence at nuclear sites in Ukraine.

2. With regard to the life cycle of its own NPPs, Belgium was preparing to face new challenges, namely extending the life of two of its newest reactors, Doel 4 and Tihange 3, and dismantling five other units, two of which had ceased operation between late 2022 and early 2023. While dismantlement was the final stage in the life cycle of a nuclear facility, it provided numerous opportunities for the development of new technologies that were safer, cheaper and less wasteful. Various institutions and businesses in Belgium that were conducting research in that area had established partnerships in order to identify innovative solutions, which Belgium would demonstrate at its exhibition stand and during a side event at the current session of the General Conference.

3. The development and deployment of SMRs should be carried out with a spirit of international cooperation, with a focus on nuclear safety and security. To that end, Belgium would continue to contribute actively to the NHSI, and the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre would continue to invest heavily in the development of lead cooled SMRs. Furthermore, construction of MINERVA would begin in 2024 as part of the ambitious and innovative MYRRHA project.

4. At each stage in the lifecycle of its nuclear facilities, Belgium ensured that the highest nuclear safety and security standards were met. To that end, it regularly invited Agency review missions. In 2023, it had hosted an INSARR mission at the Belgian Reactor 2 operated by the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre, an OSART mission at Tihange NPP and an IRRS mission to evaluate the robustness of its national regulatory system. An ARTEMIS mission was planned for December 2023 to assess the country's management of radioactive waste and spent fuel.

5. The sustainable management of radioactive waste was a priority for Belgium. In April 2022, Belgium had chosen deep disposal as a long term solution for highly radioactive or long lived waste. That decision in principle was the first stage of a participatory process that would serve as the framework for later political choices. Given the importance of broad, informed and shared dialogue on such a crucial topic, an initial year-long social discussion had been launched in April 2023, at the request of the Belgian Agency for Radioactive Waste and Enriched Fissile Materials, to give citizens, businesses, local authorities and actors involved in radioactive waste production and management the opportunity to help decide the form that the participatory process would take.

6. With regard to nuclear security, Belgium continued to invest in combating insider threats. In cooperation with the National Nuclear Security Administration of the USA, the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control planned to hold a second international symposium on insider threat mitigation in 2024, with the aim of raising awareness about the topic.

7. Belgium would assume the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first semester of 2024. It planned to use its prominent international position in the field of nuclear medicine to introduce new priorities at the European level, such as ensuring access to quality health care for all. As a leading producer of medical radioisotopes, Belgium attached particular importance to ensuring that the supply chain for such vital products was technically and economically viable and to their safe transport. Although equal access to health care included access to radiotherapy for cancer patients, such services were unfortunately lacking in many countries. For that reason, Belgium had been supporting Rays of Hope politically and financially since 2022 and would continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

8. Given the crucial importance of nuclear non-proliferation, the continued expansion of the Iranian nuclear programme was deeply worrisome. Iran continued to enrich and accumulate uranium and to expand its nuclear knowledge. Belgium urged Iran to respect its international commitments, implement the additional protocol and cooperate fully with the Agency.

9. The DPRK continued to defy the international community, which had a duty to provide a firm response and to maintain pressure on that regime, including through the strict application of sanctions.

10. Reiterating his country's full support for the Agency and the Director General, he recalled that, each year, Belgium met its obligations by paying its contributions to the Regular Budget in full and on time. It also made an annual voluntary contribution of close to €2 million to the TCF. In 2023, Belgium would make further contributions to support projects in the areas of health, sustainable agriculture, safeguards and in support of the Agency's efforts to promote gender balance.

11. Mr OSMAN (Bangladesh), praising the Director General's strong leadership, commitment and dedication, said that transparency was a fundamental principle of Bangladesh's peaceful nuclear programme. Acknowledging the Agency's outstanding contribution to international peace, security and prosperity, Bangladesh commended the Agency for its continuous delivery of technical support to developing nations in various areas to help achieve national development targets and the SDGs.

12. Under the leadership of its Prime Minister, the Smart Bangladesh Vision 2041 had been drawn up, with the aim of transforming the country into a high income, equitable, sustainable and smart developed country. To that end, energy security and sustainable energy policies were top priorities. Nuclear power was a vital component in the provision of clean energy with a view to achieving sustainable development and carbon neutrality goals.

13. The construction of Rooppur NPP, comprising two VVER-1200 MW reactors, was on track to be achieved, with the first fresh nuclear fuel expected to be delivered to the plant site by the end of September 2023. That milestone would mark Bangladesh's entry into the league of countries with peaceful nuclear power technology. The first unit was expected to be connected to the grid in 2024, adding a significant source of energy to the country's portfolio. The second unit would become operational a year later.

14. Bangladesh was maintaining the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation at Rooppur NPP. It appreciated the support of the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation "Rosatom" for its commitment to the project despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and global political conditions.

15. Bangladesh highly valued its growing engagement with the Agency. As a newcomer country, it was actively working to establish its nuclear infrastructure. The Agency's peer reviews and advisory missions would help ensure the successful commissioning of Rooppur NPP. Bangladesh had already hosted five missions as part of its Integrated Work Plan and anticipated holding others in 2024.

16. Underscoring the Agency's ability to share the benefits of the safe and secure application of nuclear technology, he said that his country looked forward to continuing its meaningful cooperation with, and strong support for, the Agency, thereby contributing to a better world through the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

17. Ms TCHUINTE (Cameroon), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that the General Conference was meeting against a global backdrop of multifaceted crises, including armed conflicts. Cameroon praised the Director General and his team for their contributions to preserving peace and ensuring the safety of NPPs in conflict zones. It also commended the Secretariat for the quality and depth of the working documents made available to General Conference participants.

18. With regard to technical cooperation, Cameroon was pleased that the Agency continued to prioritize socioeconomic development, especially in the key sectors of health and nutrition, food and agriculture, water and the environment, industrial applications, energy planning and nuclear power, and nuclear safety and radiation protection.

19. Her country welcomed the launch of Agency initiatives to support Member States in tackling certain problems that primarily affected developing countries. Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics were particularly commendable.

20. Cameroon encouraged the Agency to continue helping Member States — especially those in Africa — build their nuclear knowledge and capacities with a view to ensuring sustainable energy development to support their industrialization.

21. The impact of Agency programmes was visible across numerous areas in Cameroon. Over the years, the Agency's Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources had helped build the capacities of the country's regulatory bodies, in particular the National Radiation Protection Agency, which fulfilled its regulatory duties with great efficacy.

22. The technical facilities used by the radiotherapy service at Douala General Hospital had been renovated, and the new radiotherapists and technicians had received specialized training, thanks to which a greater number of patients could now be treated. Cameroon hoped that the Agency would similarly support the renovation of the radiotherapy department at Yaoundé General Hospital.

23. Thanks to Agency assistance, the National Veterinary Laboratory had improved the early diagnosis of animal diseases. It had also increased its capacities for producing veterinary vaccines, which were in great demand among farmers in Central and West Africa. Furthermore, with Agency support, various scientists from Cameroon, especially those from the Institute of Geological and Mining Research, had conducted studies on radon gas concentrations in homes. The results had enabled the country to develop a more informed management strategy for radon risks. She expressed her country's thanks to the Agency for its technical assistance within the context of national and regional projects.

24. At the Agency's request, Cameroon had hosted a number of regional events in 2023, including a regional course in March on conditioning and storing used Category 3 to 5 sources. During the practical exercises for the course, more than 20 different sealed used sources had been conditioned and stored in Cameroon's centre for the temporary storage of radioactive waste. In August, it had hosted a coordination meeting for a regional project on strengthening the application of basic safety and radioactive waste management standards, and in July it had hosted a subregional table exercise on the security of radioactive material transport in Central Africa. In hosting those events, Cameroon had demonstrated its desire to support Agency activities in a practical manner, by increasing their visibility and helping to ensure their lasting impact.

25. The synergies between the work of the Agency and that of sector-specific organizations in Africa provided an opportunity to bolster the positive impact of Agency programmes on the continent.

Cameroon therefore encouraged the Agency to strengthen its collaboration with AFRA, the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy.

26. Her country praised the launch of COMPASS, which it had joined in the hope of increasing its contribution to international nuclear verification efforts.

27. Cameroon underscored the Agency's unique role and encouraged it to continue striving to help all Member States gain access to the various benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

28. Mr AHMED (Sudan) said that, in the light of the increasingly significant potential of atomic energy in addressing the challenges facing humanity, efforts to strengthen international cooperation on the peaceful uses of atomic energy must be redoubled and the Agency must be enabled to perform its tasks to the fullest extent. The continued support provided by the Agency to enhance national capacity building in agriculture, health, livestock, water resources and education had contributed greatly towards the Sudan's use of the atom for peace and its achievement of the SDGs.

29. Although domestic events had prevented Sudanese experts from participating in various Agency events over the preceding year, his country hoped to take part in future events once the situation improved. Combined efforts were needed to rebuild its institutional infrastructure, and the Sudan looked forward to receiving support and sponsorship from the Agency and civil society partners in that regard.

30. In view of the growing international importance of food security in the light of climate change, drought, desertification, declining soil fertility, population growth, migration, urban development and armed conflicts, the Sudan commended the Director General on launching Atoms4Food and called on all partners to support the important initiative, especially in African States. In that connection, his country had launched an initiative to establish a group of friends of food security, aimed at strengthening cooperation and partnerships among the Vienna-based international organizations and other stakeholders and mobilizing resources.

31. The Sudan thanked the Agency for including it as a beneficiary of Rays of Hope and reaffirmed its readiness to meet all the agreed commitments. It applauded the progress made in combating marine plastic pollution through NUTEC Plastics and, as a coastal country, looked forward to cooperating with the Agency in that area. In addition, his country commended the Agency's major role in strengthening the infrastructure of veterinary research laboratories and national public health laboratories under ZODIAC, which had helped to significantly reduce the risk posed by COVID-19.

32. The Sudan highly appreciated the Agency's provision of technical assistance and national capacity building support to the Sudanese Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Authority, which was working to approve the policies, regulations and operating rules required to achieve its legally defined objectives. In that context, the Sudan remained committed to complying with its recently concluded modified SQP. Moreover, the National Technical Committee for Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies continued to coordinate on EPR with the relevant State authorities. In that connection, the Sudan commended the Agency's cooperation with the Arab Atomic Energy Agency to support the Arab radiation monitoring network.

33. The Sudan had updated its INSSP, which continued to be satisfactorily implemented with the involvement of all stakeholders. The INSServ mission to the Sudan conducted at the end of 2022 had been crucial for reviewing the national nuclear security infrastructure, and his country was committed to implementing the recommendations and proposals produced. Appreciative of the support for regional cooperation provided by the Division for Africa, the Sudan stood ready to participate actively in regional projects under AFRA and to share experiences and lessons learned with a view to strengthening relations among the parties.

34. The competent authorities were working to prevent the leakage of radioactive sources as a result of recent developments in the country. The Sudan looked forward to the support of the Agency and partners in that regard.

35. Nuclear applications and the increased use of nuclear power and other new and renewable energy sources were vital in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and tackling the climate change crisis in order to preserve the environment for future generations. The Sudan was considering introducing nuclear power in view of its proven ability to advance development without an adverse environmental impact. His country highly appreciated the Agency's tireless efforts to encourage Member States to adopt nuclear energy as a clean energy source and its work to support the Sudan in that regard. He also praised the Agency's active participation in international climate-related events and the 2023 Scientific Forum's focus on environmental conservation.

36. Mr AL-JABRI (Qatar) said that the Director General's reappointment was a strong reflection of Member States' confidence in his leadership, impartiality, professionalism and excellent diplomatic skills. Qatar affirmed its unwavering support for the Agency under his leadership and called on it to continue playing its unique role in promoting nuclear arms control and the benefits of the peaceful use of atomic energy.

37. The deliberate obstruction by certain parties of agreed mechanisms for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament had elevated the risks of nuclear war to unprecedented levels, as evidenced most recently by the failure of the Tenth NPT Review Conference and the lack of consensus on the final report of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference. Qatar called on all governments and relevant international organizations to play their role under the NPT in order to reverse the current trend and trigger Article VI of the Treaty. It also appealed to the people to remind politicians of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the need for their comprehensive prohibition and elimination.

38. Reiterating its call for Agency safeguards to be applied across the whole Middle East in support of the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards regime and as an essential step towards the establishment of an NWFZ in the region, Qatar looked forward to the Director General playing an active role in breaking the current stalemate and making headway in establishing that zone.

39. Thanks to the training, technical support, guidance and field visits provided through the Agency's TC programmes, Qatar had made significant developments in the peaceful application of nuclear technology and was expanding its national capacities in the environmental, food, industrial, agricultural and health sectors. In the light of its National Vision 2030, his country had submitted proposals for new national projects for the 2024–2025 TC cycle under its CPF, signed in May 2022. It was also participating in many regional and interregional projects, including through ARASIA, and had initiated procedures to establish a secondary calibration laboratory — the largest of its kind in the region — in cooperation with the Agency. Accordingly, Qatar had launched a full review of its policy and strategy for nuclear and radiation safety and security, with a view to strengthening the relevant infrastructure in line with national programmes and plans and ensuring the security and safety of its citizens. It looked forward to receiving Agency assistance in that regard.

40. With regard to nuclear and radiological emergencies, nuclear security and the fight against smuggling, Qatar had strengthened border control by installing radiation detection gates at all border crossings.

41. In the area of nuclear and radiation safety, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change was strengthening its regulatory and monitoring role in order to protect people and the environment from the risks of radiation contamination and exposure. To that end, it was installing radiation monitoring stations across the country and preparing a map of national radiation levels in the air, water and soil. The Ministry

had also prepared an effective national programme to manage and treat radioactive waste, especially that resulting from oil and gas production.

42. Committed to implementing international agreements and supporting all efforts to enhance global nuclear safety, Qatar had submitted its first report under the CNS, to which it had recently acceded.

43. Qatar looked forward to continued cooperation with the Agency to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and build the national institutions and capacities required to implement socioeconomic development projects. In that connection, he invited Agency experts to attend a national forum on the role and peaceful uses of atomic energy in national development, to be held during the first quarter of 2024 with the participation of all State authorities concerned.

44. Mr GUIBOURGÉ-CZETWERTYŃSKI (Poland), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country was deeply concerned that, despite several resolutions adopted by the Board on the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine, global safety remained at risk owing to the continued illegal and violent occupation of Ukrainian nuclear facilities by Russian aggressors. The situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP had been exacerbated by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, limiting the available cooling options. Furthermore, the occupying forces had disrupted the transmission of radiation monitoring data and other communications from the NPP to the Ukrainian regulatory authority, posing a serious threat to nuclear safety, with disastrous consequences in the event of a nuclear emergency.

45. The Board's resolutions adopted in 2022 — which had yet to be implemented — had demanded that the Russian occupant cease all actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine and withdraw its military and other personnel from all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, in order to restore full control over those installations to the competent Ukrainian authorities. The Director General and the Agency had an indispensable role in resolving the matter.

46. Poland had complete confidence in the Agency and the Director General in fulfilling their mandate, especially in relation to NPT safeguards commitments. It appreciated the full cooperation of the Governments of the Russian Federation and Ukraine with the Agency, which played an indispensable role in the implementation of the safeguards system — a fundamental component of the non-proliferation regime.

47. His Government considered nuclear energy a valuable power source and the main driver in modernizing the Polish energy system. It would not only make a significant positive contribution to climate change and socioeconomic development, but would also ensure energy security, which had become a crucial issue in view of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. As reflected in Poland's nuclear programme prepared in 2020, those advantages were the main rationale for introducing nuclear power as part of the long term national energy policy. The roadmap for providing 6–9 GW of nuclear power capacity would be put into operation by 2043.

48. There was also growing interest among large scale energy-intensive Polish corporations in investing in nuclear power, including SMR technologies. Those private sector initiatives would complement the national programme and contribute to faster decarbonization, especially in areas such as industrial applications and hydrogen production.

49. With a view to the continued improvement of its nuclear safety framework, Poland had recently received an IRRS mission, which had concluded that its nuclear regulatory framework was in line with Agency safety standards and that the national regulator was ready to launch the nuclear power programme. The mission had also provided useful suggestions on further improvements to the framework. A second INIR mission had been requested to review the development of the nuclear power infrastructure.

50. Poland would continue to support the TC programme, including by hosting events, and was excited by the increasing number of young Polish engineers interested in national efforts to modernize the energy system and achieve climate goals. In that connection, programmes for training much needed experts, such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, were also greatly appreciated.

51. The recent deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus had significantly increased the risks of escalation and negatively affected the global and regional environment. Furthermore, other global security challenges had become even more visible. The DPRK, which did not appear interested in substantive negotiations, continued its military nuclear and missile programmes and sent dangerous signals that it was ready to raise the stakes even higher by carrying out another nuclear test. It must return to nuclear related talks, comply fully with all Security Council resolutions and resume implementation of Agency safeguards.

52. The Director General's reports on Iran's implementation of the JCPOA and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) were cause for additional concern. Poland unambiguously supported efforts to preserve the Plan, which was a key element of the nuclear non-proliferation architecture and would be vital in achieving consensus among the parties.

53. In closing, Poland expressed its strong concern about the Russian Federation's military invasion of Ukraine and its violation of international law, nuclear safety and safeguards. That country's reprehensible policy should be condemned in the strongest possible terms, and appropriate action should be taken in international forums, including reconsideration of the Russian Federation's position and role in the Agency, and even its suspension.

54. Mr HERNÁNDEZ (Mexico), commending the Agency's actions to provide solid institutional foundations, clear leadership and an efficient structure, said that the decisive progress made in the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories charted a clear path to the Director General's objective of achieving gender parity at the Agency by 2025.

55. Noting that the General Conference was taking place at the start of the new NPT review cycle, he recalled that the 2022 NPT Review Conference had failed to agree its Final Document for the second consecutive time. The first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference had also ended without achieving consensus. Nevertheless, the NPT remained the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, functioning, in large part, thanks to the Agency's continued vigilance and work.

56. The current international landscape was increasingly complex and divided, with serious risks of escalation that could lead to miscalculations with grave humanitarian and environmental consequences. Member States must therefore re-establish — not question or erode — the value of effective multilateralism. The NPT must not be undermined; its strength depended on full, balanced and unconditional compliance with all its provisions.

57. Mexico would remain a strong backer of the Agency's verification mandate under the NPT. Safeguards, as international obligations to which NPT States Parties committed under CSAs and additional agreements with treaty status, were non-negotiable and should not be politicized.

58. Mexico was among those countries to have assumed additional voluntary obligations, such as an additional protocol, export controls and other obligations under the Tlatelolco Treaty, the CTBT, the TPNW and various nuclear safety and security treaties and conventions. It called on all Member States to do likewise to strengthen international peace and security.

59. His country echoed the Director General's concerns about the safety risks posed to nuclear facilities and materials by the protracted armed conflict stemming from the Russian Federation's

invasion of Ukraine. Preventing a radiological accident and its humanitarian consequences must be the international community's priority, in line with international obligations.

60. Supportive of the Agency's ongoing work in Ukraine, Mexico commended the professionalism of the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and reaffirmed the importance of the Seven Pillars for ensuring nuclear security during an armed conflict and the five principles for the avoidance of a nuclear accident.

61. For Mexico, nuclear security was a priority that needed to be constantly affirmed and updated according to new contexts and technological advances. It therefore took great interest in the Agency's work to develop and update safety standards and nuclear security guidance and praised the Agency's efforts to maintain and strengthen nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, and EPR capabilities.

62. Mexico shared the Director General's concern about Iran's failure to engage with the Agency for more than two years to address the outstanding issues regarding its safeguards agreement and additional protocol. His country called on Iran to comply with all its obligations under the Subsidiary Arrangements to its safeguards agreement and fully implement modified Code 3.1. It called on all parties to return to the JCPOA, which was the product of diplomacy and offered the best path towards prosperity for the Iranian people and peace in the Middle East.

63. Mexico urged the DPRK and Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency in order to enhance transparency and address the concerns regarding their nuclear programmes. It also called on the DPRK to promptly resume full compliance with the NPT, as stipulated in various Security Council resolutions.

64. The continued development of nuclear science, technology and applications clearly enhanced the ability of States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and had a positive impact in areas such as health, nutrition, agriculture, water resources management, the environment and energy.

65. Applauding the effectiveness of Agency projects such as ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope, Mexico noted the Agency's growing relevance in informed debate and decision making on climate change. The TC programme deserved particular recognition and must continue to be strengthened through sustainable funding.

66. He concluded by highlighting that the General Conference's work was to preserve the technical nature of the Agency to ensure that all countries had fair and timely access to the benefits of nuclear science and technology, and that the Agency remained a mainstay of international peace and security.

67. Mr COZENDEY (Brazil), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his professional, proactive and inclusive approach had reinforced the Agency's role in all areas pertaining to its mandate, from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to the most sensitive nuclear issues.

68. The international community's ambitions to use the atom for peace and development would only be achieved if all interested parties had access to the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and applications. Brazil therefore encouraged the Agency to consolidate its commendable efforts to further democratize access.

69. Brazil remained fully aware of its nuclear safety and security responsibilities and safeguards obligations as it pursued its legitimate aspirations to further develop its nuclear sector, including the completion of a third reactor at Angra NPP and of the Brazilian Multipurpose Reactor with an associated Nuclear Fusion Laboratory. The strengthening of medical radioisotope and radiopharmaceutical production capabilities with a view to achieving national autonomy was also a top priority. In that connection, he invited all delegations to attend Brazil's General Conference side events on its national strategic projects.

70. Highlighting ARCAL's continued pivotal role in strengthening regional technical cooperation, he said that Brazil welcomed the establishment of the new Agency-facilitated Regional Network of Research Reactors and Related Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would strengthen national and regional needs assessment and the sharing of information and knowledge.

71. SIT development and application was an important area in Brazil's cooperation with the Agency. The assistance provided to Latin American and Caribbean countries in SIT application had been key in controlling disease-transmitting mosquito populations.

72. His country fully supported the Director General's flagship initiatives ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope and warmly welcomed the new Atoms4Food programme, which would support Brazil's foreign policy objectives on reducing food insecurity and hunger globally.

73. With respect to nuclear safety and security, Brazil continually maintained the highest standards of safety in all its nuclear activities and was in the process of acceding to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage.

74. Brazil had opted for an innovative approach to planning for the long term disposal of nuclear and radiological waste, and its Nuclear and Environmental Technological Centre project aimed to build a final repository for nuclear waste and foster R&D. His country also continually exchanged regulatory experiences and cooperated with other countries, in particular through FORO.

75. Brazil had ratified the amendment to the CPPNM in 2022 and had actively participated in the first Conference of the Parties. It complied fully with the amended Convention and strongly supported the Agency's work to promote its universalization.

76. The importance of nuclear safety and security could not be overestimated and Brazil fully supported the Agency's efforts to assist Member States in that respect. His country welcomed the upcoming inauguration of the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre, to which it had offered in-kind contributions. It looked forward to ICONS 2024, which would once again underline the Agency's central role in strengthening nuclear security globally. It also praised the Director General's leadership on nuclear safety and security in very challenging circumstances, including by establishing the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and an on-site presence at Fukushima Daiichi NPP.

77. The Agency's safeguards implementation work was a core element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. His country reiterated its commitment to fully abiding by its safeguards obligations and undergoing inspections by the Agency and by ABACC. Coordination between the two organizations should be strengthened to improve the efficiency of safeguards implementation and to avoid duplication of activities.

78. In accordance with the Quadripartite Agreement, Brazil had initiated discussions with the Secretariat on an arrangement for special procedures to use nuclear material in naval nuclear propulsion. The Director General's report to the June 2023 round of Board meetings impartially and objectively reflected his country's constructive interactions with the Agency, and other relevant information. Naval nuclear propulsion was a legitimate use of nuclear energy, and Brazil was committed to ensuring that its programme, developed with indigenous technology, was fully compatible with its non-proliferation undertakings under the Quadripartite Agreement, the NPT, and the Tlatelolco Treaty.

79. In closing, he said that Brazil understood that the 1999 Amendment to Article VI of the Statute satisfactorily addressed the concerns of the 'arealess' States. His country had ratified the amendment in 2007 and called on other Member States to follow suit to enable its entry into force.

80. Mr REVAZ (Switzerland) said that Liechtenstein associated itself with his statement. Congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, he commended his leadership throughout the many unprecedented challenges during the preceding years, and the Secretariat's consistently high-quality work.

81. Switzerland condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the Russian Federation's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine, which constituted a gross violation of international law and the UN Charter and put nuclear facilities at great risk. It therefore welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Agency and the Director General to preserve nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. His country once again called on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its armed forces from Zaporizhzhya NPP and the whole territory of Ukraine and welcomed both the recent reinforcement of the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and the Agency's presence at all Ukrainian NPPs.

82. Switzerland strongly supported the Seven Pillars, which must be observed in all circumstances, and remained concerned at their continued compromise at Zaporizhzhya NPP. In addition, it fully supported the five principles and called on the Russian Federation and Ukraine to commit to them.

83. His country supported all Agency efforts through the provision of direct financial contributions and in-kind donations, such as personal protective equipment, dosimeters, iodine tablets, and nuclear and radiation safety experts upon request. It had signed an agreement with the Agency the previous week that included a €1 million contribution to ensure the permanent presence of Agency experts at five Ukrainian NPPs.

84. The Agency's JCPOA-related verification and monitoring activities had been seriously affected by Iran's decision to stop implementing its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA — a situation exacerbated by Iran's subsequent decision to remove all the Agency's related surveillance and monitoring equipment. Switzerland remained concerned about Iran's continued suspension of the provisional application of its additional protocol and its failure to implement other measures, which had a serious impact on the Agency's ability to verify the exclusively civilian nature of its activities.

85. Switzerland was also disappointed that, despite three Board resolutions, Iran had still not provided the necessary cooperation to clarify outstanding safeguards issues. His country urged Iran to cooperate immediately and constructively with the Agency by providing technically credible and satisfactory answers and all the required information and documentation in order to resolve those issues.

86. The continuation of the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programme, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, remained of deep concern. Switzerland condemned, in particular, the attempts to put a military satellite into orbit using ballistic missile technology, and the launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles. It urged the DPRK to take tangible steps towards abandoning its nuclear programme, ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, cease all related activities, return to the NPT and Agency safeguards at the earliest possible date, and sign and ratify the CTBT.

87. Switzerland also called on Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency to resolve all outstanding issues concerning the Dair Alzour site and all related locations. Full compliance with NPT safeguards agreements by all Member States was essential to uphold the global safeguards and non-proliferation regime.

88. Switzerland supported efforts to further optimize the safeguards system in order to ensure the best possible use of the Agency's limited resources. His country contributed actively to several safeguards development projects through its Member State Support Programme in order to bolster the efficiency and effectiveness of future safeguards inspections.

89. The successful Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting had strengthened the implementation of the Convention and the Vienna Declaration on Nuclear Safety. Switzerland was fully committed to the Joint Convention and looked forward to presiding over the Organizational Meeting in 2024 for the preparation of the eighth review cycle. It also welcomed its role as chair of the Commission on Safety Standards in 2024.

90. Switzerland looked forward to ICONS 2024. It noted the progress made on some aspects of nuclear security since the previous conference and encouraged further joint efforts to address new challenges. All Member States should work towards a successful conference leading to an ambitious ministerial declaration.

91. Switzerland would host an IPPAS follow-up mission during October and November 2023 and was pleased that more countries were receiving international peer review missions in nuclear safety and security.

92. Switzerland actively supported the Agency's activities in nuclear science, technology and applications, which were indispensable for achieving the SDGs. It directly supported the Global Water Analysis Laboratory Network, launched at the UN 2023 Water Conference, and had signed Practical Arrangements to deepen cooperation between the Agency and the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology.

93. Switzerland welcomed the recent redesignation of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne as a Collaborating Centre in the area of nuclear energy. The Institute's cooperation with the Agency had led to progress in advanced reactor experiments and high-fidelity multi-physics nuclear simulation techniques. In addition, the Spiez Laboratory — Switzerland's second Collaborating Centre — had recently participated in the Agency's interlaboratory comparative study concerning the discharge of ALPS-treated water in Fukushima. His country was pleased that Japan was sharing information with Member States and engaging with the Agency, and commended the Agency's impartial, independent and objective role, which was essential in building confidence in the nuclear sector on the basis of scientific evidence.

94. Ms NKABANE (South Africa), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that the previous year had been marked by both challenges and positive developments. South Africa remained committed to the Agency and would continue working with delegations to restore the Vienna spirit.

95. As a Contracting Party to the CNS, South Africa placed great importance on nuclear safety and the Agency's central role in coordinating international efforts in that area and was confident that it had met its related obligations.

96. South Africa's public power utility had submitted a licence application and a safety case report to the National Nuclear Regulator in July 2022 to extend the operation of Koeberg NPP for an additional 20 years. Procurement for a centralized interim storage facility would commence once the feasibility study in progress had been completed and shovel-ready status had been secured.

97. South Africa had eight AFRA regional designated centres, aimed at promoting TCDC through capacity building initiatives for the development and expansion of nuclear techniques in Africa. It had also successfully hosted the fourth General Assembly of the AFRA Network for Education in Science and Technology and the regional meeting of vice-chancellors and representatives of regional bodies and networks involved in education and training, to address human resources and development needs in Africa, held in August 2023.

98. The effective implementation of the Agency's safeguards system was a critical element of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime that contributed to international peace and security. South Africa

continued to cooperate effectively with the Agency to implement its safeguards obligations under the integrated safeguards approach.

99. South Africa supported the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine through the support and assistance missions. It firmly believed that dialogue, mediation and diplomacy were the only viable path to end the current conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine and achieve a durable peace. Those principles informed South Africa's participation in efforts to resolve the conflict.

100. Welcoming the 2023 Scientific Forum's focus on nuclear innovation for net zero, South Africa was convinced that its nuclear build expansion programme could make a meaningful contribution in that area as part of the transition to a low carbon economy. The national energy regulator had recently granted unconditional approval for the procurement of 2500 MW of new nuclear power generation capacity for the programme, paving the way for a request for proposal to be issued by 2024.

101. The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation was forging ahead with the development of a multipurpose research reactor project to complement the existing research reactor, which was almost 60 years old. The completed feasibility study was being reviewed before procurement commenced.

102. In the area of nuclear medicine, a South African team had facilitated the first lutetium-177 prostate-specific membrane antigen procedure at Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Ghana, and a female South African expert had been elected as a president of the South African Society of Nuclear Medicine. In addition, the iThemba Laboratory for Accelerator-Based Sciences, which had recently become South Africa's first Collaborating Centre, had launched the South African Isotope Facility in June 2023.

103. Responding to the Director General's call to ensure cancer care for all through Rays of Hope, her country had submitted an expression of interest in hosting an anchor centre at the Steve Biko Academic Hospital and looked forward to cooperating with the Agency on that important initiative.

104. In closing, she reiterated South Africa's continued unwavering support for the Agency's fundamental role in ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology for development, in line with the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

105. Mr KÜHN (Germany), congratulating the Director General on his re-election, said that the Secretariat's steadfast commitment to nuclear safety, security and safeguards was appreciated. Germany condemned any acts compromising the safety of nuclear installations devoted to peaceful purposes. It urged the Russian Federation to immediately stop its unjustified, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and restore full control of Zaporizhzhya NPP to its rightful sovereign owner, Ukraine.

106. The Agency must be given full access to all areas of all nuclear facilities in Ukraine and be able to engage directly and without interference with the Ukrainian personnel responsible for their operation. The personal safety of all individuals involved in those efforts must be guaranteed and Germany had contributed €3.5 million in 2023 towards the rotation of Agency experts at Ukrainian NPPs. Underscoring the importance of the Agency's safeguards system for the implementation of the NPT, he expressed his country's appreciation for the excellent work of the Agency's safeguards inspectors.

107. Germany trusted fully in the Agency's expertise and neutrality, including with regard to the release of the treated water into the Pacific Ocean.

108. His country was committed to a secure, sustainable and climate-friendly future energy supply, and deemed renewable energy key in driving forward the energy and climate transition. Although nuclear power no longer played a role in Germany, it respected the right of every country to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

109. Germany had served on the Board since 1973 and would continue its strong, expert involvement in the Agency's work. Noting the need to consider safety, security and safeguards in relation to innovative reactors and SMRs, it would remain strongly supportive of the Agency's efforts to advance nuclear safety standards and security guidelines and of its safeguards and verification activities.

110. His country supported the Agency's valuable work both bilaterally, as the fourth largest contributor to the Agency's budget, and through the European Union. It also contributed to the NSF, made extrabudgetary contributions and supported emergency projects, flagship initiatives, ReNuAL and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. Furthermore, it offered assistance through its Member State Support Programme and sought to strengthen the Agency's human resources by identifying qualified German specialists for candidatures and funding cost-free experts and Junior Professional Officer positions.

111. The Iranian nuclear programme had reached unprecedented levels and Germany called on Iran to change course and to cooperate substantially with the Agency. It condemned the withdrawal of the designation of several Agency inspectors, which undermined the Agency's ability to effectively conduct its verification activities. His country remained fully committed to the resumption of negotiations towards a diplomatic solution.

112. Germany welcomed the Agency's efforts to enhance its readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme, once the political conditions allowed, and stood ready to support the process. It called on the DPRK to comply with its obligations under Security Council resolutions and to return to full compliance with the NPT.

113. In closing, he said that Germany appreciated the Agency's successful work and stood ready to provide continued support.

114. Ms DE LA FUENTE GONZÁLEZ (Chile), reiterating her country's commitment to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, said that Chile adhered to the principle of the indivisibility of international security, since all States, regardless of their size or power, had a responsibility to contribute to the consolidation of a global order based on cooperation, international law and democratic, inclusive and transparent debate.

115. Chile welcomed the entry into force of the TPNW as the prohibition and complete elimination of nuclear weapons was the only way to prevent their use. The TPNW was the first to consider gender in disarmament matters, including obligations regarding victim assistance and environmental remediation, and also addressed the serious harm caused by the use and testing of nuclear weapons. It would complement the NPT — the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. Her country also called for the entry into force of the CTBT, which would become a foundation stone, alongside the TPNW and the NPT, in the international legal regime for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

116. Chile recognized the Agency's independent, professional and technical work; its collaboration with national specialized entities such as the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission; and its vital role in the areas of safeguards, safety, security and technical cooperation, and in promoting and facilitating R&D and the practical application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

117. Her country defended the right of all States to develop and benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in areas such as science, medicine and the environment in view of their widely recognized contribution to achieving the SDGs.

118. Expressing appreciation for the Agency's flagship projects, including Rays of Hope and ZODIAC, she highlighted Chile's keen interest in NUTEC Plastics in connection with its "turquoise" foreign policy prioritizing initiatives focused on addressing and mitigating the global climate crisis and ocean protection and management.

119. Chile reaffirmed its commitment to promoting effective measures to strengthen the security of nuclear material at all stages, including during transport, and expressed its appreciation for the active work of FORO and of ARCAL, under which it chaired the Technical Coordination Board and the Board of ARCAL Representatives.

120. The situation in Ukraine was regrettable, and Chile supported multilateral resolutions on the issue in forums such as the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. It shared the Agency's concern regarding Ukraine's nuclear infrastructure and joined the calls against military actions that could jeopardize the integrity of those facilities. Recognizing the importance of the Agency's technical work in that regard, Chile urged it to maintain a staff presence at nuclear sites in Ukrainian territory and stressed the importance of the Seven Pillars and the five principles.

121. Her country reiterated its conviction that the JCPOA contributed to resolving the discrepancies regarding the scope and projections of the Iranian nuclear programme. Chile also urged the DPRK to renounce non-peaceful nuclear activities, swiftly return to the NPT and promptly sign and ratify the CTBT.

122. Proud of its feminist foreign policy establishing equality and non-discrimination as a guiding principle in international actions, Chile considered the contribution of women to be fundamental in nuclear science, technology and applications and in Agency-related activities. Her country noted the positive impact of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme and would continue to support the Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear, which it currently chaired with El Salvador and Spain. She gave assurance of her country's full support to enhancing women's participation and promoting a gender approach in Agency initiatives.

123. Mr EDRI (Israel), congratulating the Director General on his re-election, said that his country attached great importance to its cooperation with the Agency in areas including nuclear safety and security, technical cooperation, emergency preparedness, health and agriculture.

124. Israel committed its best experts to support the Agency and benefited from its knowledge and expertise. A proactive player within the Agency's core activities and initiatives, his country had made a significant contribution in 2023 to Rays of Hope and had donated equipment to Ukraine under the Assistance Convention.

125. Along with its firm commitment to the Agency's important mission, Israel strongly believed in the principle of equal rights among all Member States and therefore supported the draft resolution led by Kazakhstan. Over the years, his country had been deeply affected by politicization from the Middle East and South Asia Group, to which Israel naturally belonged, and its inability to join a regional group had deprived it of its rights as an equal Member State. It was critical that the Agency rectify the long-standing discrimination against Israel and other Member States.

126. His country had also been continuously singled out by the Arab Group for many years through its agenda item on so-called Israeli nuclear capabilities. Israel strongly objected to the inclusion, year after year, of the politically driven agenda item, as it lay completely outside the scope of the Agency's Statute and mandate and diverted the professional forum's attention from important issues.

127. Israel continued to uphold the highest safety and security standards in all relevant nuclear activities, and was pleased to state its political commitment to implementing the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources.

128. Given that nuclear safety and security risks knew no boundaries, a global discussion on nuclear safety and security was more necessary than ever in the light of the war in Ukraine. In that context, the

international community must condemn the repeated and explicit threat by Iran and its proxies to attack Israel's nuclear facilities, which his country would continue to protect, as required.

129. Iran continued to spearhead regional instability and was a threat to peace and security worldwide. The international community must give the issue its full attention. There was no doubt that Iran had developed a military nuclear programme, which it continued to advance by gaining knowledge, technology and alarming amounts of fissile material. Moreover, the Agency had found concrete evidence — including undeclared nuclear material — that Iran had been conducting covert nuclear activities at undeclared sites for many years. That country had persistently failed to provide credible explanations or clarifications regarding the nature of those activities, and continued to deceive the Agency and the international community.

130. Furthermore, Iran continued to develop, test and deploy long-range ballistic missiles, in direct violation of Security Council resolutions, and supported terrorist organizations throughout the Middle East. The provisions of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) regarding Iran's ballistic missile activities would expire in October 2023, allowing Iran to continue to advance its ballistic missile programme without any formal limitations. That situation should be addressed. Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons and delivery systems was not an option that Israel, or the world, could or should tolerate.

131. Four out of five recognized cases of NPT violations had taken place in Middle Eastern countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria. The latter, in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations for more than a decade, had built at Dair Alzour an undeclared, clandestine nuclear reactor optimized for plutonium production. Syria had done nothing to rectify its non-compliance or cooperate with the Agency's investigation. The international community should stand behind the Agency in its endeavour to obtain clear, conclusive answers from Syria.

132. Israel strongly supported the Agency's promotion of discussion on renewable energies, especially in the light of the global climate crisis and the rising need for alternative energy sources. Discussions on nuclear energy must include ways to reduce potential proliferation risks. His country, with its advanced capabilities, stood ready to contribute its expertise and knowledge to assist the Agency in achieving that important mission and looked forward to continuing its fruitful relationship with the Agency.

133. Mr AZHIKEEV (Kyrgyzstan) said that his country — an active and reliable partner of the Agency since 2003 — supported the Agency's essential role in global nuclear safety and highly appreciated its work. Radiation safety was a key element of the Kyrgyz Republic's national scientific and technical policy, which promoted the development of national programmes and served as a catalyst for technological and economic development. The policy included the safe use of the latest nuclear technologies in the national economy and public health and the improvement of Kyrgyzstan's regulatory framework and infrastructure, so that the country could bring them into line with international requirements and comply with its international obligations.

134. In recent years, environmental protection and sustainable development had steadily moved to the top of the list of the international community's global priorities.

135. His country welcomed the Director General's Rays of Hope initiative and highly appreciated its achievements. In Kyrgyzstan, some 5500 people were diagnosed with cancer every year. His country was therefore grateful to Member States for the support received through Rays of Hope and called for further assistance to be provided to countries in need in that area.

136. In order to address that serious global problem, a number of projects aimed at reducing the risk of environmental disasters involving radiation hazards and improving the environmental situation in Kyrgyzstan had been implemented in recent years through the joint efforts of the Central Asian States.

All such projects were implemented in strict compliance with Agency recommendations and relevant international norms and rules. Accordingly, with the support of international partners — such as the European Commission and the EBRD — remediation work had been completed at the Shekaftar and Min-Kush sites and had started at the large uranium complex in Mailuu-Suu. The work was being carried out under the Environmental Remediation Account for Central Asia. In addition, within the CIS, the inter-State targeted programme on the remediation of territories of States affected by uranium mining industries was being successfully implemented. One site had been rendered safe — Kajy-Say — and work was under way on remediating the second site, in the settlement of Min-Kush. The settlements where remediation activities had been carried out had been noticeably transformed by the removal of contaminated waste and derelict buildings. The local population had also noted great benefits — new, clean land had been obtained that could be used to expand economic activities.

137. As part of its efforts to promote socioeconomic initiatives, the Kyrgyz Republic had held the first international conference on the establishment of an association of cities and settlements with uranium legacy sites on their territories in September 2022, with the support of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek. Representatives of city administrations and settlements from Member States had participated in the event. The strategic objective of the association was to develop and implement joint national, regional and international projects, promote cooperation among its members, engage external partners and mobilize additional resources. Kyrgyzstan called on Member States to join the initiative.

138. The allocation of countries to regional areas was an important topic for a number of Member States and had been under discussion for some time. Kyrgyzstan welcomed the establishment of the Group of Friends of Arealess States. It sincerely hoped that the group's activities would enjoy the support of all Member States and ultimately make it possible to resolve the long-standing unjust situation. In that context, Kyrgyzstan called on all interested Member States to participate actively in the group's activities and to support the draft resolution submitted by Kazakhstan, of which Kyrgyzstan was a sponsor. Kyrgyzstan hoped that, through the goodwill and joint efforts of all Member States, the sovereign equality of all Member States would be restored, which in turn would benefit all parties.

139. Mr GUNAAJAV (Mongolia), warmly congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of his country's membership in the Agency. Mongolia was grateful for the Agency's significant contribution to its development and confirmed its commitment to that continued fruitful cooperation.

140. Mongolia was fully committed to its obligations under the NPT, its Agency safeguards agreement and the additional protocol, and would continue to work closely with the Agency on safeguards implementation.

141. Following an Agency mission to Ulaanbaatar in June 2023, jointly organized with the Nuclear Energy Commission, to advise on the significance and benefits of adhering to the A/CPPNM, the CNS, the Joint Convention and the modified SQP, Mongolia had decided in August 2023 to begin the process of accession to the three conventions and to ratify the modified SQP.

142. His country met its obligations regarding nuclear and radiation safety and security under the relevant international agreements, and implemented Agency standards and recommendations to develop infrastructure for radiation protection, safety and security and improve its national legal framework. In August 2023, Mongolia had indicated its intention to make a political commitment to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources.

143. Mongolia had reviewed and updated its Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan in November 2022 on the basis of Agency recommendations, and the Nuclear Energy Commission had approved the related roadmap and action plan in August 2023.

144. His country actively backed global efforts to combat climate change, thereby supporting soil protection, food supply and security and human health. Calling on all Member States to intensify their efforts towards achieving the SDGs, he highlighted Mongolia's national campaigns "Healthy Mongolians" and "One Billion Trees".

145. As nuclear energy was a zero emission energy source, an interministerial working group had reviewed national infrastructure and developed proposals for a possible nuclear power programme. A consultation meeting had subsequently been held with the Agency, and a roadmap for Mongolia's nuclear power programme had been drawn up. Mongolia wished to work closely with the Agency to learn good practices from both advanced and developing countries with nuclear power programmes.

146. Mongolia intended to exploit its radioactive mineral resources to support its development and was confident that the Uranium Production Site Appraisal Team review mission had made a significant contribution to the exploration, mining and processing of those minerals using environmentally friendly technologies and to the strengthening of the Mongolian legal and regulatory framework. An integrated work plan was being implemented in accordance with the final mission report.

147. His country highly appreciated the TC programme, which was crucial for supporting national development and for the responsible expansion of peaceful applications of nuclear technology. Under its CPF for 2022–2027, Mongolia was implementing national projects in the areas of food and agriculture, human health, water and environment, nuclear science and technology, nuclear and radiation safety and security, energy and industry.

148. Mongolia was taking steps to enhance national capacities in crucial nuclear cancer diagnosis and treatment techniques with a view to improving health care quality and access in line with international standards. The cooperation provided by the Agency and the Republic of Korea to implement the national project on improving cancer care management under Rays of Hope was appreciated.

149. Having launched a national campaign on food supply and safety to strengthen the implementation of the health- and nutrition-related SDGs, Mongolia welcomed the Atoms4Food initiative aimed at helping Member States improve food production and safety, agricultural planning and nutrition programming using nuclear and isotopic techniques. His country would participate in that new initiative and would remain an active supporter of Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics.

150. He concluded by reaffirming Mongolia's full commitment and readiness to work closely and constructively with the Agency.

151. Mr SILLI (Italy), congratulating the Director General on his re-election, said that the Agency's work over the preceding year had been commendable. Italy greatly appreciated the Agency's crucial role in increasingly difficult circumstances and would continue fully supporting all its activities.

152. With the Russian Federation's aggression continuing to affect Ukrainian nuclear facilities, his country remained extremely troubled by the developments on the ground and underlined the need for tangible and effective measures to protect all nuclear installations in Ukraine, especially Zaporizhzhya NPP. In line with that priority, Italy fully endorsed the five principles, which complemented the Seven Pillars affirmed by the Director General since the beginning of the hostilities.

153. It was of paramount importance that the Agency be able to directly monitor Ukraine's main nuclear installations on a permanent basis and without impediment, and continue providing extensive support and assistance, at the request of the Ukrainian authorities. Italy had promptly made a voluntary contribution to meet the extraordinary financial needs arising from those crucial undertakings. Italy firmly opposed the Russian Federation's illegal attempt to annex Ukrainian territories and seize Zaporizhzhya NPP, where the presence of Russian military and technical personnel remained unlawful.

154. The JCPOA remained a crucial element of the global non-proliferation architecture and a successful achievement of multilateral diplomacy. Italy had repeatedly called for the full and effective application of the JCPOA by all participants and had welcomed the negotiations in Vienna to re-establish the Plan after the USA's withdrawal in 2018. His country regretted Iran's repeated breaches of the JCPOA in recent years and was increasingly troubled by the advancement of its nuclear R&D. Italy urged Iran to resume implementation of all its obligations under the JCPOA, cooperate promptly and fully with the Agency to resolve all pending safeguards issues, in accordance with its legally binding obligations under its CSA, and to return to diplomacy. The efforts of Agency inspectors to conduct verification and monitoring in Iran — despite Iran's progressive limitation of their access to sites and data — was greatly appreciated.

155. Italy shared the Director General's serious concern about a possible resumption of nuclear testing by the DPRK. The apparent continuation of its nuclear programme, and the increasing number of unlawful missile launches in 2023 constituted clear violations of numerous UN Security Council resolutions and a severe threat to international and regional peace and security. Underscoring that the actions taken could not confer on the DPRK the status of a nuclear-weapon State or any special status whatsoever, Italy commended the Agency for its readiness to resume its essential verification role in the DPRK as soon as conditions allowed.

156. Recognizing that the Agency's safeguards system was a crucial element of the non-proliferation architecture and for security, he said the CSAs, together with the additional protocols, represented the current verification standard and should be universalized without delay. In that connection, Italy's national regulatory authority had developed — and was now operating — an integrated informatics system for tracing all nuclear and radioactive material used, stored or transferred in the country.

157. As a party to all main international nuclear safety conventions, Italy actively supported the Agency in its continuous efforts to develop nuclear safety standards and called on all countries that had developed, or intended to develop, a nuclear power programme to adhere to the relevant international instruments and cooperate with the Agency. His country therefore welcomed the Agency's comprehensive July 2023 report and ongoing monitoring regarding Japan's plan to discharge treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi NPP.

158. Fully committed to the enforcement of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and its supplementary guidance, Italy supported the Agency's central role in improving international nuclear security and encouraged all Member States to fulfil their respective responsibilities.

159. His country had ratified the A/CPPNM and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and actively participated in the Nuclear Security Contact Group and in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, it had contributed funding to the International School on Nuclear Security, jointly run by the Agency and the ICTP.

160. Attaching high value to the TC programme, Italy would renew its full contribution of almost €3 million to the TCF in 2022. It had resumed hosting foreign researchers in its laboratories, universities and medical centres and continued to offer the two-year Master of Advanced Studies in Medical Physics jointly run by the ICTP and the University of Trieste.

161. In the area of nuclear applications, the National Institute of Nuclear Physics was focusing on state-of-the-art techniques such as radiotherapy with ion beams and accelerator-based alternatives to the uranium-based production of medical radioisotopes, the development of innovative technologies for safety and security, and technologies to support the fusion programme. In addition, several leading Italian institutions and companies were at the forefront of advancing research on fusion and innovative fission systems.

162. Noting the upcoming ARTEMIS peer review of the national waste management programme, Italy expressed appreciation for the independent expert opinions and advice provided to Member States through the Agency's peer review services, and had gladly provided its experts for that purpose.

163. By way of conclusion, his country encouraged the Agency to continue all its activities related to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technologies.

Mr Li Song (China), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

164. Mr ZANANAVIČIUS (Lithuania), noting that 2023 marked the 70th anniversary of US President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech, which had inspired the establishment of the Agency, said that in launching an unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine and its nuclear facilities, the Russian Federation — a permanent member of the Security Council and a designated Board member — had violated its obligations to the Agency, with negative effects on the entire UN system.

165. Underscoring that Zaporizhzhya NPP was Ukrainian, Lithuania was pleased that the Director General had mentioned the Agency's compliance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/ES-11/4 of 12 October 2022 in his latest report to the Board on the situation in Ukraine. The Russian Federation's annexation of four regions of Ukraine had no validity under international law.

166. His country praised the Director General and the Agency's staff for their courageous and tireless work to prevent a nuclear accident at the Russian-occupied NPP. Lithuania appreciated the Director General's efforts to establish the Seven Pillars and the five principles and strongly condemned the Russian Federation for deliberately compromising them. It called once again on the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its military and other personnel from Zaporizhzhya NPP.

167. It was of concern that the commissioning of the new Russian-built Belarusian NPP continued in spite of unresolved nuclear safety issues, thus disrespecting international safety standards and recommendations. Given the deeply troubling lack of safety culture and transparency, repeated undisclosed equipment failures and delayed safety improvements, the NPP should not be operational.

168. The DPRK's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes was unacceptable. Lithuania called on it to refrain from actions that threatened international peace and security and to take steps towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

169. According to the latest Agency reports, Iran continued to develop its nuclear programme, increasing proliferation risks in the region and beyond. It had expanded its nuclear activities, including by installing additional enrichment capacity, deploying advanced centrifuges and accumulating enriched uranium in excess of JCPOA limits. Lithuania strongly urged Iran to reverse its nuclear trajectory and return, without further delay, to full implementation of the JCPOA.

170. Lithuania was continuing with the decommissioning of Ignalina NPP in accordance with an immediate dismantling strategy while maintaining the highest level of nuclear safety. Cleaning of the fuel storage pools for the two RBMK-type reactors had been completed earlier in 2023. Now that both units were free from fissile material, and all spent nuclear fuel was stored safely in dry storage facilities, the complex process of decommissioning and dismantling the NPP could resume.

171. An ARTEMIS mission conducted in July 2023 to assess Lithuania's progress in identifying a suitable site for a deep geological repository for the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel and long lived radioactive waste had deemed the plans to be safe. Lithuania appreciated the Agency experts' suggestions and recommendations, which would help it overcome future challenges and guide it through the process. It was important for all Member States to request Agency missions in a timely manner,

implement the recommendations and suggestions promptly and in full and make public the reports and implementation results.

172. The implementation of the Agency's safety standards on radiation protection in planned, emergency and existing exposure situations in Lithuania was essential in reducing the population's dose, and particular attention was paid to the questions of justification and optimization in connection with medical exposure.

173. In closing, he reaffirmed Lithuania's continued support for the Agency's crucial work on ensuring radiation protection and nuclear safety, security, and safeguards worldwide.

174. Mr WESTLÉN (Sweden), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country's aim of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, and negative emissions thereafter, would require extensive electrification of industry and transport, with electricity consumption expected to double by 2045. That transition was driven by EU climate policy and Sweden's long term climate goal, which nuclear energy was key in reaching.

175. With an ageing hydro infrastructure and given the growing need for biomass to replace fossil feed stock in industry, Sweden was left with the options of wind, solar or nuclear energy for fossil-free electricity generation. Of those, only nuclear energy was dispatchable, giving it a unique role. However, the closure of Sweden's oldest reactors had reduced the share of nuclear power in the energy mix, meaning that it must now expand that energy source to meet the immense need for clean electricity.

176. Although it had been widely assumed for decades in Sweden that nuclear power would be a parenthesis in history, it was increasingly obvious that nuclear power was, and would remain, an integral part of any climate-neutral society. With that insight, his country was turning its energy policy around and removing historical institutional barriers to create a level playing field where market actors were encouraged to once again build reactors.

177. Sweden had been very pleased to receive an official visit from the Director General in August 2023, during which national plans for nuclear power expansion and the final storage of spent fuel, new nuclear technology developments and nuclear safety considerations were discussed.

178. Rapid global expansion of nuclear power was a key tool to avert the climate crisis and required standardization. Sweden therefore welcomed the NHTS and its possible implications for SMR development.

179. The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine was a grave violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and was further aggravated by the fact that the country was a nuclear-weapon State, a permanent member of the Security Council and a designated Board member. The Russian Federation must implement the Board's resolutions on safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine and end its brutal and senseless war of aggression.

180. Noting the countless breaches of the Seven Pillars since the war started, Sweden welcomed the Agency's support and assistance missions to Ukrainian nuclear facilities and had contributed SEK 20 million to the programme in 2023. In addition, his country had more than doubled its nuclear safety and security cooperation with Ukraine while suspending cooperation programmes with Belarus and the Russian Federation, and had recently decided to contribute more than €25 million to the Ukraine Energy Support Fund.

181. Sweden called on the DPRK to fulfil its international commitments, completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programme, and immediately cease all related activities, in accordance with Security Council and General Conference resolutions. His country remained committed to supporting a peaceful dialogue on the Korean Peninsula and had recently

provided a further SEK 2 million to support the Agency's readiness for new verification tasks in the DPRK.

182. Although there had been signs the previous year of a possible imminent return to the JCPOA, Iran's escalating nuclear trajectory had led to a rapid deterioration of the situation and questions about its intentions. Moreover, since early 2021, Iran had limited the Agency's verification authority to the bare minimum under its NPT safeguards agreement and had failed to provide technically credible explanations regarding the outstanding safeguards issues.

183. Sweden reiterated its call on Iran to abandon that dangerous course and provide the Agency with the necessary authority to verify the correctness and completeness of its declarations and draw sound safeguards conclusions. The resumption of the additional protocol would be an indispensable step towards restoring confidence. Sweden appreciated the Agency's impartial, objective and professional verification in Iran and had made a further extrabudgetary contribution of SEK 2 million to support that work.

184. In the current, severely deteriorated security environment, it was more important than ever to protect the integrity of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. That applied to the NPT, in which the Agency's safeguards system was indispensable for upholding global security. Sweden stressed that CSAs together with additional protocols constituted the contemporary standard for Agency safeguards pursuant to Article III of the NPT, and SQPs should be amended or rescinded. In addition to its active and long-standing Member State Support Programme, Sweden had provided SEK 200 000 to the COMPASS programme earlier in 2023 to help Member States put in place safeguards infrastructure.

185. It was important that States adopt an approach that highlighted the interplay between nuclear safety and security, and safeguards, so as to better reflect not only their commonalities but also situations where safety and security considerations may conflict. Such an integrated approach to nuclear safety and security enabled an optimized balance of measures to meet the common objective of protecting people and the environment. Recognizing the Agency's essential role, Sweden was pleased to continue supporting its activities in that area.

186. Continuous improvement and learning from others were critical, and peer reviews were important in terms of providing an opportunity for experts to discuss safety matters and challenge each other's perceptions and actions. His country had received its second IRRS mission in November 2022 and its first ARTEMIS mission in April 2023, giving rise to valuable discussions and feedback.

187. Sweden welcomed the active cooperation on cancer treatment between the Elekta company and the Agency, and the signing of a memorandum of understanding during the Director General's visit in August 2023. It was pleased that a Swedish company was playing a leading role in the Agency's important work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Member States.

188. Welcoming the Agency's progress towards gender parity, his country encouraged continued gender mainstreaming in all organizational policies and practices. It had contributed to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme in support of young Ukrainian women wishing to pursue a career in the nuclear field.

189. Sweden looked forward to further active collaboration with the Agency in the coming years. Nuclear power was of special importance because it offered hope in a dire situation of escalating climate change; its global expansion must be stepped up to achieve climate goals. In that transformation, the Agency had a fundamental role in updating safety standards and in assisting interested Member States to build the necessary nuclear safety, security and safeguards infrastructure and competence to use nuclear power for a fossil-free future.

190. Sweden stood ready to help the Agency enlarge the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world.

191. Mr BALŠEVICS (Latvia) said that for more than a year and a half his country had been expressing its utmost concern over the nuclear safety and security risks caused by the Russian Federation at Ukraine's nuclear facilities. In that same period, the Director General and the Agency had been working tirelessly to sustain global nuclear safety and security by helping Ukraine prevent a severe nuclear accident.

192. Latvia acknowledged the efforts of the Agency's missions to Ukraine's nuclear facilities, especially the permanent presence of Agency experts at Zaporizhzhya NPP, to ensure safe and secure operation. It was crucial to continue to monitor those facilities and to provide the required technical support and assistance. Latvia was deeply grateful for the Agency's work to keep the world safe.

193. Iran's increasing departure from its JCPOA commitments could have irreversible proliferation implications for the region and beyond and was of grave concern. It was also worrying that Iran persistently failed to engage with the Agency in a timely and transparent manner on its NPT safeguards agreement despite the Agency's continued efforts and repeated calls to do so. Latvia condemned such detrimental actions.

194. His country also condemned the DPRK's continued provocations and urged it to pursue complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, as its nuclear programme and arsenal were clear violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Agency's readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme was appreciated.

195. Latvia fully supported the Agency's role in enhancing global nuclear safety and security, facilitating peaceful uses of nuclear technology and fostering nuclear research. Those efforts must be maintained to prevent nuclear terrorism and promote peaceful uses of nuclear technology for responsible innovation in areas such as energy and medicine.

196. Latvia commended the Department of Technical Cooperation for providing invaluable support to Member States, especially guidance on adjusting regulatory frameworks to ensure high standards of safety, security and safeguards. His country had implemented three national projects during the 2022–2023 TC cycle and had hosted five fellowships and scientific visits in the area of food safety in 2023. Latvian institutions stood ready to host more fellows and visitors in the areas of dosimetry, medical physics and food safety. Latvia had submitted three national projects for the 2024–2025 cycle focused on improving radiation safety control in radioactive waste management, strengthening the State regulatory infrastructure for nuclear and radiation safety, and strengthening diagnostic radiology and radiation therapy services to improve health care quality and availability.

197. Latvia would receive an IRRS follow-up mission in 2024 to assess progress in enhancing the effectiveness of the regulatory infrastructure.

198. In concluding, he expressed Latvia's appreciation to the Agency for the capacity building opportunities it offered and for its important role in international cooperation to ensure global safety, security and peace.

199. Mr RODRÍGUEZ (Honduras), congratulating the Director General on his re-election, said that the Agency's promotion of peaceful nuclear applications for development made a valuable contribution to peace and security and directly supported the achievement of the SDGs, in particular SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG4 (quality education) and SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation).

200. He expressed his country's gratitude to the Agency for its continued assistance through the TC programme, which had enhanced Honduras' human resource capacity in the use of nuclear applications in human health, agriculture, isotope hydrology, radiation safety, energy planning and the environment. The rapid and efficient support that Member States had received from the Department of Technical Cooperation during emergencies was also appreciated.

201. The Agency was an important partner for Honduras and could be assured of the country's support in fulfilling its mandate to ensure the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes, in accordance with Article II of the Statute.

202. Honduras was convinced that nuclear technologies provided an alternative for supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially to address food security in the Central America Dry Corridor. It looked forward to receiving a scoping mission in October 2023 with a view to addressing plastic pollution in the Bay of Omoa through NUTEC Plastics and protecting marine biodiversity in the world's second largest coral reef, along the Honduran coast.

203. Honduras would continue to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes through the TC programme, adhering strictly to Agency standards and safeguards. All Member States should support the Agency and the Director General, and a balance of activities must be maintained so that effective progress could be made in the use of nuclear energy for development through initiatives such as Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics, ZODIAC and Atoms4Food.

204. Mr LAMUWA (Nigeria) congratulated the Director General on his re-election, and Cabo Verde and The Gambia on their recent membership, which brought the total number of African Member States to 48.

205. Since its creation in 1957, the Agency had continued to prove its worth as a veritable global institution for peace and development. Nigeria supported the Agency's leadership and activities, especially in the areas of technical cooperation, nuclear science, technology and applications, and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Agency safeguards. His country also fully endorsed and participated in Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics.

206. Noting that the 2023 Scientific Forum's focus on nuclear innovations for net zero was particularly apt and important, he said that Nigeria expressed appreciation for the Agency's efforts in promoting attainment of global net zero emissions by 2050 — a target that the world could not afford to miss.

207. There was growing global interest in energy options to tackle climate change, and Nigeria looked forward to the second International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power, in October 2023. The conference would provide an important opportunity for Member States to understand the significant potential of nuclear power in addressing the mounting global challenges associated with climate change and would encourage them to consider adding it to their national energy mix.

208. Nigeria was pleased to have been among the eight Member States — including three African countries — selected to participate in the first group fellowship for National Liaison Assistants, which had strengthened the National Liaison Office's service delivery and programme coordination capacities.

209. Nigeria appreciated the recommendations from the IPPAS mission conducted in July 2023, at its request, with a view to enhancing physical protection systems at the Nigeria Research Reactor-1, the temporary waste storage facility, the radiotherapy department at Ahmadu Bello University Teaching Hospital and the gamma irradiation facility at the Nuclear Technology Centre.

210. In collaboration with the Agency, Nigeria had organized a number of regional and national events in 2023 to devise tangible strategies for enhanced project implementation and impact in Africa, including the regional training course on authorization and inspection of radiotherapy facilities with

linear accelerators and regional training on advanced climate-smart agricultural practices to increase cassava production. His country thanked the Agency for its confidence and effective cooperation and looked forward to hosting more successful events in the future.

211. Highlighting the growing global interest in SMRs and their evolving development, Nigeria expressed appreciation for the Agency's provision of information on their various concepts and designs and on the implementation of several regional and national projects and programmes. His country looked forward to greater future collaboration with the Agency and other global partners to discuss the immense potential of SMRs in improving electricity supply so as to accelerate industrial development and achieve the SDGs.

212. Nigeria thanked the Agency and other partner institutions for their significant contribution to the finalization of its fourth CPF for 2024–2029, which would be signed during the General Conference, and looked forward to its implementation.

213. Nuclear security remained an important instrument for global peace and stability. Nigeria therefore looked forward to building on its existing partnerships with other countries in that area at ICONS 2024, which would provide a platform for senior government officials, decision makers and nuclear security experts to exchange ideas and share best practices for the promotion of international partnerships and confidence building.

214. Lastly, he assured the Director General that Nigeria was addressing its outstanding assessed contributions to the Agency.

215. Monsignor PACHO (Holy See), conveying the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis, said that the preceding year had been momentous. Pope Francis had stressed that the world remained in the grip of a third world war fought piecemeal, and, in the tragic case of the conflict in Ukraine, not without the threat of recourse to nuclear weapons.

216. Indeed, the Agency's work to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, strengthen nuclear safety and security and make peaceful nuclear science and technology available to developing countries had never been more important. In that regard, the Holy See recognized the Agency's vital contribution to creating a nuclear-weapon-free world and preventing nuclear accidents.

217. Sixty years since the publication of Pope John XXIII's Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, it was more important than ever to heed his prophetic admonition that, in the light of the terrifying destructive force of modern weapons, relations between States, as between individuals, must be regulated not by armed force, but in accordance with the principles of right reason: truth, justice and vigorous and sincere cooperation.

218. Noting the grave risk that a nuclear war could be started inadvertently, Pope John had stated that nuclear weapons must be banned. Pope Francis had repeatedly echoed that call, emphasizing that both their possession and the threat of their use should be firmly condemned. WMDs, especially nuclear weapons, created nothing but a false sense of security and represented a multiplier of risk that offered only an illusion of peace.

219. The Holy See had no doubt that a nuclear-weapon-free world was both necessary and possible. Agency safeguards were an important tool in achieving that goal, providing an essential contribution to peace and security and helping to construct a climate of confidence in place of mutual recriminations.

220. In that regard, the Holy See regretted that Iran had ceased to implement its commitments under the JCPOA two years previously, seriously affecting the Agency's verification and monitoring activities, and supported the Agency's continued engagement with Iran.

221. The Holy See also appreciated the international community's continued and patient efforts to revive negotiations regarding the DPRK's nuclear programme, which threatened the integrity of the non-proliferation regime.

222. In addition, with regard to Ukraine, the Holy See noted that a country with such an important nuclear energy programme had never previously been a target of a military attack. It therefore fully supported the Agency's efforts to ensure safety and security at Zaporizhzhya NPP and other Ukrainian nuclear facilities. The Director General's efforts in that regard gave hope that meaningful change could be achieved, even in such unprecedented situations.

223. All countries had the moral responsibility to construct political and economic grounds for peace, in order to support integral human development and the authentic hopes of all peoples, placing human dignity and the common good at the centre. It had become increasingly evident that in the multipolar world of the 21st century, the pursuit of peace was closely related to the need for security, and that global security needed to be capable of embracing issues including access to food and water, respect for the environment, health care, energy sources and the equitable distribution of the world's goods. An integral concept of security could serve to anchor multilateralism and international cooperation between government and non-governmental actors, on the basis of the profound interconnection between those issues. That made it necessary to adopt an approach of responsible multilateral cooperation.

224. In that regard, the Holy See supported the Agency's unique work in making peaceful nuclear technology available to developing countries to improve health, well-being and prosperity, and to mitigate the impact of climate change through programmes to monitor pollution and environmental change, including in oceans. The Agency thus provided a valuable contribution to the achievement of the SDGs, and its activities promoted integral development, enhancing the stewardship of God's creation.

225. In conclusion, the Holy See reiterated its sincere gratitude to the Agency and affirmed its unwavering support for its many contributions to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as to the safe, secure, and peaceful development and operation of nuclear technologies.

226. Mr WOTOBE (Togo), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that the current international context was complex and marked by multiple challenges. The geopolitical tensions and crises around the world were of concern. Togo strongly encouraged all parties to reach peaceful solutions and resolve their conflicts through dialogue.

227. Togo praised the Agency's efforts in all areas of its work, especially nuclear security and its efforts to ensure nuclear safety, including at Zaporizhzhya NPP.

228. Through its technical cooperation with the Agency during the 2022–2023 cycle, Togo had seen progress in establishing a regulatory framework for nuclear safety and security, and in the areas of agriculture, livestock farming, health and nutrition. It was continuing its work to establish a centre for radiotherapy and nuclear medicine, with the Agency's valuable support. Furthermore, it had submitted two new project proposals for the 2024–2025 cycle, on the use of isotope techniques, mass spectrometry and nuclear magnetic resonance for quality control of medicines and foods and on using isotope techniques for sustainable soy production.

229. To boost its participation in TC projects and promote an integrated African approach to the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology for development, Togo had become a member of AFRA in April 2022.

230. Togo was pleased to be part of the second group of African countries participating in Rays of Hope. The initiative aligned perfectly with the Government's goals on cancer control and would increase access to cancer treatment in the country. Togo was also participating in ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics.

In that connection, he conveyed his country's gratitude to the Director General for those initiatives and for his leadership and engagement as the head of the Agency.

231. Togo had developed an independent nuclear regulatory body, which would soon be brought into operation. With Agency support, it was drawing up regulations on the safety and security of radioactive sources during use, transport and storage.

232. His Government was continuing to work to ratify the A/CPPNM. Significant progress had already been made and he expressed his country's thanks to its technical partners in that regard.

233. Togo was further grateful for the trust placed in it by the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security in choosing the country to host a regional coordination workshop on the implementation of INSSPs by members of the Economic Community of West African States in August 2023.

234. Togo praised the choice of theme for the Scientific Forum 2023, as the pursuit of nuclear innovations for net zero was crucial in combating climate change. It hoped that the event would give greater impetus to efforts to mitigate the devastating impact of climate change in Africa and the rest of the world.

235. In closing, he reiterated his country's commitment to collaborating actively with the Agency to achieve its noble objective — using the atom to promote peace and prosperity around the world.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.