

# General Conference

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## Sixty-seventh regular session

# Plenary

## Record of the Fifth Meeting

*Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Wednesday, 27 September 2023, at 10.05 a.m.*

**President:** Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

**Later:** Ms Mugwanja (Kenya)

**Later:** Ms HOLGATE (United States of America)

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## Abbreviations used in this record

A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
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
CANDU reactor	Canada deuterium-uranium reactor
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CSC	Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EPREV	Emergency Preparedness Review
EU	European Union
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
HEU	high enriched uranium
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
ICONS	International Conference on Nuclear Security

**Abbreviations used in this record (continued)**

INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INIS	International Nuclear Information System
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ISAMZ	IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya
ITDB	Incident and Trafficking Database
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
Joint Division	Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture
MeV	megaelectronvolt
MW	megawatt
MW(e)	megawatt (electrical)
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the 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
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PET	positron emission tomography
PHWR	pressurized heavy water reactor
R&D	research and development
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology

**Abbreviations used in this record (continued)**

ReNuAl	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
TC	technical cooperation
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
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
Vienna Convention	Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action



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

1. Mr MOHANTY (India) said that his country strongly supported the Agency's pivotal role in promoting international cooperation on nuclear matters and the peaceful uses of atomic energy. It fully backed the Agency's efforts to mitigate the global cancer burden through Rays of Hope and was honoured that the Tata Memorial Centre and its nine satellite centres had become anchor centres under the initiative.
2. Continuing the tradition of harmonious engagement, his country had participated in the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting in May 2023. All challenges and suggestions arising from the previous review meeting had been resolved, and no new challenges had been identified for India.
3. India's Department of Atomic Energy had made good progress over the preceding year. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited had been setting records in continuous power plant operation and maintaining excellent levels of safety. The recent start of the commercial operation of Unit 3 of the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station, India's first indigenous 700 MW(e) PHWR, was a remarkable achievement.
4. The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) had uncovered beneficial applications of radioisotopes and radiation in agriculture, medicine and industry. Moreover, the BARC's low-energy high-intensity proton accelerator had reached the target energy of 20 MeV, making it the highest intensity proton accelerator in the country. All the proton accelerator's significant subsystems had been designed by scientists and engineers at India's Department of Atomic Energy.
5. In May 2023, on the 25th anniversary of India's National Technology Day, the Prime Minister had dedicated to the nation the Fission Molybdenum-99 Production Facility of the Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology, which would produce enough molybdenum-99 to meet domestic demand and to export the product to neighbouring countries.
6. The Heavy Water Board, the largest global producer of heavy water, had been exporting heavy water to several countries for non-power applications and had successfully produced medical-grade water enriched with oxygen-18. In addition, the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research balloon facility had successfully test-flown the space exploration capsule of Spanish company Halo Space in December 2022.
7. The Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology had continued the uninterrupted operation of the Indus-1 and 2 synchrotron radiation sources, and three high-beta 650 MHz cavities made by the Centre had been successfully tested and integrated into the first prototype cryomodule under the Proton Improvement Plan II project at Fermilab in the USA. Furthermore, the Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre's 30 MeV medical cyclotron facility had produced the PET radiopharmaceutical copper-64 chloride — a theranostic used for cancer diagnosis and treatment — from solid zinc-68 target.
8. The Nuclear Fuel Complex had developed a new state-of-the-art automated machining centre, contributing to India's self-reliance initiative and, at the BARC Vizag campus, Indian Rare Earths Limited had developed a facility for producing samarium cobalt permanent magnets, which had also been dedicated to the nation on 11 May 2023.

9. The Electronics Corporation of India Limited had continued supporting the Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research and had supplied 382 ultra-stable high-voltage power converters. It had also developed India's first indigenous calorimeter, which would serve the requirements of all India's nuclear reprocessing and waste disposal facilities. In addition, the Institute for Plasma Research had demonstrated 1 MW of radio frequency power at 170 GHz for 1000 seconds at ITER-India's gyrotron test facility as part of its collaboration with ITER to develop fusion technologies.

10. Noting the importance of energy security, access, affordability and transition, he recalled that under India's presidency of the 2023 G20 Summit, countries using nuclear energy for civilian purposes had reaffirmed their role in providing clean energy and would now collaborate on R&D, innovation and deployment of civilian nuclear technologies, including advanced reactors and SMRs.

11. India thanked the city and people of Vienna and the Government of Austria for hosting the General Conference and remained committed to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for research and application.

12. Mr LATROCH (Algeria) congratulated the Director General on his appointment for a second term and reassured him of his country's continued cooperation and support. Algeria remained committed to the Agency's work, in line with its Statute, and called for further efforts to achieve a balance among its three pillars.

13. Emphasizing the importance of further efforts to strengthen the remarkable contribution of nuclear technology to health, agriculture, water resources management and the environment, he expressed his country's support for the Director General's various initiatives in that regard — in particular ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope. The designation of the Pierre and Marie Curie Centre and the Bab El Oued Teaching Hospital in Algiers as Rays of Hope regional anchor centres in September 2023 would strengthen Algeria's role as a regional leader in the provision of training in radiotherapy and nuclear medicine. Pre-empting that designation, over the preceding year Algeria had already begun hosting trainees from various African countries on medium and long term training courses and was preparing to host more in the future, including on specialized academic training programmes. Algeria was also a supporter of ReNuAL 2, as the Agency's Seibersdorf laboratories played a central role in helping Member States strengthen their capacities and achieve their sustainable development objectives.

14. His country highlighted the good level of project implementation achieved during the 2022–2023 TC cycle. The activities carried out during that biennium reflected the priorities set out in Algeria's CPF.

15. Algeria was continuing to develop the relevant legislative and regulatory infrastructure following the establishment of its National Nuclear Safety and Security Authority in July 2019. As part of efforts to build skills at both national and regional level, Algeria had continued to host the Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources, the sixth edition of which would begin in October 2023.

16. Nuclear energy was an important part of Algeria's energy mix, as it provided a reliable alternative to fossil fuels that was capable of meeting growing electricity demand and helping the country adapt to the effects of climate change, thereby contributing to efforts to achieve the SDGs. Algeria therefore applauded the decision to make "Nuclear Innovations for Net Zero" the theme of the 2023 Scientific Forum and encouraged the Agency to continue participating in future sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC.

17. At the regional level, Algeria was pleased that the Agency continued to prioritize Africa in many areas. Algeria remained committed to AFRA, having actively participated in regional activities through its AFRA regional designated centres and hosted regional events. In addition, Algeria supported the



initiatives under the strategic plan of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) and welcomed its efforts to collaborate and cooperate with AFRA.

18. In line with its AFRA commitments, Algeria had participated in the development of the action plan for the AFRA High-level Policy Meeting held in Cairo in December 2022. It had also hosted the 34th meeting of the AFRA Technical Working Group in June 2023.

19. Having assumed the chair of AFRA that week, Algeria was focusing on fostering an environment favourable to creating synergies and strengthening cooperation between African States in various areas related to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. In addition, it welcomed the Agency's decision, in September 2022, to establish a fourth AFRA designated regional centre in Algeria for the provision of training on the use of nuclear devices, thereby further strengthening the country's rich service offering in that area.

20. Despite the many steps taken to rid the world of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, that goal was far from being achieved. The repeated failure of the NPT Review Conference should push the international community to redouble its efforts to tackle global challenges within a multilateral framework — especially in view of the persistent obstacles to the implementation of the resolution, adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

21. In that context, Algeria welcomed the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York in November 2022 under the presidency of Lebanon. The progress achieved through that Conference was commendable.

22. Algeria also praised the success of the First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, which had taken place in June 2022 and had provided answers to questions regarding the humanitarian and environmental challenges posed by nuclear weapons, such as the ongoing impact of the French nuclear tests conducted in the desert areas of In Ekker and Reggane in Algeria. In addition, his country underscored the importance of the CTBT and of regional legal instruments establishing NWFZs, such as the Pelindaba Treaty, for regional and international peace and security.

23. In closing, he reiterated his country's readiness to work towards the success of the Conference in service of the motto "Atoms for Peace and Development".

24. Mr SALL (Senegal) said that his country remained committed to continued cooperation with the Agency in order to strengthen and uphold nuclear safety and security standards. Thanks to the support of the Agency and other partners such as the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the US Office of Radiological Security, Senegal's Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Authority had established effective and efficient control of all activities, practices and associated facilities involving radioactive material. His country encouraged the implementation of the Regulatory Infrastructure Development Project, which enabled safety and security to be integrated into a single assistance mechanism with several working languages.

25. The project on managing disused sealed radioactive sources, aimed at helping Member States strengthen their management of sources withdrawn from service — including through the development of strategies, was also welcome. In that connection, Senegal repeated its request for the repatriation of spent sources stored in its central temporary storage site or their inclusion in a recycling programme, particularly for radium sources.

26. Turning to health, he thanked the Director General for appointing the President of Senegal as champion of the Rays of Hope initiative. The President had advocated the initiative in his speeches at

international meetings, including at the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly and the recent African Union–European Union summit.

27. The fight against cancer required substantial financial resources to purchase cutting-edge technology and well-trained human resources throughout the cancer therapy chain. He therefore thanked partners, including Japan, the USA and the Swiss biotechnology company Roche, for funding training abroad for nearly forty Senegalese fellows and for helping Senegal acquire equipment to fight that silent killer.

28. Senegal appreciated the support of impACT and WHO in developing its new national cancer control strategic plan for 2023–2027, due to be finalized before the end of 2023. Implementation was expected to be greatly facilitated by the upcoming construction of the Diamniadio national oncology centre and the provision of modern cancer treatment facilities for public hospitals.

29. Senegal also welcomed the results achieved in tsetse fly control thanks to the support of the Agency, the Joint Division and the USA, and had commenced the second phase, which involved setting up an insectarium in the larger central part of the country.

30. Like other developing countries, Senegal suffered major losses of fruit and vegetable produce every year owing to a lack of preservation infrastructure. To remedy that situation and support its food sovereignty, his country had decided to acquire one or more irradiators with the support of Agency partners and certain friendly countries.

31. Senegal appreciated its fruitful cooperation with Pakistan on training in integrated soil management techniques to combat soil salinization, and in the selection of suitable crop varieties. The Agency could make an invaluable contribution in that area through isotopic analysis techniques. In that connection, Senegal reaffirmed the importance of discussions aimed at establishing a partnership between the Agency and the Senegalese Agency for Reforestation and the Great Green Wall, the national counterpart of the Great Green Wall project involving 11 African countries aimed at tackling desertification and developing the Sahara–Sahelian region.

32. Senegal appreciated the confidence that the Agency had placed in the Pasteur Institute of Dakar to hold the first ZODIAC regional training course for French-speaking African Member States in 2022. Staff from the National Laboratory for Livestock and Veterinary Research, a ZODIAC reference laboratory, had also benefited from capacity building provided at the Seibersdorf laboratories on the calibration and certification of microbiological safety cabinets for diagnostic laboratories.

33. Human capacity building — a vital complement in technology transfer — should remain a top Agency priority. Senegal appreciated the support provided through the AFRA Network for Education in Science and Technology to develop and implement a national human resources development strategy, which included master's and PhD courses at the Institute of Applied Nuclear Technology; diplomas in radiology, nuclear medicine and radiation therapy studies; and the integration of the regional master's degrees in human nutrition and nuclear techniques, and in water resources management. Further efforts were needed to address challenges in training on radiopharmacy and radiation protection.

34. The Senegalese chapter of Women in Nuclear had been officially launched in 2022 by the Director of the Division for Africa, and it was hoped that the official launch of the Senegalese Young Generation in Nuclear would soon follow.

35. To improve the coordination and visibility of the TC programme, Senegal was considering a new organizational architecture and planned to establish a national INIS centre and a platform for promoting nuclear science and technology at the Knowledge City in Diamniadio. The city was intended to be a hub for pooling research and innovation platforms, and the nuclear applications platform was currently being installed with the first lot of equipment received through national projects.

36. Senegal reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the Agency's ideals of peace and development and to playing an active role in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and strengthening the Agency's verification and monitoring regime.

37. Ms HIGGIE (New Zealand) said that the Agency continued to make a substantial and valuable contribution to global peace and security by ensuring that nuclear science and technology was harnessed safely, securely and peacefully in support of international development. The Agency played a pivotal role within the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and in upholding obligations enshrined within the NPT and the TPNW.

38. Welcoming Cabo Verde and The Gambia, she noted that the record level of Member State demand for the Agency's services, advice and support was a testament to the Agency's good work.

39. The General Conference was taking place in trying times. The Russian Federation's illegal invasion of Ukraine and its nuclear threats had taxed the Agency's resources like never before. New Zealand commended the Agency's continued efforts to support nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine amid the Russian war of aggression. Recognizing the tremendous pressure that the war had placed on the Agency's staff and resources, her country had announced a further extrabudgetary contribution of \$500 000 in July 2023 to support that work, reflecting its recognition of the extraordinary risks associated with military activities involving nuclear facilities and the great value that it attached to the Secretariat's work to reduce the risk of a nuclear accident.

40. New Zealand backed the Agency's presence in Ukraine, including the invaluable IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and fully endorsed the Director General's Seven Pillars and five principles. The only way to resolve the nuclear risk in Ukraine was for the Russian Federation to end the war and the attendant threat of a nuclear disaster.

41. As the Agency continued to grapple with the threat of nuclear proliferation, Member States should ensure that it was supported to effectively verify and monitor nuclear programmes around the globe so as to confirm their peaceful nature. The additional protocol gave the Agency the right tools for the job; New Zealand urged Member States yet to put one in place to do so in order to ensure a truly modern and fit-for-purpose global safeguards regime. It was also important that the relevant States — in particular those planning nuclear facilities — amend or rescind their SQPs.

42. New Zealand recognized the Agency's broader work to ensure effective safeguards application, noting in particular Member States' interest in the safeguards arrangements being developed for naval nuclear propulsion initiatives. Her country had full confidence in the Agency's independent and impartial work on all safeguards matters, including with respect to naval nuclear propulsion, and looked forward to further updates from the Director General in due course.

43. While the vast majority of Member States worked constructively with the Agency on safeguards matters, some, unfortunately, continued to disregard the shared interest in protecting the nuclear safeguards system and ensuring non-proliferation. Iran's recent removal of about one third of the Agency's most experienced inspectors was deplorable. As Member States had consistently made clear, Iran should take steps to properly engage with the Agency on its safeguards obligations and not escalate the crisis around its nuclear programme.

44. Other long-standing nuclear proliferation challenges persisted. The DPRK's nuclear programme remained a constant threat; its increased ballistic missile testing, failed satellite launch, heightened nuclear rhetoric, and indications that it remained intent on conducting a further nuclear test, all served to escalate tensions. The DPRK must return to diplomacy, and all Member States should continue to press it in that direction, including by adhering fully to international sanctions. Likewise, Syria's

long-standing and deeply regrettable non-compliance with its safeguards obligations must be addressed to ensure the integrity of the international safeguards system.

45. New Zealand recognized the Agency's valuable work to support the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, which had a meaningful impact on the achievement of the SDGs. While her country welcomed the benefits of nuclear technology in a range of contexts, it had chosen not to pursue nuclear power generation and continued to have concerns about its sustainability and risks. It was critical that the use of nuclear power — including innovative reactor designs, such as SMRs and TNPPs — be governed by the highest possible safety and security standards.

46. As a coastal State located near radioactive material shipping routes, New Zealand had long advocated for the safe and secure transport of such material. It strongly supported advanced notification of such shipments to coastal and other interested States, and it valued ongoing dialogue and cooperation between coastal and shipping States on implementing the voluntary best practice guidelines concerning communication protocols. Similarly, it welcomed efforts to improve the international liability regime and would continue collaborating to ensure that the concerns of non-nuclear coastal States were taken into account.

47. New Zealand had made two extrabudgetary contributions to support the important work of the Agency's task force on the discharge of ALPS-treated water from Fukushima Daiichi NPP and appreciated the Agency's extensive, professional and impartial efforts, and its commitment to a permanent monitoring presence at the site throughout the process. Recognizing that the release was a significant issue of interest in the Pacific region — especially given its traumatic nuclear legacy — her country appreciated the sustained efforts of both Japan and the Agency to ensure transparent and open communication with the countries in the region and welcomed their continued commitment to dialogue and information-sharing.

48. Mr AGUSMAN (Indonesia), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country looked forward to further enhancing its cooperation with the Agency and welcomed its pivotal contribution to strengthening disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, and promoting international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

49. It was disconcerting that, as the world continued to grapple with persistent global tensions and an uncertain security situation, some nuclear-weapon States prioritized their nuclear arsenals over efforts towards non-proliferation and disarmament. The lack of consensus at the Tenth NPT Review Conference and at the recent first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, and the ongoing distrust between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States were worrying trends requiring immediate action.

50. Member States must maintain a strong focus on advancing global disarmament efforts under the NPT and restoring confidence in nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and must continue to support the Agency's crucial role in helping Member States fulfil their obligations in that regard. Promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy remained vital for global welfare.

51. The Agency's work extended to promoting clean energy, tackling plastic waste and strengthening cooperation in food safety and health — all critical aspects of sustainable development. Notably, the ZODIAC initiative, established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the Agency's proactive approach to combating future outbreaks.

52. Indonesia proudly supported the Agency in fostering a culture of safety and security, and promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and was actively engaged in flagship Agency programmes — including NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope — through which his country was expanding the use of nuclear technology. Indonesia had signed a letter of intent with the Agency in relation to

Rays of Hope in March 2023 to signify its shared commitment to advancing the positive impact of nuclear technology on global health and well-being.

53. Although Indonesia prioritized nuclear security, it was essential to maintain a comprehensive approach that did not impede international cooperation in peaceful nuclear activities and to preserve the inalienable right of States to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes unhindered in order to achieve their development goals.

54. His country emphasized the significance and effectiveness of global nuclear security initiatives, and committed to further strengthening its nuclear security infrastructure in collaboration with the Agency through the INSSP, with a focus on improving coordination, capacity building, cybersecurity and national detection capabilities at entry points and borders to ensure a safe and secure nuclear environment.

55. As a State party to the CNS, Indonesia was committed to maintaining the highest standards of nuclear safety in the operation of its research reactors. Its commitment to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources underscored its proactive approach to managing the risks associated with high-activity sources in a cooperative and responsible manner, thereby promoting safety and security on a global scale.

56. Indonesia had also pledged to continue supporting the Agency's efforts under the NHSI to develop global standards for nuclear energy infrastructure using advanced reactor technology, while prioritizing safety and security standards at the highest level, along with technology transfer to all Member States. Indonesia's experts had actively developed technical documents under regulatory track working groups 1 and 2 and, following the establishment of a national nuclear regulatory forum in 2022, his country would also develop pre-licensing regulations and technical guidelines based on international standards and best practices.

57. Safeguards should remain an essential component of nuclear governance, and the Agency played a critical role in ensuring their continued effectiveness. Given the significant recent developments in nuclear naval propulsion under the auspices of the Agency, Indonesia had been closely following discussions in that area, including at the most recent Board meeting. The Agency should adhere fully to its statutory safeguards mandate in order to find legal, procedural and technical solutions and maintain the highest standards of safeguards verification and monitoring. Furthermore, Indonesia called for international cooperation to ensure that the development of naval nuclear propulsion aligned with existing international norms and legal frameworks under the Agency.

58. He concluded by reiterating Indonesia's commitment and readiness to continue supporting the Agency's work.

59. Mr DAPKIUNAS (Belarus) said that among the key outcomes of the Agency's work was the global awareness of the importance of nuclear power and non-power applications for sustainable development around the world. The Agency's flagship initiatives — ZODIAC, Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics — had become a recognizable brand. Congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, Belarus commended his efforts to position nuclear power as a safe, sustainable and reliable source of energy. His country had consistently advocated strengthening the Agency as a leading international organization—it welcomed the growing demand for the TC Programme, supported the proposed increase in the TCF and paid its contributions to the Fund in full and on time.

60. In Belarus, TC projects made it possible to improve the effectiveness of staff training for the new nuclear power industry and promote nuclear and radiation safety. They also made a notable contribution to the development of nuclear medicine and to addressing the unique challenge of sustainable

development in the areas affected by the Chernobyl accident. Belarus looked forward to further productive cooperation in the upcoming programme cycle.

61. His country regretted the continued unconstructive approach taken by the European Union, which hindered the Agency's effective TC work and ran counter to its obligations under Article IV of the NPT. That position was detrimental not only to the Agency but also to the global non-proliferation regime.

62. Belarus was at the final stage of its project to build the country's first NPP, consisting of two Generation 3+ power units with a total capacity of 2400 MW. In 2022, the first scheduled preventive maintenance had been performed on the first power unit, and the first transfer of spent nuclear fuel had been completed. Since its commissioning in 2020, the unit had already generated more than 18 billion kWh of electricity—including 6 billion kWh in 2023. The second power unit of the Belarusian NPP had entered its final commissioning stage. In March 2023, a controlled fission chain reaction had been successfully triggered and the unit had been connected to the grid for the first time. The unit was expected to be approved for commercial operation by the end of 2023. Full commissioning of the Belarusian NPP would meet about 40% of the country's domestic electricity needs and would make it possible to replace some 4.5 billion cubic metres of gas annually—thus significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

63. Since launching its national nuclear power programme, Belarus had been committed to the highest standards of nuclear and radiation safety. Accordingly, it was fully open to constructive professional expert dialogue with all interested parties. In line with existing practice, reports on the Agency's peer review and advisory missions to Belarus were publicly available, including through the Agency's information resources. The conclusions and recommendations of the missions served as an important reference point for improving the country's nuclear safety regime, enhancing the reliability of nuclear installations and ensuring the security of nuclear material.

64. Having fully utilized the Agency's expertise and support tools in order to draw on the accumulated global experience in the use of nuclear energy, Belarus was pleased to share its own experience in the development of nuclear power infrastructure — of great interest to the Agency and countries preparing to develop their own nuclear power programmes.

65. The universal nature of nuclear security risks and threats required active and coordinated action. Belarus had therefore recently acceded to the Amendment to the CPPNM, further strengthening the nuclear security regime at the national, regional and global levels.

66. Belarus fully supported and attached great importance to the strengthening of, the Agency's safeguards system. It looked forward to the imminent launch of a comprehensive inter-State expert discussion on the new challenges posed to the Agency's verification activities by certain countries' plans to begin using highly enriched nuclear material in non-proscribed military activities.

67. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates), expressing appreciation for the Director General's strong leadership and dedication, and congratulating him on his reappointment, said that his country commended the Agency's efforts to provide technical support, facilitate international cooperation in nuclear safety and security, ensure non-proliferation and help its Member States develop peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

68. The UAE looked forward to discussing the role of nuclear energy in tackling climate change and mitigating its impact at the 28th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP28), which it would host later in 2023 reflecting its commitment to proactively addressing the issue. In 2023, the UAE had updated its national energy strategy to include several new goals, such as increasing the share of clean energy in the energy mix to 30% by 2031 and becoming carbon-neutral by 2050. The development of a peaceful nuclear energy sector was a key component of his country's net zero strategy,

demonstrating its commitment to diversifying its energy mix and reducing fossil fuel dependence. Together with renewable energy, the nuclear power programme would provide 14 GW of clean power for the UAE by 2030. The path to net zero emissions required built-in climate resilience to guarantee energy security.

69. The UAE appreciated the valuable support provided by the TC programme, in particular through regional and national workshops and training courses, a number of which it had hosted in 2023. His country had provided financial support for the Agency's vital ReNuAL project and welcomed discussions on the role of SMRs and advanced nuclear technologies in achieving net zero and supporting energy security and sustainability.

70. In February 2023, the UAE had hosted the International Conference on Effective Nuclear and Radiation Regulatory Systems: Preparing for the Future in a Rapidly Changing Environment, which had addressed regulatory approaches to innovation and new and emerging technologies — including regulatory harmonization and international and regional cooperation, regulatory credibility, and capacity building to ensure regulators' preparedness for future needs.

71. As a party to international nuclear safety conventions, the UAE provided timely and comprehensive reporting and actively participated in CNS and Joint Convention review meetings. His country's report to the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting had highlighted its efforts regarding the licensing of Barakah NPP, where three of the four units were commercially operational and delivering electricity to the national grid. It had been concluded that the UAE continued to meet its obligations under the CNS. Stressing the importance of universalizing nuclear safety conventions, the UAE encouraged countries that had not yet done so, especially those operating nuclear power reactors, to join the CNS at an early date.

72. The UAE had received more than 13 major Agency review missions and encouraged Member States to make full use of such services given their significance in achieving progress and addressing shortcomings.

73. Placing great importance on enhancing global nuclear security, the UAE expressed continuing deep concern at the situation in and around nuclear facilities in Ukraine. It welcomed the crucial ISAMZ and the Director General's endeavours to ensure that NPPs and related facilities were not targeted and remained protected from conflict.

74. Given the essential role of the Agency's safeguards system, the UAE appreciated the increase in the number of additional protocols brought into force and continued to call for that instrument and the CSA to be universalized. His country had concluded Practical Arrangements with the Agency in March 2023 to provide project-related direct funding and in-kind contributions for activities in safeguards development.

75. The unresolved issues regarding Iran's safeguards implementation and its enrichment of uranium beyond the agreed limits was troubling. The UAE called on all countries with concerns surrounding their nuclear facilities and activities to meet their international obligations and to cooperate with the Agency in a full and timely manner. His country would continue to support all constructive efforts to finally establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

76. Highlighting the need to properly fund the Agency to maintain its vital role, he said that the UAE remained committed to a strong partnership with the Agency in its responsible development of its peaceful nuclear power programme and its use of nuclear applications, and it looked forward to continued collaboration with other Member States to achieve the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards at the national and international levels.

**Ms Mugwanja (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.**

77. Mr OBRADOVIĆ (Serbia) said that his country remained fully committed to the Agency's fundamental principles and goals of ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy to promote international peace and development. It would continue to cooperate constructively in all Agency programmes and efforts aimed at strengthening nuclear safeguards in line with the NPT and ensuring full compliance with the principles of the non-proliferation regime. Committed to combating nuclear terrorism, Serbia would continue its unwavering collaboration with the international community to deter the illegal trade in nuclear material and other radiation sources, in particular through their proper physical protection and the retrieval of orphan sources under regulatory control.

78. Serbia continued to steadily develop its legislative and regulatory framework for radiation and nuclear safety and security in line with international standards and the EU acquis. It would therefore continue to support the Secretariat's attempts to enhance international standards and relevant international legal documents.

79. Public health, environmental protection and the peaceful use of nuclear technology for global peace and prosperity were the cornerstones of Serbia's policy. His country would continue to fulfil its obligations under the relevant international conventions and apply the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources as a non-legally binding instrument, along with the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources.

80. Serbia was deeply grateful for the assistance provided through the Agency's TC programme, which was an essential vehicle for international cooperation and capacity building and had enabled Serbia to begin several national, regional and interregional projects. It looked forward to their completion with the Agency's continuous support and collaboration.

81. He concluded by expressing Serbia's firm support for the Agency's Annual Report for 2022 and the programme and budget for 2024.

82. Mr DARSALIA (Georgia) said that handling the risks and challenges related to nuclear proliferation was a top priority in the modern security environment. Georgia condemned the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine, which was a gross violation of international law and the UN Charter in particular, and severely undermined European and global security and stability.

83. The Russian Federation's actions posed serious and direct threats to nuclear safety and security and the Agency's safeguards verification activities in Ukraine. The Russian Federation must stop its illegal war of aggression and unconditionally withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, in particular from Zaporizhzhya NPP, to allow the Ukrainian authorities to resume their sovereign responsibilities and the legitimate operating staff to conduct their duties without outside pressure and interference. His country thanked the Director General and the Agency for closely monitoring the situation and keeping the international community informed.

84. In the current uncertain and troubling circumstances, it was more important than ever for the international community to act in the spirit of unity. The universalization of internationally agreed instruments and deep commitment to the resulting obligations were therefore of the utmost importance.

85. In view of the complex international security environment, the Agency's role in ensuring the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear material and technology was vital. Georgia attached great importance to the Agency's core mandate in the fields of nuclear safeguards, safety and security, nuclear energy and technical cooperation. It supported the universal and effective implementation of the NPT and underlined the importance of the Agency's safeguards system in its implementation. CSAs, together



with additional protocols, constituted the current verification standard and his country continued to call for their universalization without delay.

86. Since the restoration of Georgia's independence, the Russian Federation's breaching of international obligations concerning the prevention of and response to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats had been weakening national security. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions — illegally occupied by the Russian Federation — posed a significant challenge to non-proliferation. Attempts to smuggle nuclear and radioactive material through those regions had been prevented as a result of effective measures taken by Georgian law-enforcement agencies. However, as the absence of an international presence in the occupied Georgian territories made it impossible to conduct verification on the ground, the threat of proliferation in those areas remained high on the regional and international security agenda.

87. Given its strategic location in the Black Sea region, Georgia strove to ensure high standards of CBRN security and safety at the national, regional and international levels, and played an essential role in supporting the global security architecture. In close cooperation with strategic partners, its interagency CBRN council continued to implement unified CBRN safety and security approaches and policies, including the new 10-year national CBRN Threat Reduction Strategy and the EU–Georgia Association Agreement.

88. Georgia's new law on radiation protection, nuclear safety and security — adopted in June 2023 and developed in accordance with IRRS mission recommendations — ensured enhanced compliance with fundamental nuclear safety and security principles and requirements. His country highly appreciated the technical and financial assistance and active contribution from the Agency and its partners — namely the European Union, Sweden and the USA — in developing national regulations and systems for nuclear and radiation safety and security.

89. In closing, he thanked the Director General and the Agency's staff for their dedication and invaluable contribution to building a safer and more prosperous world and encouraged the Agency to continue all its activities related to peaceful uses of nuclear science and technologies.

90. Mr GRAFF (Luxembourg), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country appreciated the unfailing commitment of the Director General and his team in the current challenging times and would lend its unwavering support to the Agency's efforts.

91. Luxembourg emphasized that nuclear power entailed inherent risks to people and the environment, which were all the more acute in the event of natural disaster or armed conflict, as the current nuclear safety threats to NPPs in Ukraine demonstrated. It was for that reason that such facilities enjoyed special protection under Article 56 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

92. Luxembourg firmly supported the Agency's continued verification activities for all nuclear material and activities in Ukraine. It was essential that the Ukrainian regulatory authority supervise the operation of nuclear facilities within Ukraine's borders, and the Ukrainian operator should be allowed to assume its responsibilities without outside interference. The Russian Federation's actions posed a challenge to the established international order governed by the principles of law, blatantly flouting international legal norms and putting the entire multilateral system to the test.

93. The situation regarding Iran's nuclear programme was worrying. After more than four years of non-compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA, Iran had continued to develop its nuclear programme at an alarming rate without any credibly justified civilian purpose. Moreover, its restriction of the Agency's ability to verify and monitor its nuclear activities — most recently its unilateral decision to withdraw the designation of experienced Agency inspectors — raised serious concerns.

94. Luxembourg backed the Agency's continuing efforts to engage with Iran on all issues pertaining to its mandate. His country urged Iran to comply with its legal obligations and commitments to minimize the proliferation risks of its nuclear programme and to increase transparency with the Agency, including by resuming the implementation of its additional protocol as an essential tool for strengthening international confidence.

95. Luxembourg also supported diplomatic initiatives to foster constructive dialogue with all stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula, as that was the only means to achieve complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, paving the way for lasting peace and stability. It also reiterated its unwavering support for the establishment of a zone free of WMDs, including their means of delivery, in the Middle East.

96. His country, which was a party to the CTBT, was also a party to the NPT and considered that instrument the only binding commitment for nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI. Although firmly committed to strengthening nuclear safety standards, Luxembourg did not deem nuclear energy a sustainable option for climate neutrality, as the unresolved issue of radioactive waste management was a burden for future generations.

97. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada) said that the international community faced increasingly stark challenges. The devastating effects of climate change were already a lived reality for so many, including in Canada, and the uneven economic and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic created new obstacles to attaining the SDGs.

98. Moreover, the international community faced growing nuclear proliferation threats and was increasingly undermined by actors flouting international law and norms. The very fabric of the multilateral system, intended to advance collective and global solutions, was fraying as several countries chose a route of confrontation and misinformation. In that context, the Agency's role was more critical than ever.

99. Commending the Agency's impartial, technical and fact-based work, Canada recognized the professionalism and dedication of the Secretariat, which had ably responded to a host of challenges over the preceding year. It thanked the Director General for his tireless efforts and congratulated him on his reappointment.

100. Highlighting the positive and increasingly prominent role of the peaceful use of nuclear technology in responding to global challenges, he noted that the CANDU reactor's nuclear technology had been delivering those benefits at home and abroad for almost 60 years. Nuclear capability would be key for decarbonization, and several jurisdictions within Canada were exploring new investments in large generating capacity.

101. In addition, advanced technologies such as SMRs would further enhance access to low-emission, secure baseload energy. Canada was actively pursuing SMR development and was currently reviewing licence applications for grid-scale SMRs. His country recognized the importance of regulatory cooperation in deploying a global fleet of standard SMR designs and had strengthened its international cooperation in that area. A positive nuclear future was only possible if waste was managed responsibly in a way that meaningfully engaged indigenous peoples, local communities and civil society. Canada was pleased to share its experiences and to learn from others in that area.

102. Pleased to fund scholarships under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, Canada welcomed the successful launch of the Lise Meitner Programme, which reinforced the importance of supporting career development for women in the nuclear sector. His country had also recently announced a further funding commitment to the Agency's ReNuAL 2 project to support the Agency's laboratories in providing unique and invaluable technical assistance to Member States.

103. The use of nuclear technologies came with important nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation obligations. Canada deeply regretted that regional actors such as the DPRK and Syria continued to pose direct challenges to international peace and security and to undermine the credibility of the Agency's safeguards system, upon which the entire international community depended. Canada had committed 4.5 million Canadian dollars to the Agency's DPRK Team so that it could continue providing Member States with updated technical assessments of the DPRK's nuclear programme.

104. Iran's nuclear programme remained of significant concern. Canada was deeply troubled by Iran's continued nuclear escalations — including its deployment of advanced centrifuges, production of uranium enriched up to 60% U-235, limited cooperation with the Agency to address outstanding safeguards questions and recent de-designation of experienced Agency inspectors. Those unilateral actions openly contradicted the cooperation that should exist between the Agency and Iran. Canada firmly supported the Agency's verification and monitoring activities in Iran as an essential contribution to regional and global security and had contributed 21 million Canadian dollars to those activities since 2014.

105. His country welcomed the Agency's continued efforts to help Member States fulfil their nuclear safety and security responsibilities. Canada contributed to the Agency's work through a number of projects, including the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Regulatory Infrastructure Development Project, which were providing comprehensive nuclear safety and security assistance for 69 beneficiary States in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

106. Highlighting the 20th anniversary of the approval of the Code, he said that the commitment to it was borne out by record participation in the 2023 Open-Ended Meeting of Technical and Legal Experts for Sharing Information on States' Implementation of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. States that had not done so were encouraged to commit to implementing the Code and the supplementary guidance.

107. Canada also applauded the Agency's efforts to support Member States in implementing nuclear liability conventions and looked forward to continued collaboration on the development of a global nuclear liability regime.

108. Canada, along with Costa Rica, Finland and Singapore, would introduce a draft resolution under the critical item on nuclear safety, security, and safeguards in Ukraine that had been added to the General Conference's agenda. His country fully endorsed the Agency's work to support nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, including through the ISAMZ and the Agency's comprehensive programme of assistance for Ukraine. The Agency's work in Ukraine remained essential, given the grave conditions created by the Russian Federation's illegal invasion and continued occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP. The nuclear safety and security challenges would not be resolved until the plant was returned to the competent Ukrainian authorities.

109. The Agency remained an effective and essential instrument in the collective response to the unprecedented times and increasingly complex challenges ahead. Canada was committed to ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the benefit of all.

110. Mr BIGGS (Australia) said that, as a founding member of the Agency, his country remained steadfastly committed to the Agency's goals. At a time when the international community should be unifying to address shared challenges, it found itself confronting the most testing strategic circumstances since the Second World War.

111. Australia continued to condemn, in the strongest terms, the Russian Federation's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. The nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications of

the Russian Federation's reckless actions in Ukraine were of grave concern. His country condemned the Russian Federation's continued control of Zaporizhzhya NPP and called on it to cease hostilities and withdraw immediately from the site and from the whole of Ukraine.

112. Australia backed the Agency's work in Ukraine, including by providing more than 1.6 million Australian dollars and protection equipment towards the safe and secure operation of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, and it looked forward to supporting the draft resolution on Ukraine proposed by Canada, Costa Rica, Finland and Singapore.

113. The Islamic Republic of Iran's failure to resolve serious outstanding safeguards issues in a full and technically credible manner was of deep concern. Australia called on Iran to reverse all measures deviating from the JCPOA and to recommit to full compliance with its nuclear-related commitments — including implementation of its additional protocol.

114. Condemning in the strongest terms the DPRK's ongoing pursuit of WMDs and their delivery systems, Australia urged the DPRK to cease provocations, reverse course, make a sustained commitment to diplomacy, resume full compliance with Agency safeguards and the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, and allow the return of Agency inspectors. His country would again sponsor the draft resolution on the DPRK and called on all Member States to follow suit.

115. Amid those strategic challenges, the world could not lose sight of its commitment to achieving the SDGs. Nuclear applications made a vital contribution to human health, climate-smart agriculture and environmental protection, and the Agency's flagship initiatives in those areas — including the recently launched Atoms4Food initiative — were commendable. Australia would contribute a further 3.5 million Australian dollars in 2023 to support the Agency's efforts to use nuclear science and technology to deliver tangible outcomes in the region through Rays of Hope, the Global Water Analysis Laboratory Network and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

116. With regard to regional cooperation, Australia would make a contribution under the RCA to mark its term as chair and invited all Member States to its General Conference side event on impactful partnerships in nuclear science and technology in the Asia-Pacific region to highlight the benefits of regional cooperation in addressing common developmental priorities.

117. Australia would continue using its own leading nuclear science and technology expertise and world-class nuclear science infrastructure to address global challenges. The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation continued to construct a first-of-its-kind waste treatment plant for the liquid by-product of molybdenum-99 nuclear medicine. Australia thanked interested Member States for attending its presentation on that development at the 2023 Scientific Forum.

118. In March 2023, the leaders of Australia, the UK and the USA had announced the optimal pathway for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. The Director General's reports and updates to the Board on Australia's naval nuclear propulsion programme, including his statement responding to questions raised at the June meeting, were welcome. Australia remained fully committed to ensuring that its approach met the highest non-proliferation standards. Throughout the lifecycle of his country's programme, the Agency would be able to continue to verify and conclude that there had been no diversion of declared nuclear material, no misuse of facilities and no undeclared nuclear material or activities. Australia fully supported the Director General's undertaking to transmit its Article 14 arrangement under its CSA, once developed, to the Board for appropriate action.

119. Highlighting the Agency's critical role in monitoring the discharge of ALPS-treated water from Fukushima Daiichi NPP, Australia expressed its full confidence in the Agency's independent, impartial and science-based technical advice. It also welcomed Japan's ongoing transparency and international engagement, including with Pacific Island countries.

120. Australia noted with concern the pressing budgetary issues faced by the Agency. It continued to pay its assessed contributions in full and on time and urged others to do likewise.

121. He concluded by reiterating Australia's unwavering support for the Agency's independence, mandate and technical authority, and its full confidence in and respect for the diligent, professional and impartial work of the Agency's staff under the Director General's leadership.

122. Ms KOIKA (Greece) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment. Greece highly appreciated the Agency's technical expertise, independence and impartiality in fulfilling its mandate and was committed to maintaining a strong partnership and cooperation.

123. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine was a stark violation of the core principles of the UN Charter and a fundamental challenge to the multilateral system as a whole. International law and the inviolability of borders were the cornerstone of world order. Greece reiterated its strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's illegal war of aggression. That country's actions not only undermined the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but also posed a significant risk to regional nuclear safety and security — especially given its illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP in violation of the Agency's Statute.

124. Greece continued to support Ukraine, the Director General and the Agency's dedicated staff deployed in the IAEA Support and Assistance Missions who were working in difficult circumstances to prevent a possible nuclear accident that would have immense consequences for the whole region. Expressing concern that the Seven Pillars at Zaporizhzhya NPP had been compromised, her country urged the Russian Federation to respect the five principles established by the Director General and allow the Agency to comprehensively assess the situation at the plant without hindrance.

125. Nuclear safety and security incidents recognized no boundaries and could have far-reaching regional and even global implications — a nuclear accident anywhere, was a nuclear accident everywhere. As a party to all the main international nuclear safety conventions, Greece strongly believed that transparency was essential in instilling public confidence in the safety of nuclear energy. It fully supported the Agency's activities to improve nuclear safety worldwide and was convinced of the benefits for Member States of the Agency's peer review services. Member States were encouraged to publish the results of those peer review missions in the interests of transparency and enhanced global nuclear security.

126. The Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting had been an important opportunity for Contracting Parties to come together, discuss current global nuclear safety issues and participate in the peer review process. Greece thanked the presidency and the Secretariat for their efforts. It also stressed the need for continuous efforts to strengthen global nuclear security and looked forward to participating in ICONS 2024 in May.

127. The Agency's multilateral, impartial, qualified and effective safeguards system remained a core component of the NPT and a fundamental insurance for global security. It was regrettable that the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference had concluded without a factual report. The Agency and its Member States must continue implementing nuclear safeguards, including the application of the additional protocol, which was essential in building confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities.

128. Iran's escalating nuclear trajectory and systematic breaches of JCPOA limits were of deep concern. It was regrettable that Iran had not taken the necessary steps to return to its nuclear-related commitments under the Plan, thereby increasing proliferation risks in the region. Greece called on Iran to work with the Agency in a serious and sustained way towards implementing the commitments in the March 2023 Joint Statement and to cooperate fully with the Agency to resolve all pending safeguards

issues, in accordance with its legal obligations under its CSA. Her country also called on Iran to reverse the de-designation of the key inspectors, which severely affected the Agency's ability to effectively conduct its verification activities in Iran.

129. Greece accorded paramount importance to the Agency's central and professional role in promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy through the TC programme in order to address global challenges such as climate change and achieve development and prosperity for humankind. Welcoming the 2023 Scientific Forum on nuclear innovations for net zero, her country commended the significant strides made in several of the Agency's flagship initiatives over the preceding year — including Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics and ZODIAC — and looked forward to the newly announced Atoms4Food initiative.

130. NUTEC Plastics was crucial in the fight against pervasive global plastic pollution — of particular concern to maritime countries like Greece. Given the high priority that her country attached to marine environmental protection and preservation, it would be hosting the Ninth Our Ocean Conference in 2024.

131. At the national level, Greece was taking specific measures regarding nuclear knowledge management, including the active participation of Greek scientists and institutions in regional and interregional scientific projects through the TC programme. Furthermore, the Greek Atomic Energy Commission had taken the initiative to establish a scholarship system for postgraduate studies in nuclear-related subjects.

132. In closing, she reiterated Greece's unrelenting support for the Agency's central role in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

133. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) said that his country congratulated the Director General on his reappointment, which reflected the confidence placed in him by the Member States.

134. Praising the Secretariat's substantial efforts to achieve the noble purposes for which the Agency had been founded, Yemen reiterated the great importance that it accorded to the TC programme, as the mechanism through which the Agency could provide resources, services and equipment to meet needs regarding research, development and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, especially in the least developed regions. Yemen continued to benefit from the TC programme and hoped to continue to do so despite the difficulties posed by the coup conducted by Iranian-backed Houthi militias in the country.

135. He expressed his country's thanks to the Agency for its substantial efforts to continue supporting TC projects in Yemen, especially in the areas of cancer treatment, agriculture and livestock, and science and technology. Yemen looked forward to receiving further support from the Agency in those areas, especially as part of ZODIAC, and reiterated its support for all the Director General's initiatives related to the use of nuclear energy to benefit the environment and support development.

136. His Government was grateful for the substantial support provided by the Agency in establishing Yemen's first cancer radiotherapy centre and a nuclear medicine unit. Further Agency support would be needed to tackle the country's increasing cancer rates and set up cancer treatment centres in various other governorates. Yemen looked forward to the first of the Agency's planned visits to the country, scheduled for November 2023, with a view to work being conducted on a cancer diagnosis and treatment centre at Al-Sadaqa Hospital in Aden.

137. Underlining the need for greater focus on TC projects, Yemen encouraged the Agency to keep working to find alternative means to ensure the continuation of TC projects in countries such as his where conflict or exceptional circumstances prevailed. The Secretariat should consider establishing a team to develop new policies to facilitate TC project implementation in countries that were experiencing

conflict and should ensure that such projects were not compromised for the sake of other Agency programmes. In that connection, Yemen commended the work of the presidency and secretariat of ARASIA to promote technical cooperation between the member States and provide training opportunities in line with States' needs regarding the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, under the oversight of the Agency.

138. It was worrisome that Iran had decided to reopen issues related to its legally binding commitments under the NPT and its safeguards agreement, thereby reflecting its unwillingness to return to the JCPOA. By dragging out the discussions on the Plan, Iran could be giving itself the time to develop its non-peaceful nuclear programme, meaning that any new agreement with Iran would be pointless. Any such agreement must therefore include measures to relieve all concerns regarding its nuclear programme, its ballistic missile programme and its interference in the affairs of other States in the region. It was unacceptable that Iran was exploiting the current discussions on the JCPOA to avoid its obligations under its CSA and undermine the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The fact that the Agency was not in a position to confirm the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme made it impossible for the international community to ignore the threat posed by Iran.

139. Yemen endorsed all steps taken by the Agency to strengthen the nuclear security system in order to prevent nuclear materials from reaching the hands of terrorists or being traded illegally. His country likewise backed all initiatives aimed at ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons and establishing WMD-free zones, especially in the Middle East. In that connection, having welcomed the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held under the presidency of Lebanon, Yemen looked forward to the fourth session, to be presided over by Libya, and encouraged all States to participate and contribute to its success.

140. All Arab States had acceded to the NPT and had stressed their continued readiness to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. In contrast, Israel persistently refused to accede to the Treaty or place all its nuclear facilities under a CSA. It also continued to reject all international initiatives to universalize the NPT in the Middle East, thereby exacerbating instability and insecurity in what was a sensitive region.

141. Lastly, he wished the Conference every success in adopting resolutions that would help strengthen the prestige of the Agency and support its noble goals of increased prosperity, security and stability for all the peoples of the world.

142. Mr CAMPANA BOLUARTE (Peru) said that the continued cooperation between his country and the Agency was appreciated. Peru had recently joined Rays of Hope, which would make a significant contribution to fighting cancer, and was implementing the programme in a localized manner.

143. The peaceful use of nuclear energy was essential for sustainable development, as evidenced by its benefits to human health, food security, agriculture, the environment and the fight against climate change. In Peru, nuclear energy had enabled significant advances in regenerative medicine and had been used to tackle COVID-19 and to contain the effects of an oil spill off the coast of Lima in January 2022. Convinced of the positive impact of the responsible and peaceful use of nuclear energy, his country was actively participating in various Agency initiatives in that area, including ZODIAC and activities under NUTEC Plastics, which was being used to tackle marine pollution along the Peruvian coast.

144. At the regional level, Peru had played an essential role in Agency cooperation and research initiatives. During its tenure as ARCAL Chair, which had ended the previous day, his country had helped consolidate the mechanism as an important reference for South–South cooperation and an effective means for promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology. He also highlighted Peru's active

participation in the Research Network of Marine-Coastal Stressors in Latin America and the Caribbean and its coordination of the new Regional Network of Research Reactors and Related Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

145. Conflicts and heightened geopolitical tensions demonstrated the importance of dialogue to achieve peaceful and lasting solutions, and the need for further unified, multilateral efforts to promote a safer international nuclear environment. Peru therefore welcomed the significant endeavours of the Board and the Director General to that end — especially in view of the worrying situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP resulting from the war in Ukraine. It also supported the efforts concerning the DPRK and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

146. Peru stressed the importance of the Tlatelolco Treaty, which had established the NWFZ in Latin America and the Caribbean, and recalled the obligation to comply in good faith with Article VI of the NPT, the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament regime. Convinced of the need to universalize non-proliferation and disarmament instruments, Peru called on those countries that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT and the TPNW.

147. True to its commitment to the consolidation of the rules-based international order, the strengthening of multilateralism, cooperation, the peaceful settlement of disputes and full respect for international law, Peru would continue to work actively, responsibly and multilaterally with the Agency to promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology for a safer and more sustainable world.

148. Mr O'LEARY (Ireland) said that his country appreciated the Director General's steadfast leadership, congratulated him on his reappointment, and looked forward to his continued steering of the Agency through difficult seas in the years ahead.

149. Ireland reiterated its condemnation of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, international law and the UN Charter. The Russian Federation had shown no sign of complying with the resolutions adopted by the Board in 2022, and its war of aggression against Ukraine continued to pose serious and direct threats to safety, security and safeguards at Ukrainian nuclear facilities.

150. Given that nuclear safety and security were essential in all circumstances, including in armed conflict, the continued compromise of the Seven Pillars was of deep concern. Ireland welcomed the Director General's five principles and strongly supported the reinforced Agency presence to monitor and report on their implementation at Zaporizhzhya NPP. His country commended the Agency's vital work at nuclear facilities across Ukraine and was proud to have provided an extrabudgetary contribution in that regard.

151. The NPT was the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and progress across its three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars was essential for its success. The Agency's role in that regard, above all in relation to non-proliferation, was indispensable. Ireland called for universal adherence to additional protocols, which — together with CSAs — constituted the current verification standard under the NPT. Ireland urged States developing their civilian nuclear programmes to amend or rescind their SQPs and sign and ratify the additional protocol as a matter of priority.

152. Ireland recognized the sovereign right of every State to develop nuclear technologies for power generation and other peaceful uses. Nuclear and radiation technologies could contribute to a wide variety of socioeconomic and environmental benefits. As such, Agency support provided to Member States to achieve the SDGs was critical. Ireland was therefore pleased to have pledged an additional voluntary contribution towards the modernization of the Agency's nuclear applications laboratories in Seibersdorf.



153. Nuclear power must be used safely and securely in line with the highest international standards on safety and environmental protection. Ireland greatly appreciated the Agency's central role in that regard and looked forward to discussing the future of global nuclear security at ICONS 2024. Although that conference had recognized the important link between nuclear security and multilateral nuclear disarmament, progress on the latter was critically needed.

154. Ireland welcomed the success of the First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW and looked forward to the second meeting to be held later in 2023. The TPNW complemented and was fully compatible with the NPT.

155. Iran's nuclear activities were inconsistent with the JCPOA and the very serious proliferation risks raised by the latest developments remained a cause for deep concern. It was essential that Iran, and the international community, work urgently to reduce the risk of nuclear proliferation and de-escalate tensions in the region. Ireland urged Iran to reverse its decision to withdraw the official designation of several Agency inspectors, which had severely and directly affected the Agency's ability to conduct its inspections.

156. Ireland reiterated its concern that nuclear material had been present at undeclared locations in Iran, and that the Agency did not know the current location of the material and any contaminated equipment. Iran had not made progress in resolving remaining outstanding safeguards issues or implementing the March 2023 Joint Statement. Ireland strongly called on Iran to urgently provide the necessary technically credible explanations to resolve all outstanding issues; to reverse and refrain from all activity inconsistent with the JCPOA and all activity giving rise to proliferation risks; and to return to full cooperation with the Agency on monitoring and verification, without delay, including resuming the application of the additional protocol pending its early ratification.

157. Ireland condemned the DPRK's unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile activities, which were in flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions and threatened world peace and stability. His country called on DPRK to immediately end its destabilizing actions and take steps to abandon its missile, WMD and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. The DPRK must return to compliance with the NPT, fully cooperate with the Agency and urgently sign and ratify the CTBT.

158. Expressing regret at Syria's failure to resolve its safeguards issues with the Agency, Ireland called on it to cooperate with the Agency without further delay and to sign, bring into force and fully implement an additional protocol as a matter of urgency.

159. Ireland commended the work of the Director General and the Agency to advance gender parity, including through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme. An inclusive Agency workforce directly contributed to global scientific and technological innovation. Ireland supported the full, equal and meaningful participation of women across all three pillars of the NPT and the integration of a gender perspective into all of the Agency's work.

**Ms Holgate (United States of America), Vice-President, took the Chair.**

160. Mr WEERASINGHE (Sri Lanka), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country commended the Director General's leadership of the Agency and the Secretariat's tireless efforts to continue delivering the Agency's programmes to Member States, despite the global challenges.

161. The Agency's significant progress in carrying out its activities related to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, nuclear safety and security, and verification and safeguards — as reflected in the 2022 Annual Report — was welcome. The Agency's TC activities were more vital than ever for

developing countries like Sri Lanka, and it appreciated the high implementation rate achieved by the Department of Technical Cooperation in 2022 in challenging circumstances.

162. Consistent with its long-standing pursuit and advocacy of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Sri Lanka had ratified the CTBT in July 2023 and had deposited its instrument of accession to the TPNW in New York the previous week.

163. Respecting the right of all NPT States Parties to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, Sri Lanka emphasized the importance of building and strengthening capacities in all Member States and appreciated the assistance provided by the Agency to establish or enhance national safety infrastructure in developing countries operating, expanding or embarking on nuclear power and radiation technology programmes.

164. Sri Lanka had determined to generate 70% of its electricity from renewable energy and the remaining 30% from thermal power plants by 2030, and would build no new coal power plants, in accordance with an agreement signed at the 26th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP26) in 2021. Having pledged at the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) to reach net zero emissions by 2050, his country had prepared a roadmap and strategic plan that included reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the energy, transport, industry, waste and agriculture sectors, and carbon sequestration in the forestry sector. The document also suggested introducing NPPs from 2035, beginning with 600 MW(e) capacity.

165. With the Phase 1 INIR mission having been conducted successfully in April 2022, Sri Lanka was currently preparing an Integrated Work Plan based on the recommendations and identified gaps, and would meet with the Agency during the fourth quarter of 2023 to discuss the plan. His country needed to diversify its energy mix and was confident that it would continue to make steady progress in that regard with the Agency's continued crucial support.

166. Sri Lanka recognized the importance of SMRs and their potential benefit as a source of power generation, especially for Member States such as Sri Lanka with limited electrical grids. It also noted progress under the SMR Platform, which provided comprehensive support on SMRs to Member States and stakeholders. As an embarking country, Sri Lanka had held several site selection and evaluation discussions with stakeholder institutions, and its Atomic Energy Board had held technical discussions with nuclear power vendor countries seeking possible future cooperation.

167. Following government approval, Sri Lanka was completing the domestic legal procedures to join the Vienna Convention and the CSC, and to accept the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

168. Sri Lanka had requested Agency assistance to conduct a gap analysis of the national nuclear law in order to determine its compatibility with the relevant international legal instruments, standards and guidance and its adequacy for future nuclear programmes. The Office of Legal Affairs had scheduled a legislative assistance mission for November 2023, which would include a national workshop on nuclear law and awareness-raising meetings for high-level government officials.

169. Under the national TC project to develop nuclear power infrastructure, a workshop on the governmental, legal and regulatory framework for a nuclear power programme and an expert mission on regulatory body staffing, organization and human resources development planning for the regulatory oversight of NPPs had been held in February and July 2023, respectively. Recognizing the important role of the Agency's TC programmes in enhancing the use of nuclear technology to achieve the SDGs in developing countries, his country would continue to work closely with the Agency and other bilateral partners in its current and future TC activities.

170. Sri Lanka firmly supported the Agency's role in effectively sharing the benefits of safe and secure applications of nuclear technology and looked forward to further meaningful cooperation with the Agency in the coming years.

171. Ms BERNAS (Philippines), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that her country appreciated the committed and valuable efforts of the Agency's staff to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. In the midst of heightened uncertainties and conflicts — both economic and geopolitical — and the worsening effects of climate change, the Agency's work was ever more relevant.

172. With the Agency's valuable support and engagement, the Philippines aimed to maximize the benefits of nuclear technology through the Philippine Development Plan, the country's 10-point economic agenda and its CPF for 2022–2027. The Philippines was establishing a nuclear medicine research and innovation centre to make cancer care more affordable and had pioneered research on the application of gamma irradiation to haemostatic agents to prevent haemorrhage in emergency situations.

173. Her country was also contributing to pollution and radioactivity management in the ridge-to-reef environment, covering terrestrial and marine ecosystems. It was privileged to be a pilot country for NUTEC Plastics and hoped to further expand its contribution by achieving technological readiness level 4 by 2024.

174. Moreover, through plant mutation breeding, the Philippines was developing high-yield crops resistant to different biotic and abiotic stresses, improving agricultural practices to enhance soil fertility and increase food production, improving food safety and supporting agricultural exports. With Agency assistance, her country's scientists had developed a carrageenan solution that increased crop yield, leading to a 19% increase in farmers' incomes. In addition, irradiation had been used to extend the shelf life of the Philippine mango.

175. Regarding energy and industry, the Philippines aimed to boost its long term capability in harnessing nuclear energy and its power-related applications. In 2023, the Subcritical Assembly for Training, Education and Research at the Philippine Research Reactor had started supporting the education and training of nuclear science and technology students and young researchers. The facility would also enhance national capacity in R&D and innovation. Her country appreciated the Agency's assistance in holding a nuclear law workshop to help Philippine legislators and stakeholders develop a comprehensive regulatory framework for the integration of nuclear power into the national energy mix. The proposed bill on the Philippine National Nuclear Safety Act progressing through the legislature aimed to provide a comprehensive legal framework for radiation protection, nuclear safety, security and safeguards in the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the Philippines.

176. Nuclear science had been integrated into the national basic science curriculum for the 10th grade and as a subject in graduate and undergraduate science and engineering programmes. Her country was also spearheading regional efforts towards sustainable nuclear technology as Chair of the Asian Network for Education in Nuclear Technology, which was celebrating its 20th anniversary, with support from the Agency on cooperation, capacity building, human resource development and knowledge management.

177. The Philippines was also a founding member of the recently established International Nuclear Science and Technology Academy, which aimed to strengthen and empower nuclear science and technology educators to advance the safe, secure, peaceful and beneficial uses in that area. In August 2024, the Philippines would be hosting the first International Nuclear Science Olympiad, an annual international science competition for secondary school students, and it looked forward to welcoming participants from all countries present at the General Conference. It hoped that those

collective efforts would encourage young people to choose nuclear science as a viable career path and vocation to build a better future for their communities.

178. The Philippines appreciated the Agency's continuing efforts to develop and scale up nuclear applications to address the world's most pressing development challenges through its flagship initiatives such as ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics, Rays of Hope, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, the Lise Meitner Programme and Atoms4Food, and also through ReNuAL 2, to which her country had made a voluntary contribution in 2023.

179. Beyond immediately tangible applications at the community level, the Philippines continued to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology at various multilateral forums. During the recently held first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, the Philippines had organized — with the Agency's generous support — a side event focusing on the scale-up of practical applications of nuclear science and technology to achieve the intended multiplier effect. In that regard, her country strongly reiterated that peaceful uses of nuclear energy should not be deemed ancillary, but rather equal, to disarmament and non-proliferation.

180. The Agency's safeguards and verification function was the backbone of the global nuclear non-proliferation agenda, as it gave the international community assurances of the exclusively peaceful purposes of nuclear material, facilities and activities. It was of paramount importance that States comply with their respective obligations under the relevant safeguards agreements and cooperate fully with the Agency to enable it to carry out its independent and impartial work.

181. The Philippines looked forward to strengthening its national capacity in nuclear and radiation safety — including radioactive waste management — and in nuclear security to protect people and the environment from the adverse effects of ionizing radiation. It appreciated the Agency's provision of guidance and technical documents, advisory and peer review services, and training events on the safe and secure use of nuclear science and technology.

182. Expressing her country's support for efforts to improve gender equality and parity in the nuclear and scientific field, she highlighted that the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute — the primary governmental agency responsible for peaceful uses — had enjoyed gender parity for several decades. Moreover, the Philippine Research Reactor had been designed and built by a young woman researcher. The Philippines' international outlook was shaped by that key feature as it simultaneously advocated for gender balance and equitable geographic distribution in the world's leading organizations for non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses.

183. The Philippines was fortunate to have the unlimited potential of nuclear technology at its disposal as it worked to achieve the SDGs. It would continue to collaborate constructively with other Member States to harness the potential of nuclear technology while ensuring its safe and secure use.

184. Mr SIMÕES COELHO DE ALMEIDA E SOUSA (Portugal), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that it was deeply regrettable that the General Conference was again taking place against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's continued attacks against Ukrainian territory and its illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya plant.

185. Portugal expressed its strong support and appreciation for the dedicated work of the Director General and the Agency's staff in extremely challenging circumstances. His country remained deeply concerned that the Director General's Seven Pillars continued to be compromised as a result of the Russian Federation's war of aggression, preventing the Agency from comprehensively assessing the situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP against the five principles, which must be respected. His country urged the Russian Federation to comply with the Board's resolutions and to unconditionally withdraw from the territory of Ukraine, and in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP.

186. Regarding Iran, Portugal reaffirmed its continued support for the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA. It was increasingly concerned about Iran's continued actions, which were inconsistent with the JCPOA, had severe irreversible non-proliferation implications and had no plausible civilian justification. Iran should return to full JCPOA implementation, including all transparency measures, and cooperate fully with the Agency without further delay or conditionality to resolve all pending safeguards issues in line with its legal obligations under its CSA.

187. Following the IRRS mission conducted in 2021, Portugal had requested an ARTEMIS mission, which had been carried out in May 2023. The review team had concluded that Portugal demonstrated the commitment and ability to enhance the safety of radioactive waste management and had noted that it had a well-functioning system.

188. In August 2023, his country had hosted a regional workshop on institutional radioactive waste management, organized by the Agency and the Portuguese Environment Agency — to discuss and share experience regarding relevant technologies and the development of dedicated facilities.

189. Committed to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and its supplementary guidance, Portugal, along with other country group chairs, had contributed to the 2023 Open-Ended Meeting of Technical and Legal Experts for Sharing Information on States' Implementation of the Code, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of that unique voluntary instrument. His country had also participated in the Joint Eight and Ninth CNS Review Meeting earlier in 2023, in fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention. In addition to implementing its national action plan on nuclear safety and radiation protection, Portugal had provided experts for IRRS, EPREV and ARTEMIS missions to other countries, thus contributing to the continuous improvement of nuclear safety and radiation protection worldwide.

190. With respect to regional cooperation, FORO had extended its action plan to 2025 and had updated its activities and priorities to meet its security objectives, emphasizing the importance of safety culture, the competences of the regulatory body and the risk analysis applied to radiotherapy techniques. Stressing the need for close cooperation between FORO and the Agency, Portugal reiterated its support for FORO's exemplary activities aimed at exchanging experiences and knowledge in nuclear and radiation safety.

191. Through its essential work over more than 60 years, the Agency had been promoting the contribution of atomic energy to global peace, health and prosperity, while ensuring that its assistance was not used to further any military purpose, thus making a vital contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

192. Given that those objectives remained equally relevant and challenging, the Agency's leading role was of the utmost importance. Portugal therefore commended the Agency's work at the Seibersdorf laboratories, especially through the ReNuAL Project, to which it had regularly contributed. Greatly impressed with the aims of Rays of Hope, his country considered that the initiative offered real opportunities for cooperation with the Agency.

193. Portugal strongly endorsed the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, to which it contributed to support the training and participation of young women in nuclear science. The project demonstrated that efforts could be made in every area to promote education, advanced training and gender equality.

194. In closing, he underscored the decisive contribution to training in the areas of cyclotron operation and radiopharmaceuticals production by the Institute of Nuclear Sciences Applied to Health at the University of Coimbra. Portugal had been honoured by the Institute's participation in the opening session of the International Symposium on Trends in Radiopharmaceuticals held in Vienna in 2023,

which had enabled his country to share its experience of cooperating with the Agency in that area. That partnership should be enhanced as it made an undeniable contribution to nuclear medicine.

195. Mr AL JABRI (Oman), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment and commending him for his efforts to strengthen the role of the Agency and its working mechanisms, said that the peaceful uses of nuclear technology had a key role to play in meeting States' sustainable development needs and overcoming related challenges. Given the importance of effective secondary-level education on nuclear technology and concepts, Oman had, since 2019, been participating in a TC project related to teaching methods for nuclear science and technology. In addition, in October 2023, Oman was scheduled to host a regional seminar for the Asia-Pacific region to discuss best practices in that area and develop appropriate educational curriculums, with the participation of experts and teachers from ministries of education, related institutions and other specialized nuclear science and technology organizations from countries in the region. Moreover, with support from the Agency and other national, regional and international organizations, Oman was playing a leading role in organizing the International Nuclear Science Olympiad scheduled for August 2024.

196. In 2023, Oman had started implementing a TC project with the Agency with the aim of drawing up a coordinated and comprehensive programme of monitoring and surveillance of zoonotic and human viral diseases, and an associated strategy for the programme's implementation — with the participation of the Central Laboratory for Animal Health, animal health research centres, veterinary clinics, the Directorate General for Disease Surveillance and Control, human health centres and the Department of Microbiology and Immunology of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. Through the programme, an integrated virus monitoring and surveillance network would be established in Oman, with access to the necessary modern equipment. The programme would require the collection and analysis of laboratory and clinical data — to be shared between relevant institutions in the fields of agriculture, animal health and human health — and would help Oman combat viruses that had the potential to move from animals, including birds and insects, to humans, improving its readiness for future pandemics.

197. Oman looked forward to the full implementation of all approved TC projects and those proposed for the 2024–2025 biennium, all of which would help strengthen the country's capacities to combat agricultural pests, ensure food safety, guarantee quality in radiation medicine practices and strengthen radiation safety infrastructure.

198. Oman had participated in the Joint Eighth and Ninth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the CNS, held in March 2023, to which it had submitted its third report for review by other Contracting Parties. It planned to take part in the working group established to improve and strengthen the effectiveness of the CNS review process, through which it hoped to make the review procedures simpler and more accessible to States that did not have a nuclear reactor construction plan or programme.

199. As global nuclear security was the responsibility of all States without exception, Oman sought to work with all other States to strengthen nuclear security. His country had joined the European Union's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative in 2022 and, as its first official act of participation in the initiative, had taken part in a training course on the medical response to nuclear and radiological incidents.

200. In May 2024, Oman was scheduled to host a regional workshop on the assessment of risks and dangers associated with nuclear materials and other radioactive materials outside regulatory control. The workshop, which had been organized by the Division of Nuclear Security, was part of a programme of activities to boost national capacities to prevent incidents of smuggling or illegal use of nuclear and radioactive materials and to monitor the response to such incidents.

201. The maintenance of mechanisms to combat nuclear proliferation was part of the Agency's mandate and was essential for tackling nuclear threats to global security and stability. Furthermore, the preservation of stability and security in the Middle East was vitally important to international stability and security, given the global significance of the region. In that context, Oman fully supported all efforts to implement General Assembly decision 73/546 on convening an annual conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East — to be held with the active participation of all the sponsors of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, all the States of the region and the Agency itself — with a view to drawing up a legally binding agreement establishing such a zone.

202. Mr STOIAN (Romania), congratulating the Director General on his re-election and noting that the General Conference was again taking place against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's ongoing illegal aggression against Ukraine, said that Romania would not tire of pointing out that the Russian Federation was knowingly breaching international law. His country remained deeply concerned by the situation created at Zaporizhzhya NPP as a result of the Russian Federation's actions, which posed a threat to the safety of the facility and seriously endangered the civilian population, with potentially wide-ranging consequences.

203. Romania called on the Russian Federation to stop its illegal war and occupation, immediately and unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders and hand over control of Zaporizhzhya NPP to the competent Ukrainian authorities without delay. His country also strongly condemned the Russian attacks against Ukrainian civilian infrastructure on the Danube river, close to Romania. That recent escalation posed serious risks to security in the Black Sea and further affected global food security.

204. Romania reaffirmed its continuous support of the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and an important element in the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. His country renewed its call for the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT, and for the immediate start of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

205. Reiterating Romania's full and continued support for the Agency's safeguards system, he stressed that it was in the common interest to strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture by upholding and sustaining an efficient and effective safeguards system. His country continued to call for the universalization of the CSA and additional protocol as the verification standard. It also encouraged all States to become parties to the relevant treaties and conventions aimed at creating a strong nuclear safety and security regime.

206. Recognizing that the use of nuclear power required a strong nuclear safety culture — including the adoption and implementation of the international safety instruments and standards — Romania would receive its requested full-scope IRRS mission in the fourth quarter of 2023.

207. Nuclear security was well integrated into the relevant regulatory documents implemented by Romania's National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control. His country was grateful for the bilateral cooperation with the specialized offices of the US National Nuclear Security Administration to build capacity and identify areas of continued collaboration.

208. With regard to physical protection and illegal trafficking of nuclear and radioactive material, Romania was participating in the ITDB. In addition, the Horia Hulubei National Institute for Research and Development in Physics and Nuclear Engineering continued to be involved in nuclear forensics in Romania and hosted international workshops with a strong regional component, such as the Vigilant Eagle workshop held jointly with the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the US Department of State. The Institute's laboratory was ready to assist the national authorities

— and regional and international partners — in responding to cases of the unauthorized use of nuclear or other radioactive material.

209. Nuclear energy was a basic component in Romania's energy mix and an essential strategic option to meet future energy needs at prices affordable to consumers. In that vein, the refurbishment of Unit 1 of Cernavodă NPP and the construction of Units 3 and 4 were a national priority to achieve energy security and national decarbonization targets. Romania was glad to continue its cooperation with Canada in that regard.

210. Supportive of the Agency's work on the nuclear safety and security of advanced nuclear reactors, such as SMRs, Romania was deploying that innovative clean technology to advance climate action and clean energy access, in accordance with the SDGs.

211. Romania attached particular importance to training a new generation of specialists in the nuclear field through cooperation not only between States, but also between companies and universities. It had therefore launched an Energy Exploration Centre at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest in May 2023 in collaboration with US company NuScale Power and the US Government in a bid to become a regional hub for both energy and education. The national operator, state-owned company Nuclearelectrica, remained committed to developing that project according to the highest safety standards, as it had done over its 25 years of operating Cernavodă NPP in close cooperation with the Agency.

212. His country reaffirmed its long-standing appreciation for the TC programme, including through voluntary contributions. It was also grateful for its cooperation with the Agency and the Norwegian Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority to enhance its nuclear safety and security through the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014–2021.

213. Mr OJEDA VIGLIONE (Uruguay) said that his country welcomed the Director-General's re-election as a testament to his leadership, professionalism and impartiality.

214. Uruguay had always been recognized as a pacifist country and a supporter of international law — the principles of which had unequivocally guided its activities and foreign policy. In that context, Uruguay reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a universal, complete and verifiable disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which could only be achieved through multilateralism based on the principles of good faith and mutual respect.

215. The Agency enjoyed international respect and recognition owing to its professionalism, credibility and independence in the discharge of its mandate. Uruguay welcomed and supported the work of the Agency and had confidence in its safeguards system, which should be extended to all Member States. Having ratified the additional protocol, Uruguay was committed to preventing the diversion of nuclear material for non-peaceful uses and its appropriation by terrorist groups. It was proud to be part of the world's first NWFZ and encouraged the establishment of more such zones as an effective way to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation.

216. Uruguay reaffirmed its support for the universalization of the TPNW — an important instrument in the non-proliferation and disarmament regime that complemented and was consistent with the NPT and the CTBT. His country supported such verification and disarmament mechanisms and called once again on the international community to respect and support the safeguards regime as a shared tool to effectively tackle the dangers of proliferation.

217. Uruguay firmly defended the inalienable right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy for development and well-being. It highly valued the work of the Department of Technical Cooperation and appreciated the support received, in terms of inputs as well as training, which was a major challenge for nuclear technology-related professions.



218. The Agency and its Director General were to be congratulated for launching and promoting projects such as Rays of Hope, ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics, Atoms4Food, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme — all of which had an undeniably positive impact. Uruguay also wished to highlight the Agency's strong gender policy in all areas.

219. Agency cooperation was the best way to shape peaceful nuclear technology to support progress and well-being and achieve the SDGs. Uruguay was grateful for the Agency's assistance in a variety of important areas, such as regulatory infrastructure, human resources training and education in security, inspections, radioactive waste, medical applications and the use of new equipment and enabling technologies. It thanked the Member States that had made voluntary contributions helping to make that possible. Uruguay attached particular importance to regional projects, including under ARCAL, and participated actively in that important initiative. In view of the extensive needs of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fact that allocated funds were insufficient, the TCF should not have to rely on voluntary contributions for its resources, which must be sufficient, assured and predictable. The activities of FORO also merited special mention, and Uruguay encouraged it to continue working together with the Agency.

220. Expressing its appreciation for the Agency's work in the area of nuclear safety and security, his country reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Security Plan and the A/CPPNM and recognized the fundamental role of States and their national policies in that sphere, and the need for adequate contingency plans to ensure the protection and security of nuclear material and facilities. For its part, Uruguay had an independent, professional and responsible regulatory authority that maintained regular contact with its counterparts in the Agency.

221. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, a Contracting Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and a State party to the NPT, TPNW and CTBT, Uruguay was committed at the highest level to strengthening the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. His country reaffirmed its full commitment to the Agency and to safeguards implementation. It urged all Member States to comply fully with their obligations and respect their commitments so as to contribute positively to international peace and security.

222. Mr RYDMARK (Norway) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment. Norway noted the continuation of the Russian Federation's illegal and unprovoked war against Ukraine and said that, despite numerous calls, the Russian Federation had declined to withdraw its forces from within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. The Russian Federation's significant military presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP — the largest in Europe — was deeply worrying, and its continued occupation of the plant posed an unprecedented risk to nuclear safety and security.

223. The Agency's support and assistance missions to Ukraine provided crucial information and assessments to the international community. Norway commended the efforts of the Agency's staff in that regard, and the Ukrainian personnel working under extreme conditions. His country fully supported the Agency's Seven Pillars and the five principles and encouraged Member States to join it in backing the draft resolution on nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine.

224. Norway had worked closely with Ukrainian authorities on nuclear safety and security for many years, and in 2023 had increased its bilateral support in that area with €13 million. In addition, the previous day his country had signed an agreement with the Agency worth close to €9 million in order to assist the Agency's work in Ukraine, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP.

225. As the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, the NPT had provided a common sense of security for more than half a century, with the Agency being the key international institution for ensuring compliance with obligations under the Treaty. All States Parties must cooperate fully with the Agency in implementing their safeguards obligations. Stressing that CSAs with an additional protocol

constituted the current verification standard, Norway called on all States to bring an additional protocol into force and to revise their SQPs, where applicable.

226. It was deeply regrettable that Iran had failed to cooperate with the Agency to address outstanding safeguards issues, including by implementing the March 2023 Joint Statement. Only Iran could provide the necessary clarifications. Its recent decision to withdraw the designation of several experienced Agency inspectors was yet another step in the wrong direction. Norway therefore called on Iran to reconsider its decision and return to the path of cooperation in good faith.

227. Expressing grave concern at the DPRK's pattern of ballistic missile tests and the continuous development of its nuclear programme, Norway called on the DPRK to return immediately to dialogue and to completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon its programme. His country appreciated the Agency's readiness to resume nuclear verification in the DPRK. Norway also urged the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Agency on all unresolved issues concerning safeguards implementation.

228. Nuclear security ran parallel to nuclear non-proliferation, and instruments in those two areas were mutually reinforcing. Accordingly, Norway called for the universalization of the A/CPPNM, and the full implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and relevant guidelines and politically binding instruments.

229. His country strongly advocated minimizing and eliminating stocks of HEU and its civilian use. A joint statement on the subject had been issued as INFCIRC/912 — there were several such information circulars covering priority areas for securing nuclear and other radioactive material. Endorsing joint statements on the issue was one way in which Member States could demonstrate their commitment to improved nuclear security practices.

230. Highlighting the Agency's crucial role in coordinating international nuclear security efforts, Norway called on all Member States to ensure adequate funding for Agency activities in that area and encouraged them to work towards the success of ICONS 2024.

231. Nuclear technologies were pivotal in addressing the world's energy, health and agricultural needs and achieving the SDGs — the Agency was a key facilitator in that respect.

232. Lastly, he commended the Agency's efforts to include more women in the Secretariat and in nuclear-related industries.

**The meeting rose at 1 p.m.**