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President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

Later: Mr BIGGS (Australia)

Later: Ms HOURNEAU-POUËZAT (France)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
AAEA	Arab Atomic Energy Agency
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFCONE	African Commission on Nuclear Energy
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COMPASS	IAEA Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
E3	France, Germany and the United Kingdom
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

INIR-RR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review for Research Reactors
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Protocol	Joint Protocol Relating to the Application of the Vienna Convention and the Paris Convention
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PMOs	Policy-Making Organs
Quadripartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
R&D	research and development

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
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
UF ₆	uranium hexafluoride
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USA	United States of America
Vienna Convention	Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
World Bank	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

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

1. Ms TEMBO LUAMBIA (Zambia) said that her country extended its deepest condolences to Libya and Morocco following the recent tragic events in those countries. She congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and welcomed Cabo Verde and The Gambia as the newest members of the Agency.
2. Zambia took note of the Agency's achievements in 2022 under the leadership of the Director General, both in the context of the TC programme and in other areas of work covering health and nutrition, food and agriculture and nuclear safety.
3. Given the increasing prevalence of cancer in most countries, including Zambia, she noted with particular satisfaction that the Agency was placing a priority on Rays of Hope. Zambia welcomed the considerable success of that initiative, which was already building cancer management capacity in Rays of Hope 'first-wave' countries, and remained committed to working closely with the Secretariat to ensure its implementation in Zambia.
4. Her country also welcomed Atoms4Food, which aimed to help Member States enhance food production, food safety, agricultural planning and nutrition programming using nuclear and isotopic techniques. Zambia intended to engage with the Secretariat on that initiative and explore synergies with existing national food security and public health programmes.
5. Unpredictable weather patterns continued to challenge countries that depended heavily on hydropower to meet their energy needs. In that regard, Zambia welcomed the Agency's work to promote the safe use of nuclear technology for energy efficiency and climate resilience in agricultural food production, and was looking to learn best practices in that area.
6. Zambia appreciated the various capacity building programmes organized by the Agency from which it had benefited over the years, and hoped that the development of Member State capacity in nuclear science, technology and applications would translate into fairer geographical representation of staff in the Secretariat.
7. A beneficiary of the TC programme, Zambia had been working very closely with the Agency to mainstream nuclear science and technology in its national development planning, with a view to improving people's health, safety and well-being.
8. In addition to prioritizing universal health coverage in its national development plans, Zambia had developed a five-year strategic plan aimed at strengthening national capacity in the use of cutting-edge nuclear science and technology in health care. In that regard, it was rolling out national training programmes in fields such as radiotherapy technology, clinical and radiation oncology, and clinical medical physics.
9. In the area of health service delivery, Zambia had collaborated with the Agency on cancer treatment and was currently constructing a second radiotherapy centre, which was expected to be operational by the fourth quarter of 2024. It was also working with various partners to mobilize resources to replace old equipment at its Cancer Diseases Hospital.
10. In the area of radiation protection and with the support of the Agency, the Zambian Radiation Protection Authority had strengthened its regulatory functions, including through decentralization in

certain areas. The Zambian Government had increased the funding allocated to enhancing the Authority's institutional capacity and regulatory mandate and ensuring that Zambia continued to mainstream all relevant international conventions and treaties at the national and subregional levels. Furthermore, supported by the Agency and the World Bank, Zambia had built capacity for radioactivity testing.

11. Expressing appreciation for the technical support it continued to receive from the Agency, Zambia reaffirmed its commitment to the peaceful, safe and secure use of nuclear science and technology.

12. Mr CHASOV (Turkmenistan), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country was grateful for the Director General's constructive efforts to strengthen cooperation between Turkmenistan and the Agency and looked forward to further productive collaboration in areas of common interest.

13. Turkmenistan had supported global non-proliferation and disarmament ever since its independence and had joined a number of related international legal instruments, including the NPT. Having signed an NPT safeguards agreement and additional protocol, it had worked constructively with the Department of Safeguards and was confident that the experience gained would allow it to meet further mutual commitments in that area.

14. Turkmenistan was strongly committed to complying with international nuclear safety and security standards. Its experts actively participated in meetings and training conducted by the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security and regularly updated its national standards accordingly. His country had also engaged in discussions on the provisions of relevant international conventions under the auspices of the Agency and was consequently on course to join a number of nuclear safety and security instruments.

15. Since it had joined the Agency in 2016, Turkmenistan had also actively engaged with the Department of Technical Cooperation, implementing TC projects in radiotherapy, waste management, dosimetry, calibration services and the development of national regulatory infrastructure. It was also in the process of developing its first CPF.

16. Stressing that nuclear science and technology had led to remarkable achievements in key areas of focus such as food security, water management, environmental protection, agriculture and healthcare, Turkmenistan was eager to work with the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications to develop its potential in those areas.

17. Thanking the Agency's Departments for their active cooperation, he concluded by stressing that Turkmenistan valued the Agency's efforts to ensure equal representation in the Secretariat.

18. Mr ABDULHADI (Libya) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and wished him every success.

19. Expressing his country's thanks for the sincere condolences expressed for the victims of Storm Daniel in Libya, he said that the extent of the catastrophe had outstripped the capacities of any one State, leaving Libya incapable of dealing with the situation alone, despite the efforts of the authorities and the solidarity of the Libyan people. His country therefore thanked all States that had provided vital assistance, especially in the form of advanced technology.

20. To date, thousands of victims around the world had died as a result of natural disasters caused by extreme weather events, including destructive flooding, widespread wildfires and unprecedented tropical storms, in addition to earthquakes and pandemics. A new collective approach to such events was therefore required. For its part, the Agency played an increasingly important role in researching

natural disasters, identifying urgent solutions and providing assistance, and was therefore a key partner in technical cooperation and capacity building.

21. In that context, Libya supported the Director General's initiatives, in particular Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, and encouraged further efforts to develop initiatives that supported well-being and stability and helped attain the SDGs.

22. Since 2011, Libya had paid some 90% of its dues to the Agency and was working to increase its future contributions to the TCF so that it could benefit from advanced technology, equipment and training opportunities in the fields of health, safety and security, food and the environment.

23. At national level, Libya had prepared a CPF for the period 2024–2029, which it had submitted to the Agency for review. It was hoped that the final approved version of the document would be signed by the end of 2023. Since 2018, under its current cooperation arrangement, the Libyan Atomic Energy Establishment had carried out nine national TC projects in collaboration with hospitals, health centres, universities, research centres and the authorities responsible for water management and the environment. Through those projects, Libya had benefited from advanced training and equipment related to the detection and treatment of diseases, including cancer; agricultural pest control; environmental radiation measurement; radiological decontamination; radioactive waste management; nuclear and radiological EPR; radiation dose measurement for workers; radiation monitoring; and nuclear and radiation safety and security.

24. Over the same period, Libya had participated in six interregional TC projects and 24 AFRA-affiliated regional TC projects, covering infrastructure development for patient radiation protection and for nuclear and radiological EPR; the drafting of local laws and regulations on the peaceful uses of nuclear and radiation science and technology; the development of national systems of education and training, radiation protection and radioactive waste management; the use of nuclear and radiological techniques to increase agricultural production; the establishment of laboratories for the detection of transboundary zoonotic diseases; nuclear power planning; uranium exploration and mining; cancer detection and treatment; and the strengthening of national environmental protection systems to combat radiological contamination. Furthermore, ten employees of the Ministry of Health who worked in the field of oncological radiotherapy had received funding to study for master's degrees in medical physics or radiotherapy or to undertake year-long advanced training courses.

25. One of the first countries to sign the NPT, Libya reaffirmed its full commitment to the Treaty and the Final Documents of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. It had placed nuclear material in its possession under Agency supervision and had signed a CSA and an additional protocol to ensure the exclusively peaceful uses of that material. Moreover, it had voluntarily abandoned its WMD programme in 2003. In that context, his country called on the United Nations and the international community to develop a verifiable, time-bound mechanism to rid the world of WMDs and to redouble their efforts to achieve that goal in order to protect international peace and security, in line with the principles of the UN Charter and the provisions of the relevant UN resolutions. In that connection, the Agency's safeguards system was the optimal legal framework and an effective and credible tool for ensuring full compliance with the NPT.

26. While its time on the Board of Governors was drawing to a close, Libya remained committed to the work of the Board regarding the enforcement of the safeguards system and the strengthening of nuclear safety and security, and looked forward to cooperating further with the Board and the wider Agency in that area.

27. Standing ready to support all Agency initiatives and efforts, Libya emphasized the importance of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the

General Assembly and the Security Council, in particular the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, in order to save lives and preserve international peace and security.

28. Ms MOCANU (Republic of Moldova) said that her country congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and looked forward to close collaboration during his second term.

29. The Republic of Moldova attached great importance to the Agency's role as a technical, independent and impartial entity and remained firmly committed to fostering robust cooperation.

30. In what were challenging times, it was imperative to protect the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core. The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, its ongoing armed attacks on Ukrainian territory and its illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP constituted blatant violations of international law, including the UN Charter, and undermined the principles enshrined in the Agency's Statute. They heightened risks to nuclear safety and security and the continued implementation of safeguards, requiring a suitable response from the General Conference.

31. The Republic of Moldova condemned the Russian Federation's war of aggression in the strongest possible terms and reiterated its call on the Russian Federation to comply with the resolutions of the Board of Governors. Her country stood firmly in support of Ukraine and thanked the Director General and the dedicated Agency staff for their active efforts in difficult circumstances.

32. The Republic of Moldova was committed to helping strengthen nuclear security and ensure the exclusively peaceful use of atomic energy. Firmly supportive of the Agency's role in promoting international peace and security and global development, it also appreciated and backed the efforts of the Agency and its Member States to ensure the physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear and radiological security across all nuclear technology applications, including in the promotion of green energy. Strengthening the resilience and protection of critical infrastructure in energy, communications, information technology, transport, health and food supply was of utmost importance. Given the war that was taking place close to its border, implementing the highest standards of nuclear safety and security remained a priority for her country.

33. Over the preceding year, the Republic of Moldova had persisted in its efforts to increase awareness and ensure comprehensive collaboration among all Government agencies responsible for implementing international conventions related to nuclear and radiological security. In that regard, it had updated its national legislation, including in the areas of detection of orphaned radioactive sources and radiological monitoring in the management of recyclable metal.

34. With the support of the Agency, the European Union, Sweden, the USA and other international partners, her country had strengthened physical nuclear security in the context of combating the trafficking of radioactive and nuclear material through the deployment of radiation portal monitors and portable detection devices at border crossing points, frontline officer training, and capacity building in nuclear forensics.

35. Against the backdrop of various ongoing crises, the Republic of Moldova's cooperation with the Agency remained fruitful. Her country was grateful to Agency staff and experts for their assistance in implementing international standards, which reinforced national efforts to enhance nuclear and radiological security. During 2022–2023, the Republic of Moldova had worked intensively to enhance its national regulatory framework for nuclear and radiological security, in line with international commitments and IRRS mission recommendations.

36. Turning to technical cooperation, she said that three national TC projects were being successfully implemented in priority areas identified in her country's CPF for 2020–2025.

37. Lastly, the Republic of Moldova was committed to continuing its successful bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries Romania and Ukraine, in particular in relation to the timely exchange of information in the event of a radiological emergency.

38. Ms MUGWANJA (Kenya) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and assured him of her country's full support and cooperation. The diligent and professional manner in which he had carried out his mandate in spite of the challenging circumstances was commendable. Kenya lauded his progressive work to promote peaceful nuclear applications, in particular under Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, which increased the transfer of nuclear technologies and knowledge to developing countries in important areas of socioeconomic development. Kenya also commended the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme, which aimed to increase the number of women in the nuclear field.

39. Kenya highly valued its continued collaboration with the Agency and noted with appreciation the progress achieved by the Agency in promoting access to peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in line with its statutory mandate.

40. In March 2023, Kenya had signed its fifth CPF, for the period 2023–2027, covering the priority areas of health and nutrition, food and agriculture, energy, water and the environment, industrial applications and nuclear and radiation safety and security.

41. Cancer remained a public health challenge and was the third leading cause of death in Kenya, with an estimated annual incidence of around 48 000 cases. However, only around 23% of cancer patients had access to radiotherapy. Kenya therefore welcomed the progress made under Rays of Hope to increase access to affordable and sustainable radiotherapy services. One of the initiative's 'first-wave' countries, Kenya had developed an action plan to address existing needs and gaps and was due to receive radiotherapy equipment. Commending countries on their extrabudgetary contributions to Rays of Hope, Kenya encouraged the Agency to continue its resource mobilization efforts in order to meet the high demand, especially in Africa, for early detection services and high-quality treatment.

42. Kenya acknowledged the positive contribution of nuclear power in climate change mitigation and energy security and had made significant progress in introducing nuclear power in its energy mix. It anticipated making its nuclear power programme a reality by 2036 and would continue to partner with the Agency to that end, including in relation to its regulatory framework, its national nuclear security support plan, the nuclear fuel cycle and radioactive waste management, emergency planning, radiation protection, site and support facilities, electric grid studies, industrial involvement and human resource development.

43. In support of the Agency's work in the area of nuclear energy, Kenya had hosted the first interregional training course on nuclear power infrastructure development, on the Milestones approach, to provide a comprehensive framework for countries considering or embarking on nuclear power programmes. It welcomed the regular organization of that course and stood ready to host more in the coming years. It was also pleased to be the second African country to host the Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources.

44. Within the framework of efforts to establish a nuclear research reactor, and with Agency assistance, Kenya had trained personnel and undertaken feasibility studies to evaluate key elements essential for the sustainable implementation of the facility. It looked forward to the Agency's support in carrying out an INIR-RR mission and subsequent activities.

45. Food and agriculture remained a key priority for Kenya. The application of nuclear science and technology played a crucial role in efforts to increase agricultural productivity and sustainability and to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. In that regard, Kenya continued to support the

Agency's work to promote climate-smart agriculture, and appreciated the ongoing assistance that had led to the successful use of nuclear techniques to drive smallholder productivity and improve nutrient use efficiency for enhanced bean, cassava, potato and wheat varieties.

46. Kenya called on the Agency to redouble its efforts in mutation breeding for crop improvement, efficient soil–water–nutrient management for enhanced productivity and food irradiation to prolong shelf life. It also encouraged the Agency to continue supporting countries in the implementation of assisted reproductive technologies to improve the quality of animal reproduction and nutrition.

47. Her country attached great importance to and supported the Agency's work in the application of isotope hydrology for water resources management, thanks to which Kenya had enhanced its ability to undertake evidence-based decision making for the sustainable management of surface and groundwater resources.

48. Kenya appreciated the support received under NUTEC Plastics in the implementation of a pollution monitoring programme covering major contaminants and ocean acidification, plastic pollution monitoring and practical solutions for plastics management. It stood ready to be designated a pilot country under that initiative and encouraged the Agency to work closely with UNEP. In that connection, Kenya welcomed the Agency's contribution to the preparatory work for a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution and the elaboration of a common approach towards a pollution-free planet.

49. Her country appreciated its collaboration with the Agency in establishing non-destructive testing and dosimetry laboratories, which had benefited the industrial and health care sectors by ensuring traceability through calibration services. Kenya was expanding the scope of its secondary standards dosimetry laboratory to ensure the quality and accuracy of diagnostic and treatment facilities.

50. Human resource development remained a priority for Kenya, which looked forward to close cooperation with the Agency in developing its human resources through training programmes, capacity building and regular exchanges between Kenyan universities and relevant experts.

51. In closing, Kenya encouraged the Secretariat to continue mobilizing resources and developing partnerships, with a view to filling the gaps in financing for the Agency's activities relating to applications of nuclear science and technology.

52. Mr O'NEAL PINDER (Bahamas) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and welcomed the Agency's newest members, Cabo Verde and The Gambia. He conveyed his country's thoughts, prayers and condolences to the Governments and people of Libya and Morocco in relation to the significant loss of life caused by the recent natural disasters in those countries.

53. Although the Bahamas was a small island developing State with a population of only 400 000, it had a large archipelagic territory spanning some 200 000 square miles and welcomed up to 8 million visitors every year. A country with no nuclear weapons or NPPs, the Bahamas nevertheless supported safeguards, nuclear safety and security and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. It had also recently signed the TPNW.

54. The Bahamas was actively implementing the recommendations stemming from an Agency visit in 2022 on the implementation of a TC project on establishing a national quality control standard for foodstuffs and fishery products, which promised to enhance food safety in the country. It stood ready to build on its achievements and embark on new food safety initiatives in the 2023–2024 TC cycle.

55. One noteworthy achievement in the Bahamas' efforts to ensure food safety was the acquisition of radioassay equipment that enabled the screening of a wide range of food products, including for veterinary drug residues, mycotoxins and pesticide residues. Such tools were essential for safeguarding public health by preventing the consumption of contaminated or adulterated foods. In addition, the

Bahamas had received sophisticated liquid chromatography equipment, which was used, among other things, to identify and confirm organic chemical compounds, analyse chemical residues and detect and quantify trace-level contaminants and adulterants, significantly boosting the country's capacity to ensure the highest standards of food safety for its agricultural products.

56. In addition to providing technology, the Agency had also played a pivotal role in the area of knowledge and capacity building, including through a regional training course on hazard assessment, which provided a solid foundation for the development of emergency preparedness and response arrangements in the event of a nuclear or radiological emergency. That integrated approach ensured that the Bahamas was well prepared to address unforeseen challenges with competence and confidence.

57. With regard to cancer care, regulations aimed at ensuring the safe and responsible use of nuclear technology in radiotherapy and radiodiagnosis were of paramount importance to his country. The Bahamas continued to experience high rates of cancer and would therefore seek to deepen its partnership with the Agency under Rays of Hope to ensure better access to cancer care.

58. The Bahamas recognized the urgent need to strengthen its resilience to address climate change and better manage and safeguard scarce resources such as potable water, the marine environment and other natural resources in the face of mounting threats. It was immensely grateful for the Agency's support in building regional and national capacity in the use of nuclear techniques to combat climate change, and for the specialized training provided in the area of data collection and analysis and the integrated assessment of climate, land, energy and water.

59. In leveraging its expertise in nuclear science and technology, the Agency had continued to actively contribute to addressing pressing challenges relating to climate change. Its support extended to various aspects of climate mitigation and adaptation, including the role played by nuclear energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Agency also played a pivotal role in promoting research and innovation in areas such as nuclear fusion and radiation technologies for agriculture and water resources management, which had the potential to significantly enhance climate resilience. The Bahamas appreciated the Agency's multifaceted support for climate projects, which clearly underscored its commitment to advancing global efforts to combat climate change through the responsible and innovative use of technology.

60. As the 36th President of the United States of America, Lyndon B. Johnson, had rightly stated: "If future generations are to remember us more with gratitude than with sorrow, we must achieve more than just the miracles of technology. We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as it was created, not just as it looked when we got through with it".

61. The Bahamas congratulated the Agency on its work to monitor activities at and around Zaporizhzhya NPP, providing important safeguards for Europe's largest NPP in the face of the reckless military actions of the Russian Federation. The Bahamas strongly condemned the Russian Federation's continued unprovoked aggression against the Ukrainian people, which violated the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law.

62. As stated by the former Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, until the philosophy that held one race superior and another inferior was finally and permanently discredited and abandoned, there would be war. Until there were no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation, until a nation's right to its own self-determination was respected without fear of aggression, and until basic human rights were equally guaranteed to all without regard to race, there would be war. Until that day, the dream of lasting peace, world citizenship and the rule of international morality would remain a fleeting illusion to be pursued, but never attained.

63. In closing, the Bahamas thanked the Agency for its continued assistance and expressed support for the mandate of ‘atoms for peace and development’. His country was committed to exploring, identifying and meeting future development needs while helping the Agency improve radiation safety and nuclear security worldwide.

64. Mr COMBERBACH (Zimbabwe), welcoming Cabo Verde and The Gambia as new members of the Agency and congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that the Annual Report was once again comprehensive, detailed and impressive. Zimbabwe thanked the Secretariat for its outstanding, committed work to ensure the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology and for its contribution to international peace and security and the attainment of the SDGs.

65. Zimbabwe remained committed to its international obligations under the various nuclear safety, nuclear security and safeguards instruments to which it was a party. Its desire to expand the peaceful applications of nuclear technology imposed on it the obligation to accede to all key treaties, thus ensuring the necessary regulatory framework, nuclear safety and security and safeguards. In that regard, Zimbabwe had deposited six instruments of ratification with the Director General at the recent Treaty Event: the CNS, the Vienna Convention, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, the Joint Protocol, the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the A/CPPNM. It would also be depositing with the UN Secretary-General its instrument of ratification for the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Such actions demonstrated Zimbabwe’s commitment to upholding the highest levels of nuclear security and its eagerness to continue strengthening the required regulatory, institutional and physical frameworks for nuclear safety and security and safeguards.

66. Zimbabwe reaffirmed its commitment to the safeguards system, which helped to build confidence that countries were abiding by their international commitments. It urged the Agency to remain proactive in the critical area of nuclear safety and security in the light of the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

67. His country continued to strengthen its legal and regulatory framework for the safe and secure use of radiation sources in line with international standards. The Radiation Protection Authority of Zimbabwe regulated the use of nuclear technologies and, with Agency assistance, was continuing to enhance its radioactive waste management capacities. Commendable progress had been made on the construction of a centralized and appropriately secure management facility for disused radioactive sources. The expert support and capacity building provided by the Agency had been invaluable in strengthening national competence in the safe management of that infrastructure.

68. It was anticipated that the outstanding bill to amend Zimbabwe’s Radiation Protection Act would be discussed at the Tenth Parliament currently taking place. The amendment would address a number of recommendations made by peer review missions over the years and would consolidate the legal and regulatory framework for the safe and secure use of radiation sources in the country.

69. Emphasizing that the TC programme remained the primary mechanism for the transfer of nuclear technology to Member States to address key development priorities, Zimbabwe was committed to meeting its obligations in respect of the TCF, national participation costs and the Regular Budget, all of which were critical enablers of technical cooperation. It applauded the Director General and his staff for their tireless resource mobilization efforts and their efforts to secure critical partnerships for the TC programme.

70. Zimbabwe was confident that the Agency would continue to support the transformation and revitalization of the country’s agricultural sector. Fostering resilience in food systems was pivotal to guaranteeing global food security and nutrition. The propagation of nuclear techniques in various areas — including plant and animal pest control, livestock vaccines, cattle breeding, climate-smart agriculture,

plant mutation breeding and improvement of the productive capacity of soils on smallholder farms to support Zimbabwe's maize, wheat and soybean production recovery plan — would complement national efforts not only to achieve food and nutrition self-sufficiency, but also to make Zimbabwe a net exporter of food, thus contributing to global resilience.

71. Ongoing challenges in the area of cancer therapy were of profound concern to Zimbabwe. Regrettably, two cancer treatment centres previously set up with Agency assistance were currently non-operational owing to a raft of challenges, including the brain drain of highly qualified personnel such as medical physicists, nuclear medicine physicians and radiographers. Having recently subscribed to Rays of Hope, Zimbabwe was focusing on bringing those centres back into sustainable operation, while also establishing additional centres to ensure a wider reach.

72. As technology transfer and training were critical to the adoption of peaceful nuclear applications, Zimbabwe called on the Agency to continue expanding its fellowship programmes aimed at supporting the training of nuclear scientists and to further promote the integration of nuclear science and technology in education systems, which would help to mitigate the challenges caused by brain drain. In that regard, Zimbabwe welcomed the expansion of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, which tackled the critical issue of gender mainstreaming in nuclear science.

73. Thanking the Agency for the support provided through the TC programme, Zimbabwe urged it to continue deploying its expertise and knowledge, together with partners, to address the complex challenges confronting the modern world. Zimbabwe would continue to cooperate with the Agency to ensure the success of projects implemented in the country.

Ms Hournau-Pouëzat (France), Vice-President, took the Chair.

74. Mr NDAHAYO (Rwanda) said that his country congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and appreciated his commendable work. Rwanda backed the Director General's flagship initiatives, notably Rays of Hope and ZODIAC, as well as work relating to small modular reactor technologies and other initiatives aimed at the achievement of the SDGs.

75. As it worked to achieve the SDGs, Rwanda was committed to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology for sustainable socioeconomic development, and planned to integrate peaceful nuclear technology solutions in order to trigger socioeconomic transformation and realize its long term Vision 2050. Rwanda's CPF highlighted priority areas, including food and agriculture, human health, water resources management, environmental management and energy and industry, in which nuclear science would make a significant positive impact.

76. Recalling that the Rwanda Atomic Energy Board was the Government institution in charge of implementing national nuclear energy projects, he said that studies were ongoing in relation to the establishment of a research reactor-based centre of nuclear science and technology, aimed primarily at carrying out training and education, industrial applications and R&D.

77. Rwanda had decided to introduce nuclear energy in its energy mix, with small modular reactor technologies forming the basis of its future NPPs. In that regard, a pre-feasibility study of an NPP project based on SMR technology would be completed by the end of 2023. Fully aware that SMR technologies were new and largely under development, Rwanda was establishing strategic partnerships with relevant companies with a view to carrying out all or part of the development process domestically. The national nuclear regulator was being strengthened and endowed with the required capacity to supervise and regulate that process. Such an approach would accelerate knowledge and technology transfer and skills development and would enable the swift implementation of national nuclear energy projects. Rwanda was committed to working closely with the Agency in that regard to ensure that all nuclear safety and security and safeguards standards were strictly upheld.

78. Rwanda recognized the importance of global efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security worldwide and the Agency's central role as the international nuclear regulatory authority. To allow developing countries to take part in the development of new nuclear technologies that better responded to their needs, the Agency and the OECD/NEA should allow those with no operating nuclear facilities to access the NEA's Data Bank and training and educational tools.

79. Appreciative of the support it received from the Agency, including through AFRA, Rwanda was also keen to work closely with the African Commission on Nuclear Energy to advance the integration of civil nuclear applications in Africa.

80. Rwanda was honoured to have been involved in the pilot phase of the COMPASS initiative, under which the Agency partnered with countries to help them strengthen the effectiveness of their national authorities responsible for safeguards implementation and their systems of accounting for and control of nuclear material. The expertise acquired through that initiative would undoubtedly be shared with other Member States.

81. By way of conclusion, Rwanda thanked the Agency, the Director General and his team for their invaluable contribution to expanding and promoting nuclear science and technology for development.

82. Mr THAMMAVONG (Lao People's Democratic Republic), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that his country was a long-standing supporter of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Lao PDR was of the firm view that the TPNW served as a complement to the NPT and the CTBT, as well as the SQP, the CPPNM, UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and other relevant instruments, which together formed a comprehensive framework guiding efforts to strengthen peaceful uses and move towards a world free of nuclear threats.

83. Lao PDR stressed the importance of the Agency's central role as an international platform for cooperation, facilitating the transfer of technology and knowledge for peaceful purposes and, most importantly, ensuring that nuclear technology would be used not against humanity, but as a tool to enhance socioeconomic development.

84. His own country's success had been aided considerably by the Agency, with nuclear technology serving as a significant driver of socioeconomic development across various sectors, including health, industry and agriculture, notably under the CPF for 2020–2025. Approximately €800 000 had been provided to Lao PDR through the TC programme, which had been instrumental in enhancing knowledge, building capacity and strengthening the peaceful, safe and secure use of nuclear technology at the national level.

85. As a small developing country, Lao PDR continued to face challenges — such as insufficient capacity and limited resources — in implementing international frameworks. Nevertheless, it was taking numerous measures in compliance with related international instruments, with plans to issue regulations, draft its second INSSP and amend its Radiation Protection and Safety Act in line with the current circumstances.

86. Lao PDR would be unable to fulfil all its international obligations without the support and assistance of the international community. In that regard, it highlighted its recent cooperation with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, which had provided a capacity building programme to strengthen nuclear and radiological safety and security in the country. It sought continued support and assistance from the Agency, Member States and other relevant stakeholders, in particular in the area of capacity building.

87. Pledging to uphold all its obligations under the Agency's framework, Lao PDR urged Member States to continue to render their support to the Agency and foster a world where nuclear technology was used responsibly for the benefit of all. Collectively, they could achieve their common

goals more effectively. For its part, Lao PDR would remain steadfast in its support for and cooperation with the Agency and other stakeholders, and looked forward to further strengthening those partnerships.

88. Ms MASUPHA (Lesotho), congratulating the Director General, said that his reappointment was well deserved given his decisive leadership and his commitment to reforming the Agency in order to better respond to the evolving global challenges facing peaceful nuclear energy and sustainable economic development.

89. Lesotho greatly valued the Agency's tireless work in support of Member States, in particular those on the African continent. It backed the Director General's efforts to pursue strategic reform and financial consolidation to promote the more effective and efficient fulfilment of the Agency's mandate, and supported national, regional and international projects focusing on the Agency's global priorities.

90. Lesotho fully supported the need for a strategic transformation of the Agency, in line with the common African position that the UN system should undergo reform to correspond to current geopolitical realities, with a special focus on ensuring proper representation, in particular in Africa, in ongoing efforts to deliver the global development agenda. In that connection, Lesotho commended and aligned its efforts with the impactful work of AFRA.

91. In the context of Rays of Hope, the Director General had correctly reported that around 70% of African Member States had no radiotherapy facilities. Rays of Hope should be seen as a robust blueprint for transforming the healthcare situation of such Member States; it was unconscionable that such a large number of African countries — representing some 20% of the world's population — were lagging behind in attaining SDG 3 and complying with international, regional and national instruments related to the right to health. There was an urgent need to reinvigorate the collective commitment to finding lasting solutions to complex challenges and bridging digital divides.

92. To that end, Lesotho had started constructing its first radiotherapy facility with Agency assistance, and hoped that it would be able to treat patients in the near future. Moreover, the Agency continued to support Lesotho's efforts to improve its regulatory infrastructure to ensure radiation safety, including the application of nuclear technologies in priority sectors such as agriculture, water management and industry.

93. Lesotho welcomed the Agency's sustained efforts to empower vulnerable people, including women and girls through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme. The promotion of gender equality remained high on Lesotho's development agenda, which was based on a vision for an inclusive and sustainable future, with economic growth propelled by quality education.

94. The Agency's mission would remain crucial in an ever-changing world plagued by constant threats to peace and nuclear security. Committed to the noble ideals of multilateralism, Lesotho would continue to support the Agency in ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear energy and sustainable economic development across the globe.

95. Mr JONSSON (Iceland) said that his country welcomed Cabo Verde and The Gambia as new members of the Agency and congratulated the Director General on his reappointment.

96. Iceland greatly valued the Agency's many contributions in the fields of non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, and attached particular importance to the safeguards system. While the Agency was actively working to make the world a better place, however, all was not well.

97. Regrettably, the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine was again setting the scene for the General Conference. The illegal Russian war of aggression had put at risk Ukraine's nuclear facilities, which must be kept safe and secure in order to avoid a serious nuclear

accident with unforeseen consequences. To that end, the Russian Federation must honour the Board of Governors resolutions on safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine and end its senseless war.

98. Iceland fully supported the Agency's important work in Ukraine and lauded its efforts in challenging circumstances. The Agency's continued presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP and other nuclear facilities was of crucial importance. Iceland commended the Director General for establishing the five principles to help ensure nuclear safety and security at Zaporizhzhya NPP and called for their implementation in full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

99. Turning to Iran's nuclear programme, he expressed his country's deep concern that recent indications that a return to the JCPOA was imminent had come to nought. Troubled by Iran's continued expansion of its nuclear activities, Iceland urged Iran to comply with Agency standards and provide the information needed to verify the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations and draw soundly based safeguards conclusions.

100. Iceland also called on the DPRK to fulfil its international commitments and to abandon its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes and immediately cease all related activities, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the Agency's General Conference.

101. All countries had a clear interest in promoting nuclear safety and security and looked to the Agency to provide related standards and guidance, which should continuously evolve to keep pace with technological developments. Given the manifold challenges facing the current security environment, the Agency should play a central role in enhancing multilateralism and international cooperation.

102. In closing, Iceland thanked the Director General and the dedicated staff of the Agency for their tireless work to build a safer and more prosperous world.

103. Mr ABDEL SHAFI (State of Palestine), commending the Agency's role in promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy, said that his country congratulated the Director General on his reappointment.

104. The State of Palestine was grateful to the Agency for working tirelessly to develop its national human resource and infrastructural capacities. The TC programme was an essential tool in facilitating the use of nuclear techniques to improve the yield of Palestinian wheat varieties and to assess groundwater in the northeastern basin, and in establishing a national laboratory at Al-Quds University for the provision of training on medical physics. The State of Palestine looked forward to receiving further Agency support in its efforts to draft a Palestinian law on radioactive materials and their applications. It had already submitted a draft of the law to the Agency so that it could be reviewed and brought into line with the relevant international laws.

105. The NPT was the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and of international peace and security. As such, only through its universalization and full implementation could the goal of nuclear disarmament be achieved. The State of Palestine therefore welcomed the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference and underscored the need for increased efforts to ensure the success of the conference, as its failure would call into question the feasibility, effectiveness and continuity of the non-proliferation regime, especially in the light of the failure of the preceding two conferences.

106. Israel, the illegal occupying power, continued to refuse to accede to the NPT in spite of the genuine risks posed by its nuclear programme, as highlighted in several official and unofficial international reports. Those risks included the environmental hazards posed to the State of Palestine and neighbouring countries as a result of the burial of atomic waste from Israeli nuclear reactors, and the unknown activities carried out at Israeli nuclear reactors, in particular the Dimona reactor. Those risks also posed a threat to international peace and security, especially given the continuous violations of international law and international humanitarian law by the current extremist Israeli Government.

Accordingly, Israel's ludicrous use of the Agency as a platform to express, with the utmost alarm and anger, its concern about the dangers of proliferation clearly demonstrated its disregard for the entire international system and its confidence that it would not be held accountable or sanctioned.

107. Establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East represented a key step towards achieving nuclear disarmament and strengthening the non-proliferation regime. The next NPT Review Conference therefore needed to strengthen the implementation of the 1995 resolution on establishing such a zone, the adoption of which had been an integral part of the deal leading to the indefinite extension of the NPT.

108. In that context, the State of Palestine welcomed the convening of three successful sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, under the presidencies of Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon. The conference remained open to all invited parties — no one was excluded — and operated on the principle of consensus. Israel's self-imposed isolation and continued boycott of the conference was a reflection of its long-standing policy of hindering all efforts to establish such a zone.

109. The State of Palestine had participated in the deliberations of the Agency's PMOs as an observer since 1976 under resolution GC(XX)/RES/334 and had been granted additional privileges under resolution GC(42)/RES/20. However, it had refrained from applying to become a Member State, despite having a right to do so like all other countries. Nonetheless, in cooperation with a group of Arab Member States, the State of Palestine had submitted a draft resolution on its status within the Agency to the General Conference, which was aligned with the provisions of all previous General Conference resolutions on the State of Palestine and with the country's current status before the United Nations. The State of Palestine looked forward to receiving the support of Member States for its proposal.

110. Mr HALLERGARD (European Atomic Energy Community) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and assured him of Euratom's support. He welcomed Cabo Verde and The Gambia as new members of the Agency and said that Euratom looked forward to mutually beneficial cooperation in the area of peaceful nuclear applications.

111. The collaboration between Euratom and the Agency was long and well established, with the Agency contributing to the safe and sustainable development of nuclear power in synergy with European policies.

112. Euratom recognized the Secretariat's continuous and intensive involvement in monitoring the safety and security of nuclear installations in war-torn Ukraine, and aligned itself with statements by the European Union condemning the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms. The European Commission, together with EU Member States, continued to support Ukraine and meet its needs to enhance nuclear safety and emergency preparedness and response, with a considerable portion of its support being channelled through the Agency.

113. Euratom also supported the Agency in a number of other important areas, notably the safety review of the discharge of ALPS-treated water from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi NPP.

114. Stressing Euratom's firm commitment to nuclear safety, he said that the sharing of relevant experience and best practices, including through international and regional peer review mechanisms, had clear benefits. He referred in particular to the post-Fukushima EU stress tests, following which the safety margins of NPPs had been re-evaluated and improved; the Agency's Integrated Regulatory Review Service, whose recommendations had enjoyed a high rate of implementation in the European Union; and the EU topical peer review to improve the fire protection provisions of 22 participating countries.

115. In the area of non-power applications, work was continuing under the Strategic Agenda for Medical Ionising Radiation Applications (SAMIRA), which contributed to efforts under Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Under SAMIRA, work had begun to establish the European Radioisotope Valley Initiative, which aimed to facilitate access to source materials, improve industrial-scale production of radioisotopes and develop innovative production methods.

116. Nuclear safeguards were an important pillar of global non-proliferation and Euratom had acted as a reliable partner of the Agency in that area for more than half a century, with 2023 marking the 50th anniversary of the safeguards agreement between the Agency, Euratom and its non-nuclear-weapon member States, and the 25th anniversary of the related additional protocol.

117. The safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel required continuous attention. As of August 2023 — the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the EU directive on spent fuel and radioactive waste management — most EU member States had conducted ARTEMIS peer reviews. Missions to the remaining five were scheduled to take place by the end of 2023.

118. The Euratom Research and Training Programme for 2021–2025, which had a budget of €1.4 billion, was central to European nuclear research and innovation efforts. The programme's scope had been expanded and covered a broad range of activities, some of which were of interest to the Agency. For example, the programme's research focus until 2025 would be on the safety of small modular reactors. In that connection, European stakeholders had advocated for the launch of a European SMR partnership, closely linked to the Agency's Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative to ensure coherence and complementarity.

119. The European Union continued to fully support fusion research and technology. The ITER project was advancing in its assembly phase, despite facing many challenges due to its first-of-a-kind nature. Euratom was cooperating with the Agency on a wide range of nuclear research topics, including waste management, decommissioning, geological disposal and fusion. Meanwhile, it expected to further strengthen its cooperation on non-power applications of ionizing radiation and small modular reactors.

120. Lastly, he highlighted the important work being done by the Euratom Supply Agency together with the European Commission to further diversify the sources of nuclear materials supply.

121. Nuclear safety, nuclear security and safeguards were of increasing concern to all, and the international community must rise to the related challenges.

Ms Mangklatanakul (Thailand), President, took the Chair.

122. Mr BUCHANAN (International Criminal Police Organization), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that INTERPOL was grateful for the opportunity to take part in the General Conference for the first time as an official observer. It appreciated the Agency's recognition of the importance of law enforcement in nuclear security and of INTERPOL's role as the global representative of the law enforcement community.

123. INTERPOL, which helped its 195 member countries counter the threat from radiological and nuclear terrorism, was well aware of the critical importance of effective international cooperation and of how information sharing could mitigate the risk posed by emerging threats to the nuclear security community.

124. As part of its chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) terrorism response, INTERPOL had established a dedicated, threat-based, criminal intelligence-driven unit specifically for radiological and nuclear terrorism prevention. That unit implemented INTERPOL's law enforcement support programme, which addressed the organization's management structure and

processes and ensured that measurable, needs-based, criminal intelligence-driven support, identified through cooperation with beneficiaries, was provided to INTERPOL member countries.

125. The benefit offered by INTERPOL lay in its ability to facilitate the sharing of crime-related police data and information among the law enforcement community. To that end, INTERPOL maintained a neutral and secure communications system, connecting its 195 member countries and providing a channel to share confidential and non-confidential data. Through that system, member countries could exchange messages in real time and access INTERPOL Notices and Diffusions, intelligence products, databases, more than 128 million records and the expertise housed in INTERPOL's General Secretariat.

126. The consequences of a malicious incident involving radioactive material were unique and far-reaching. With the global movement of criminals and terrorists, who employed diverse methods and tools to wreak havoc, law enforcement agencies must be prepared to counter and respond to such incidents. An effective response required specialist awareness and capabilities that lay outside the traditional law enforcement skill set. INTERPOL therefore engaged internal and external subject matter experts to help its member countries address areas of improvement identified through capacity building activities.

127. Acknowledging the limitations of the single-project approach, INTERPOL had shifted its focus towards a longer term strategy and commitment to its member countries. In addition to building sustainability, the new approach enhanced relationships, built trust and created a safe environment for information sharing and a more accurate understanding of the needs and requirements of law enforcement colleagues.

128. As the global representative for law enforcement, INTERPOL had a pivotal role to play as the conduit between operational front line officers and strategic policymakers.

129. Threats were often assessed through a calculation of intent, capability and probability. Assessing terrorist threats required an intimate familiarity with those and other variables in order to identify emerging threats and trends.

130. Through its well-established secure communication platforms, INTERPOL facilitated the two-way flow of information. It empowered law enforcement officers with real time access to critical information to prevent and counter the use of nuclear material and facilities for criminal purposes. It also supported investigative activities and acted as an interlocutor for investigators and security services. Facilitating the exchange of information assisted in the delivery of a proportionate response and the early resolution of investigations.

131. The gathering and processing of data on criminal acts also allowed INTERPOL to provide key information and produce accurate and credible analytical products for policymakers, decision makers and legislators so that they could make well informed decisions resulting in proportionate policies and legislation under which funding could be allocated efficiently and resources directed towards the areas of greatest need.

132. INTERPOL recognized, more than ever before, the need to work together and share information with member countries and partner organizations to deliver the capacity building activities necessary to engage law enforcement and improve nuclear security across the globe. In that regard, it had a well-established agreement and MOU with the Agency that supported capacity building and facilitated the sharing of information between the two organizations. It remained steadfast in its commitment to support the Agency and would continue to build on their long-standing and active partnership.

133. Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) said that OPANAL congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and was determined to contribute to the success of his second term in office.

134. OPANAL and the Agency had a long history of collaboration, having signed a cooperation agreement in October 1972 that provided a framework for harmonizing efforts to facilitate the effective operation of the NWFZ in Latin America and the Caribbean. That joint commitment was reflected in the two organizations' cooperation, in accordance with Article 12 of the Tlatelolco Treaty, in the implementation of a control system to ensure the peaceful use of nuclear energy. In accordance with Article 13 of the Tlatelolco Treaty, all 33 countries of the Latin America and Caribbean region had bilateral and multilateral safeguards agreements with the Agency. Stressing that efforts to strengthen verification and safeguards mechanisms were essential to ensure confidence in nuclear programmes and contribute to global security, OPANAL fully supported the Agency's work to ensure effective safeguards implementation.

135. OPANAL backed the Director General's tireless efforts to protect and strengthen nuclear safety in Eastern Europe, demonstrating his dedication and visionary leadership in challenging times.

136. OPANAL welcomed the election of Ecuador and Paraguay to the Board of Governors. Their involvement in that important body would contribute significantly to the strengthening of nuclear safety and the promotion of the peaceful use of atomic energy.

137. OPANAL acknowledged the Agency's outstanding work to promote the full, equal and effective participation of women in the Secretariat and welcomed the fact that, during the current session of the General Conference, the active and meaningful participation of women in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts had been recognized as making a fundamental contribution to building a safer and more stable world. OPANAL was proud to promote gender equality, as demonstrated through its adoption in 2021 of a resolution on gender, non-proliferation and disarmament. It supported the further promotion of the gender agenda not only as a moral imperative, but also as a strategic necessity to tackle global challenges in a broader and more diverse manner.

138. In a world where the complexity of international challenges was becoming increasingly evident and nuclear weapons continued to pose a grave danger, OPANAL reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — a historic commitment based on an international legal instrument establishing an NWFZ in a densely populated area, which had inspired other regions of the world to create similar zones.

139. Fully supportive of the Agency's efforts to build trust and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, OPANAL was committed to maintaining its strong and constructive relationship with the Agency.

140. Mr GRANSER (Sovereign Military Order of Malta) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment assured him of the Order's support and cooperation.

141. Having existed for more than 950 years, the Order was a neutral, impartial and non-political entity that aimed to help those in need without distinction. Consequently, it was able to act as a mediator. The Order was recognized as a sovereign subject of international law and maintained relations at the ambassadorial level with more than 113 States — most of them Agency Member States — and multilateral relations with the European Union and the United Nations, where it held permanent observer status pursuant to a General Assembly resolution adopted 30 years previously and supported by all UN member States.

142. Noting with appreciation the Agency's activities in the area of nuclear safety and security, which aligned closely with the 2030 Agenda, the Order welcomed the Director General's commitment to using nuclear technology to tackle global health and climate issues.

143. The Order appreciated the achievements under the TC programme, in particular with regard to agriculture, food security and medicine, and encouraged the Agency to continue strengthening its work in those areas, notably human health.

144. The Order fully supported Rays of Hope, through which the Agency helped countries enhance their ability to diagnose and treat cancer using radiation medicine and supported global research, education and innovation.

145. The Order carried out charitable missions through its international medical and humanitarian relief organization, Malteser International. It had a number of objectives in common with the Agency, notably in human sciences and health care. For example, it provided financial support to efforts to ensure early cancer diagnosis, focusing on training at hospitals in the West Balkan region. Furthermore, in the context of Rays of Hope, the Order was working with other Member States and the Agency on a radiotherapy training project in Africa.

146. In conclusion, the Order expressed appreciation for the Agency's important technical role, under the leadership of the Director General, in fostering peace and security.

147. Ms MACEIRAS (Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and wished him every success.

148. On 18 July 1991, Argentina and Brazil had signed an agreement on the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy. The agreement had established a system of reciprocal control of nuclear material and facilities and an organization independent of the two countries — ABACC — to ensure its implementation. Still the only one of its kind worldwide, that innovative model had made a significant contribution to the international non-proliferation regime. In the 32 years since its establishment, ABACC had discharged its mission and displayed robust technical credibility in so doing. To date, it had drawn positive conclusions concerning the compliance of Argentina and Brazil with their commitment to use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes.

149. As nuclear activities in the two countries continued to expand, ABACC had been facing new challenges, notably with regard to developing, in coordination with the Agency, efficient and effective safeguards approaches to verify transfers of irradiated fuel elements from NPPs to dry storage. At the two units of the Angra NPP, considerable efforts were being made to develop a new verification approach for the forthcoming 2024 transfer campaign, using unattended monitoring systems to reduce the field inspection effort. Similarly, transfers to the recently established dry storage facility at Atucha I NPP, which had recommenced in January 2023, were being successfully verified through the use of an unattended monitoring system and a new 2D laser system was being used for the first time. Over the previous year, both systems and the related equipment had required adjustments and maintenance to ensure their proper functioning.

150. Another challenge had been to develop safeguards criteria and approaches for new facilities in the two countries, in particular the two multipurpose reactors and the CAREM modular reactor.

151. ABACC had been involved, from the outset, in the process of defining and negotiating the special safeguards procedures — provided for in the agreement between Argentina and Brazil on the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy and the Quadripartite Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, ABACC and the Agency — that would be applied to nuclear material to be used for the nuclear propulsion of a conventional submarine in Brazil. ABACC had been participating in the negotiations and maintaining a dialogue with all parties. It had also been reviewing the proposal submitted by Brazil to ABACC and the Agency on the special safeguards procedures, taking into account the need to protect information that the country considered sensitive and the fact that the process involved facilities intended for the fabrication and testing of the fuel elements.

152. The performance and assessment of inspections lay at the heart of ABACC's verification activities. During 2023, ABACC had been satisfactorily carrying out its annual verification plan, including routine, short-notice and unannounced inspections and visits to verify design information at nuclear facilities. ABACC expressed appreciation for the dedicated work of its officers and inspectors and for the cooperation provided by operators and national authorities. It also highlighted the excellent coordination with the Agency, which had allowed joint activities to be carried out effectively and efficiently.

153. One of ABACC's priorities was to keep its pool of inspectors properly trained. Taking into account staff turnover and the emergence of new generations of inspectors, it had conducted four in-person courses in 2023 and was looking into the introduction of distance learning tools.

154. Another priority was the continuous modernization of measurement, containment and surveillance systems. ABACC had been investing heavily in equipment, tools and software to maintain an appropriate level of technical capability, which was essential for the credibility of its safeguards conclusions.

155. To ensure the secure management of the information it received from Argentina and Brazil, ABACC had established a strict information security policy.

156. Following tests at the commercial uranium enrichment plant in Brazil in conjunction with the Agency and Brazil's National Nuclear Energy Commission, in 2023 ABACC would start using the ABACC-Cristallini method for sampling UF₆ in conversion and enrichment plants — a clear contribution by ABACC to safe and effective safeguards techniques — and would continue to work with the Agency to ensure its early adoption.

157. In 2019, ABACC had received its first visit under the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, launched by the General Assembly in 1978. A third visit would take place in October 2023, to Argentina and Brazil, where fellows of different nationalities would gain an overview of the history and process that had led to the creation of ABACC and of the organization's technical operation.

158. ABACC's success could be attributed to the sustained political commitment and technical and financial support provided by Argentina and Brazil, and also to ABACC's independence in implementing its verification activities and drawing conclusions regarding the commitment of the two countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Over the preceding 32 years, ABACC's work had helped to strengthen mutual trust and cooperation between Argentina and Brazil, demonstrating how cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect between countries contributed decisively to regional and international security.

159. Mr ZHANG (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization), congratulating the Director General on his reappointment, said that, while their respective mandates were distinct, CTBTO and the Agency had much in common: they both worked towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, were important contributors to the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and placed verification at the heart of their work.

160. The principles and methods underpinning the work of the two organizations were also similar, with multilateralism and cooperation forming the basis for their achievements. Both organizations had large memberships and relied on science and technology to serve their aims. Over the years, their common objectives and approaches had led the CTBTO and the Agency to work side by side.

161. The recent observance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests on 29 August 2023 had served as a stark reminder of the harm caused by decades of nuclear testing. At the same time, it had again highlighted the international community's commitment to banning nuclear test explosions — a

commitment that had underpinned the CTBT when it had opened for signature in 1996 and had also been written into the preamble of the NPT.

162. Since the previous General Conference, two countries had ratified and one had signed the CTBT. With 187 States Signatories and 178 ratifying States, the Treaty was very close to universalization. It had a robust verification regime, with over 90% of the International Monitoring System's facilities installed and 305 stations certified, and a solid track record of providing States Signatories with data and data products through the International Data Centre.

163. Despite having a verification regime representing an investment of well over US \$1 billion in global security, the CTBT was not yet in force. Its full benefits would not be realized until the eight remaining States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty had completed their respective ratification procedures. Nevertheless, the Treaty was already a success. Global uncertainty had brought renewed focus to the value and importance of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and there was an opportunity to build on past successes, including the powerful norm against nuclear testing.

164. In the previous two years, there had been a surge in momentum towards universalization and the Preparatory Committee was focused on building on that momentum to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT — a key message delivered by States at the recent biennial CTBT Article XIV Conference in New York. At the same time, he encouraged all States possessing nuclear weapons to restate their testing moratoriums as a sign of their commitment to the collective goal of ending nuclear test explosions and a means of building trust and confidence in what were challenging times.

165. The Agency and CTBTO shared a home both in Vienna and also within the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Above all, they shared a common ambition to make the world a safer, more secure and better place. Only through cooperation was it possible to achieve a brighter future.

166. Mr AGBORAW (African Commission on Nuclear Energy) said that AFCONE was the Secretariat of the Pelindaba Treaty and the African intergovernmental nuclear organization uniquely mandated to ensure nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in Africa and to foster industrial and socioeconomic development in Africa through the promotion of the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology.

167. AFCONE continued to make progress in fulfilling its mandate, furthering peace, security and development in Africa and globally. The work of AFCONE was structured around four pillars: nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology, and regional and international cooperation.

168. Since the previous General Conference, AFCONE had made good progress in advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In May 2023, it had launched the first African-led safeguards capacity building programme in Pelindaba, South Africa, in collaboration with the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority. That programme, which was based on an assessment of the needs of the participating African countries, ensured sustainability of outcomes and built a solid foundation upon which African countries could participate in international nuclear cooperation and trade.

169. The African continent was facing severe energy poverty, with the lowest per capita access to electricity in the world. It was therefore imperative that African countries urgently construct new power plants. In order to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and contribute to net zero within a reasonable time frame, AFCONE was strongly advocating for nuclear power to play a central role in Africa's energy transition. To that end, it was cooperating closely with the African Union and also engaging directly with African countries, both individually and in groups.

170. Taking into account the fact that African countries were at wildly different stages of developing the infrastructure required for their nuclear power programmes, AFCONE was promoting a multilateral approach to developing nuclear power in Africa. That approach, in addition to accelerating the process by leveraging synergies and opportunities among countries, also advanced nuclear non-proliferation and facilitated financing for nuclear power projects.

171. Such efforts were being undertaken in collaboration with the Agency and other partners. For example, in September 2022, the Agency and AFCONE had signed a three-year MOU. Activities to support the effective and efficient development of nuclear power programmes had been prioritized in the draft work plans prepared to facilitate the implementation of that MOU.

172. In 2023, AFCONE had been admitted as an observer in INPRO, which helped to promote the sustainable development of nuclear energy. Its participation in that initiative provided an additional avenue for guiding African embarking countries in the development of their nuclear power programmes.

173. AFCONE had also made great strides over the preceding year with regard to other peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in Africa, notably in the areas of cancer treatment and medical diagnosis, agriculture, food security, uranium mining and radioactive waste management.

174. AFCONE facilitated cooperation and collaboration between African countries in order to expand access to medical radioisotopes and radiation medicine in Africa. It had also facilitated cooperation between African countries and AFCONE partners in the use of radiation technologies to ensure food security and safety. AFCONE aimed to play a central role in coordinating cooperation both within Africa and with international partners to ensure that cooperation was fit for purpose, to prevent duplication of efforts, to facilitate the exchange of best practices, and to optimize the use of human and financial resources.

175. The population of Africa stood at around 1.4 billion and was estimated to double by 2050. Africa was experiencing the fastest population growth in the world, but the lowest growth rate in terms of access to nuclear technologies to address its urgent challenges. In that regard, AFCONE reiterated its recommendation to prioritize a multilateral African approach to nuclear infrastructure development, entailing more regional African cooperation and more inter-African and intra-African cooperation. That multilateral approach, combined with existing international cooperation, would provide a good basis for addressing Africa's urgent issues expeditiously and effectively.

176. In spite of the many achievements in the area of nuclear energy, there remained hurdles to be overcome at the global level. In that regard, he recalled that the 10th NPT Review Conference had concluded with no outcome. AFCONE was participating in the 2026 NPT Preparatory Committee, collaborating with other NWFZs and garnering support among African countries to foster a successful outcome for the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.

177. In closing, he thanked all AFCONE partners, including the Agency, the African Parties to the Pelindaba Treaty and the African Union for their support and for the important role they played in furthering peace, security and development throughout the world.

178. Mr HAMDI (Arab Atomic Energy Agency), congratulating the Director General on his appointment for a second term, said that the AAEA had developed the second phase of the Arab Strategy for the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, covering the period 2021–2030, which had been approved by the 2022 summit of the League of Arab States. The strategy focused on the triad of food, water and energy security through activities in the areas of water and energy resources, food security, human health, the environment, manufacturing and education.

179. In cooperation with the Agency, the AAEA had established the Arab Network of Nuclear Regulators in 2010 as a platform for sharing experience, expertise and lessons learned. The network also

contributed to the development of Arab capabilities in radiation protection and environmental conservation. Hundreds of Arab trainees and specialists had benefited from the network's nuclear safety and security activities, including in the control of radioactive sources and the security and safety of nuclear and radiation facilities.

180. The AAEA had also implemented a project with the Agency to establish the Arab Network for Environmental Radiation Monitoring and Early Warning, which had launched in early 2022. Through the project, radiation monitoring stations were being established or developed in Arab countries to create networks to address any nuclear or radiological incident that might result in radioactive contamination hazardous to the environment, workers and the public, thus supporting Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR.

181. As part of that project, the AAEA, in cooperation with the Agency and under the auspices of the League of Arab States, had organized a high-level Arab meeting on the establishment of Arab nuclear and radiological EPR infrastructure. Responding to the Director General's call in his supportive video message to the meeting, the AAEA had developed a road map for Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR for the next five years — the first regional road map of its kind — and was working with the Agency to implement it.

182. The AAEA was cooperating with the Division of Nuclear Power to enhance the nuclear infrastructure of countries that were starting to construct NPPs, and several seminars had been held on the assistance provided by both organizations to Member States that wished to include nuclear power in their energy diversification strategies. In that connection, the AAEA was currently working with the Agency to build power reactor simulators for training personnel at its headquarters.

183. The conclusion in June 2022 of an historic, comprehensive memorandum of understanding between the AAEA and the Agency, covering nuclear safety and security, nuclear power and the applications of nuclear techniques, represented a milestone in their cooperation. The AAEA had proposed four regional projects within the framework of the memorandum and would work with the Agency to identify practical means of implementing them.

184. In closing, he commended the UAE on successfully operating three NPPs in the Arab region and connecting them to the electrical grid, Egypt on starting to build its first NPP, and Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan for launching nuclear programmes. The AAEA stood ready to help strengthen the relevant infrastructure in other Arab countries that wished to start building NPPs — including the State of Palestine, which enjoyed full membership.

185. Ms MURRAY (United Kingdom), speaking also on behalf of France and the USA in exercise of the right of reply, said that the three countries did not consider the Agency to be the appropriate forum for discussing the TPNW. Their views on that Treaty were well known. The three countries considered the NPT to be the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and would continue to work towards fulfilling their commitments under Article VI, despite the deteriorated global security environment.

186. Mr NESHATESAZAN (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that baseless allegations had been made by a number of delegations with regard to Iran's nuclear programme. The false and misleading information presented was aimed at casting doubt on Iran's cooperation with the Agency under the CSA and pushing a fabricated narrative.

187. Iran's peaceful nuclear programme was consistent with its sovereign and inalienable rights under Article IV of the NPT and its strong commitment to non-proliferation, safeguards implementation and long-standing cooperation with the Agency, which dated back to its accession to the NPT. His country

had always done its utmost to enable the Agency's smooth implementation of its robust and unique verification activities in Iran.

188. As Iran had stated repeatedly, the root cause of the current situation facing the JCPOA was the USA's unilateral and unlawful withdrawal from the Plan. Following the US withdrawal, Iran had continued to comply with the JCPOA for a full year and the Agency had confirmed Iran's full compliance with its JCPOA commitments in 15 consecutive reports. The E3, however, had responded to Iran's display of strategic patience by fervently supporting the USA's illegal sanctions. The European Union's significant and unacceptable inactivity had left Iran with no choice but to re-establish the balance of reciprocal commitments and benefits under the Plan and, in accordance with paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA, to cease implementation of certain JCPOA commitments.

189. By way of conclusion, he said that there should be a clear distinction between the legal obligations of Member States under their respective safeguards agreements and their voluntary undertakings, in order to ensure that such voluntary undertakings were not mistaken for legal safeguards obligations or taken for granted.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.