

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the Second Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Monday, 16 September 2024, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)

Later: Mr LULASHNYK (Canada)

Later: Ms OUATTARA (Burkina Faso)

Later: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹		Paragraphs
5	Arrangements for the Conference (<i>resumed</i>)	1–5
	(a) Adoption of the agenda and allocation of items for initial discussion (<i>resumed</i>)	1–3
	(b) Closing date of the session and opening date of the next session	4–5
26	Examination of delegates' credentials	6–8
–	Organizational matters	9
7	General debate and Annual Report for 2023 (<i>resumed</i>)	10–242

¹ GC(68)/21

Contents (continued)

	Paragraphs
Statements by the delegates of:	
Estonia	10–15
Belgium	16–27
Japan	28–39
Norway	40–51
Denmark	52–59
Pakistan	60–70
Argentina	71–79
Morocco	80–89
Kingdom of the Netherlands	90–93
Holy See	94–104
Burkina Faso	105–112
Egypt	113–124
United Kingdom	125–137
Türkiye	138–144
South Africa	145–155
Syrian Arab Republic	156–166
Slovakia	167–179
Namibia	180–189
Qatar	190–196
Côte d'Ivoire	197–208
United States of America	209–218
Thailand	219–231
Ireland	232–242

Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AAEA	Arab Atomic Energy Agency
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEANTOM	ASEAN Network of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
GW	gigawatt
HEU	high enriched uranium
ICERR	IAEA-designated International Centre based on Research Reactor
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INIR-RR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review for Research Reactors
INSServ	International Nuclear Security Advisory Service
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

LEU	low enriched uranium
MW	megawatt
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NSF	Nuclear Security Fund
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
ORPAS	Occupational Radiation Protection Appraisal Service
PET-CT	positron emission tomography–computed tomography
PUI	Peaceful Uses Initiative
RANET	Response and Assistance Network
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SPECT-CT	single photon emission computed tomography–computed tomography
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

USA	United States of America
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

5. Arrangements for the Conference (resumed) (GC(68)/1 and Add.1 to 4)

(a) Adoption of the agenda and allocation of items for initial discussion (resumed)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day and recommended that the agenda for the sixty-eighth regular session consist of all items on the provisional agenda set forth in documents GC(68)/1 and of all supplementary items set forth in documents GC(68)/1/Add.1 to 4. With regard to the allocation of items for initial discussion, it had recommended that all items be taken up for discussion as indicated in documents GC(68)/1 and Add.1, 2 and 4, and that the item contained in document GC(68)/1/Add.3 be discussed in the Plenary. With regard to the order in which the items contained in documents GC(68)/1 and Add.1 to 4 should be discussed, the General Committee had recommended that the suggestions made in those documents should be followed.

2. He took it that the Conference agreed to adopt the agenda and allocate items as recommended by the General Committee.

3. It was so decided.

(b) Closing date of the session and opening date of the next session

4. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had recommended that the Conference set Friday, 20 September 2024 as the closing date of its sixty-eighth regular session and Monday, 15 September 2025 as the opening date of its sixty-ninth regular session. He took it that the Conference agreed to adopt that recommendation.

5. It was so decided.

26. Examination of delegates' credentials (GC(68)/22)

6. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a Credentials Committee to examine the credentials of the delegation of Myanmar, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 5 of the report contained in document GC(68)/22.

7. He took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution.

8. The resolution was adopted.

– **Organizational matters**

9. The PRESIDENT said that the Committee of the Whole would meet later that day at 3.30 p.m. He appealed to those wishing to submit draft resolutions to do so as soon as possible in order to expedite the conduct of business, in particular at the Committee of the Whole. He hoped that the Committee of the Whole would be able to conclude its work and provide its final report to the Plenary by the morning session on Friday, 20 September 2024 at the latest.

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2023 (resumed) (GC(68)/2)

10. Ms ALENDER (Estonia) said that her country condemned, in the strongest possible terms, all reckless and illegal activities carried out by the Russian Federation that endangered nuclear safety, most notably the ongoing attacks near Zaporizhzhya NPP. The Russian Federation's unlawful occupation of the plant for over two years had rendered it unable to produce electricity and subjected it to increasingly perilous nuclear safety and security conditions. Estonia denounced those deliberate assaults, which violated international law and nuclear safety principles. It commended the Director General and the Agency for their courageous efforts in that regard and called for the immediate and unconditional return of Zaporizhzhya NPP to Ukraine's control. Moreover, it demanded the complete withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian nuclear facilities and reaffirmed its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and right to self-defence. Estonia would stand with Ukraine for as long as necessary to ensure justice and accountability for those grave violations.

11. The deteriorating security environment posed a significant challenge to multilateral cooperation and regional stability. The Agency played a central role in reinforcing the global nuclear security framework, and the NPT remained the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Estonia advocated the universal and effective implementation of the NPT and stressed the importance of the Agency's safeguards system in mitigating nuclear threats.

12. Estonia supported the use and development of innovative nuclear technologies to help Member States achieve energy security and leverage nuclear science and technologies for socioeconomic, medical, health and environmental benefits. At the same time, it was essential that the highest standards of safety and security were upheld.

13. Estonia was grateful for the support and guidance provided by the Agency to the country's Nuclear Energy Working Group. The INIR mission conducted by Agency experts in October 2023 had found that Estonia was well on its way to advancing its nuclear energy programme, having carefully assessed the necessary infrastructure requirements. In June 2024, the Parliament had taken a significant step by adopting a decision to establish the necessary legal framework in preparation for introducing nuclear energy.

14. Estonia greatly appreciated the cooperation and support provided by the Agency through its expert missions and its TC programme and would appreciate further cooperation with the Agency in building its expertise in the potential use of nuclear power.

15. In conclusion, she expressed her country's gratitude for the invaluable work carried out by the Director General and the Secretariat and urged all countries to continue supporting the Agency in its critical mission.

16. Ms VAN DER STRAETEN (Belgium) said that her country aligned itself with the official statement of the European Union, as available online.

17. Despite the numerous issues that were undermining the multilateral order, Member States had gathered at the current session of the General Conference to make multilateralism work and to support the Agency's activities. Nuclear security, safety and safeguards were inextricably linked to the international security context, which was reflected in the many challenges that the Agency faced in fulfilling its tasks.

18. The Russian Federation's illegal invasion of Ukraine threatened nuclear safety and security both in Ukraine and around the world, and its unlawful occupation of Zaporizhzhya NPP and continued attacks on Ukraine's critical energy infrastructure posed a real risk of a serious nuclear incident. Belgium welcomed the continuous presence of Agency personnel at Zaporizhzhya NPP and other Ukrainian nuclear facilities, as well as the personal involvement of the Director General. For its part, it had donated €3 million in support of the Agency's activities in that area. However, there was only one rightful solution to the situation — the Russian Federation's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine.

19. Iran had continuously failed to provide the necessary information and cooperation to the Agency in order to clarify and resolve the outstanding issues relating to its obligations under its safeguards agreement with the Agency, pursuant to Article III of the NPT. Moreover, it had moved away from the JCPOA, even though that voluntary agreement was designed to foster confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Iran could still correct its course by returning to compliance with its safeguards agreement and the JCPOA, cooperating with the Agency and ratifying the additional protocol, which would provide the Agency with the tools that it needed to permanently monitor Iran's nuclear programme in a comprehensive manner.

20. The DPRK had also continued to taunt the international community. Its expansionist nuclear and ballistic missile programme had been coupled with disquieting changes at the doctrinal level. Oversight of restrictive measures should be strengthened, especially by the members of the UN Security Council, which had decided on those measures in the first place.

21. Belgium called on all members of the international community to steadfastly uphold the principles that guided the Agency's work so that solutions could be found to the numerous challenges being faced. Every Member State had a duty to support the Agency and to join forces in various domains of cooperation to achieve sustainable development for all.

22. The Agency played a crucial role in ensuring that all Member States could enjoy the benefits of the atom through the provision of assistance and the transfer of technology. Belgium's voluntary assessed contribution to the TCF and its extrabudgetary contributions to the Agency continued to support the many successful initiatives in the field of nuclear medicine, food security, nuclear safety, capacity building, training, women's empowerment and safeguards. The Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme, to be held in November 2024, would be an excellent opportunity to showcase and build upon TC projects and a broad range of nuclear applications for sustainable development.

23. Belgium remained at the forefront of nuclear science, as illustrated by its research into lead-bismuth cooled accelerator-driven fast reactor systems and lead-cooled SMRs. During the current session of the General Conference, it would hold a side event to demonstrate the importance of European partnerships that combined research expertise with industrial know-how.

24. Another major field of her country's expertise was nuclear medicine. In June 2024, Belgium had launched an action plan on radioligand therapy — a pioneering treatment also known as targeted

radionuclide therapy, which could become a major new pillar in the fight against cancer — with the aim of perpetuating Belgium’s pioneering role in the provision of radioligand therapy and future-proofing its health-care system. Furthermore, Belgium was one of the world’s leading producers of medical radioisotopes, and it had unique assets available to help it roll out new cancer treatments more broadly, benefiting even more patients.

25. In the future, Belgium would be confronted with the long-term operation and decommissioning of its nuclear power reactors. Those challenging projects would have to be executed according to the necessary safety, security and safeguards standards. Preparations for decommissioning activities in Belgium would continue in the years to come. Her country would keep investing in new technologies to increase the reuse and recycling of materials stemming from decommissioning projects, as in the case of its State of the art Metal Melting Limiting Waste during D&D (SMELD) project, which sought to push the boundaries of radioactive metal smelting.

26. With regard to nuclear security, Belgium was continuing its work on insider threat mitigation, having organized a widely attended international symposium in Brussels in March 2023 and a side event, together with the USA, during the International Conference on Nuclear Security: Shaping the Future (ICONS 2024). It welcomed the fact that, in 2024, new countries had subscribed to the Joint Statement on Mitigating Insider Threats, contained in document INFCIRC/908, and encouraged others to do the same.

27. Lastly, Belgium reiterated its full support for the Agency and the Director General in upholding the legal framework and assisting States in their peaceful use of the atom. To overcome the challenges ahead, the international community should not look back at how the world was, but rather imagine how it should be.

28. Mr UESAKA (Japan) said that the Agency’s role was becoming increasingly important as nuclear energy once again attracted significant attention owing to fluctuating international relations and new advances in science and technology.

29. The peaceful use of nuclear energy was one of the three pillars of the NPT and contributed to the achievement of the SDGs. It was also important from the perspective of energy security and decarbonization. Under its policy on the sustainable use of nuclear energy, which placed the highest priority on safety, Japan had been working on restarting its NPPs, extending their operating lives, researching and developing next generation advanced reactors and strengthening supply chains through international collaboration.

30. Nuclear technology played a prominent role in a wide range of areas, including health care, agriculture and the environment. For its part, Japan was working towards the domestic production of radioisotopes for medical use. At the same time, in order to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy globally, Japan strongly supported the Director General’s Rays of Hope and Atoms4Food initiatives, including through contributions to the PUI, and promoted international cooperation, including within the framework of the Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024.

31. Japan had also been working on the early development of fusion energy. To that end, it had established the Japan Fusion Energy Council and, in cooperation with its partners, would formulate a basic approach to ensuring the safety of fusion energy by March 2025. It planned to further enhance its cooperation with the international community, including the Agency, in that field.

32. Japan was sharing its experience of the accident at Fukushima Daiichi NPP and the knowledge that it had gained through its decommissioning of the plant with the people of Japan and with the international community, including neighbouring countries. It had also been contributing to the

international community's efforts to improve nuclear regulations. To date, Japan had discharged eight batches of ALPS-treated water into the sea. The safety of the discharged water had been corroborated through monitoring and reviews conducted by the Agency with the participation of analytical laboratories and international experts from around the world, including from neighbouring countries. The water had been discharged after sufficient purification using ALPS and had been diluted using sea water; it therefore had no impact on people or the environment. It was not appropriate to describe the discharged water as contaminated water. In addition, efforts towards decommissioning the plant were progressing, and the work had entered a new phase, including the retrieval of fuel debris — the most difficult task.

33. The Agency had the authority, under its Statute, to establish, adopt and apply international safety standards in the field of nuclear energy, and its authority and independence should be respected. Japan appreciated the Agency's independent, science-based and long-term commitment to monitoring the discharge of ALPS-treated water. It would continue to strengthen its engagement with domestic and international stakeholders, especially those in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, and to provide transparent explanations to the international community.

34. To ensure the highest standards of nuclear security, Japan supported the universalization of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, in addition to the CPPNM and its Amendment. His country had been working to minimize all stocks of nuclear materials that could potentially pose a threat to the international community, having completed the removal of all HEU from the Japan Atomic Energy Agency. It was also continuing its education and research activities and was converting the research reactors at Kyoto University and Kindai University from HEU to LEU.

35. Japan was committed to further improving its nuclear security measures in light of the praise received from the IPPAS mission in 2024 regarding the robustness of its nuclear security regime.

36. As the Agency was a core tool for ensuring nuclear non-proliferation, Japan firmly supported its work to strengthen and promote the efficiency of the country's safeguards system. Japan advocated the universalization of the CSA, the additional protocol and the revised SQP.

37. Global efforts towards human resource development were indispensable to the achievement of nuclear safety, security and safeguards. Japan had long been engaged in providing capacity building assistance and conducting research and development in the fields of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear security at the Integrated Support Center for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security of the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, which was a designated Collaborating Centre. In 2024, the Center had upgraded its training facilities and had become a member of the International Nuclear Security Education Network. Japan would further strengthen its contributions in that regard.

38. Japan attached importance to such issues as nuclear activities in the DPRK, the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue and the maintenance of nuclear safety and security in Ukraine. It firmly supported the Agency's dedicated efforts in the current tough international environment and would continue to actively contribute to discussions on those subjects. In particular, Japan strongly urged the DPRK to abandon all its WMDs, its ballistic missiles of all ranges and its related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and reaffirmed the importance of full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions by all Member States.

39. As a responsible Member State and member of the Board of Governors, Japan reiterated its appreciation for the professional efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat and its continued full support for the Agency.

40. Mr PETERSSON (Norway), noting the continuation of the Russian Federation's illegal and unprovoked war against Ukraine, 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 such plant in Europe — was totally unacceptable, and its continued occupation of the plant posed an unprecedented risk to nuclear safety and security.

41. The Agency's support and assistance missions in Ukraine provided crucial information and assessments to the international community. Norway commended the Agency's staff and the Ukrainian personnel for their efforts under such extreme conditions. His country fully supported the 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.

42. Norway had worked closely with the Ukrainian authorities on nuclear safety and security for many years and had increased its bilateral support in that area by €13 million. In addition, his country had contributed close to €9 million in support of the Agency's work in Ukraine, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP.

43. As the cornerstone of the global disarmament and 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 non-proliferation obligations under the Treaty. All NPT 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 urged all States to bring an additional protocol into force and to revise their SQPs, where applicable.

44. It was deeply regrettable that Iran had failed to cooperate with the Agency to resolve the outstanding safeguards issues. Only Iran could provide the necessary clarifications. The fact that it had not reversed its decision to withdraw the designation of several experienced Agency inspectors was of continued concern. Norway therefore called on Iran to reconsider its decision and return to the path of cooperation in good faith.

45. Norway condemned the DPRK's pattern of ballistic missile tests and the continuous development of its nuclear programme and called on the DPRK to return immediately to dialogue and to abandon its programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. His country appreciated the Agency's readiness to resume nuclear verification in the DPRK.

46. Norway regretted Syria's long-standing non-compliance with its NPT safeguards agreement and the lack of clarification provided regarding four sites of concern to the Agency, including the Dair Alzour site. However, it noted Syria's renewed engagement with the Agency on unresolved safeguards issues and encouraged Syria's full cooperation in that regard.

47. Nuclear security ran parallel to nuclear non-proliferation, and international instruments in those two areas were mutually reinforcing. It was regrettable that it had not been possible to achieve consensus on a ministerial declaration at ICONS 2024, despite the hard work of the Co-Presidents. Norway called for the universalization of the Amendment to the CPPNM and the full implementation of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and all relevant guidelines and politically binding instruments.

48. As a strong advocate of minimizing and eliminating stocks of HEU and reducing its civilian use, Norway called on all Member States to sign and implement the Joint Statement on Minimising and Eliminating the Use of Highly Enriched Uranium in Civilian Applications, contained in document INFCIRC/912 — one of several such information circulars covering priority areas for securing nuclear and other radioactive material, the endorsement of which was one way in which Member States could demonstrate their commitment to improved nuclear security practices.

49. 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.

50. Nuclear technologies were pivotal in addressing the world's energy, health and agricultural needs for the benefit of all and in achieving the SDGs. The Agency was a key facilitator in that regard.

51. Lastly, he commended the Agency's efforts to increase the number of women in the Secretariat and in nuclear-related industries.

Mr Lulashnyk (Canada), Vice-President, took the Chair.

52. Mr RASMUSSEN (Denmark) said that the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine had brought nuclear danger to Ukraine and, therefore, to all. In light of the fact that a permanent member of the UN Security Council was illegally occupying Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP — thereby adding a new and deplorable dimension to nuclear safety and security — the Agency's mandate to protect and promote nuclear safety and security was more important than ever. It was clear that the current risk stemmed from the Russian Federation. All countries must continue to insist that the Russian Federation withdraw from Zaporizhzhya NPP and return control of the plant to its legitimate owner.

53. Denmark was grateful for the efforts of the Agency and its committed staff to ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine, which was key to both protecting Ukraine and upholding the integrity of the global nuclear regime. His country had contributed financially to that important work.

54. Denmark supported the Agency's work across the full spectrum of its mandate. It welcomed the Agency's contributions to the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, which would help Member States achieve the SDGs. Denmark was pleased to pledge its full share of the TCF target for 2025 in order to foster development and growth.

55. His country was deeply concerned at Iran's lack of cooperation with the Agency and its continued expansion of its nuclear activities, which had no credible civilian purpose. Similarly, Denmark condemned the DPRK's clear failure to comply with its international obligations and called for the DPRK to eliminate all nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner. It also called on the Russian Federation and other States to refrain from any military cooperation with the DPRK.

56. Denmark looked to the Agency to provide standards and guidance on nuclear safety and security. It was essential that those standards evolved to keep pace with technological and other developments.

57. His country had confidence in the Agency's ongoing objective monitoring of the release of treated water from Fukushima Daiichi NPP, which complemented the valuable transparency shown by Japan.

58. As a significant contributor to the NSF, Denmark was keen to support the Agency's efforts to assist Member States in improving national nuclear security. It regretted the heavy reliance of the Agency's work on voluntary contributions, however, and called for resources to be made available from the Regular Budget.

59. In the current security environment, more — not less — international cooperation was needed. Denmark thanked the Director General and the Agency's dedicated staff for their invaluable contribution to building a safer and more prosperous world.

60. Mr ANWAR (Pakistan) said that the Agency's work was taking on greater significance as the world grappled with such challenges as climate change, water scarcity, rising energy demand and environmental degradation. The Agency's initiatives, including Atoms4Food, Rays of Hope and

NUTEK Plastics, underscored the critical role of nuclear science in fostering a safer, healthier and more sustainable future.

61. Pakistan fully supported the Agency in its efforts to help countries achieve the SDGs, especially through its clean energy initiatives. Extreme weather patterns caused by climate change and global warming were having a severe impact on different parts of the world, with Pakistan ranking among the top ten most vulnerable countries, despite its low contribution to global emissions. The unprecedented rise in global temperatures had left his country struggling to rebuild and recover from calamities such as floods and water and food shortages. Nuclear energy offered a promising solution as a clean and sustainable energy source.

62. Pakistan had six NPPs in operation, with a combined capacity of 3530 MW, contributing about 17% of the country's electricity production and accounting for around 30% of its low carbon power generation. In replacing the use of fossil fuel-based sources, nuclear power in Pakistan had effectively prevented over 100 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. His country was in the final stages of planning the construction of another NPP, which was expected to be commissioned by 2030. Pakistan's 100 reactor years of experience in operating a safe and secure nuclear power programme spoke volumes about its competence and commitment.

63. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission placed strong emphasis on the use of nuclear technology to provide high-quality health facilities to the citizens of Pakistan. Through its 19 cancer hospitals, over one million diagnostic and therapeutic procedures were carried out annually. In recognition of Pakistan's steadfast commitment in that regard, the country's Nuclear Medicine, Oncology and Radiotherapy Institute had been designated a Rays of Hope Anchor Centre, with the first batch of trainees already having received training under the initiative.

64. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission was leveraging the use of nuclear technology at its four agriculture and biotechnology centres with a view to ensuring food security and safety. In 2023, Pakistan's Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology — a Collaborating Centre and a ZODIAC National Laboratory — had successfully organized a regional meeting on food safety. The Deputy Director General for Technical Cooperation had attended as chief guest and had applauded Pakistan's contributions in the field.

65. Pakistan was working closely with the Agency on water resources management; the Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology was in the process of becoming a Collaborating Centre focusing on that topic. His country looked forward to participating in the Agency's new Global Water Analysis Laboratory Network, through which it would share its expertise with other Member States.

66. Pakistan had successfully implemented comprehensive TC projects that had achieved substantial outcomes. It was pleased to offer its expertise in project design and implementation to fellow Member States under the auspices of the Agency.

67. Pakistan noted with full satisfaction that its Practical Arrangements signed with the Department of Technical Cooperation — which had recently been extended — had generated a range of productive and mutually beneficial engagements between Pakistan and other Member States.

68. Nuclear security — as a State-level responsibility — received the highest level of attention in Pakistan, in accordance with the country's domestic and international obligations. The National Institute of Safety and Security in Pakistan was a designated Collaborating Centre for education, training and technical support in the area of nuclear and radiation safety. In addition, the Pakistan Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security was a highly esteemed national institution that had grown into a prominent regional and international hub offering exceptional nuclear security training programmes. Furthermore, the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority operated as an independent national nuclear

regulator, entrusted by the Government to regulate nuclear and radiation safety and nuclear security within the country.

69. Pakistan's dedication to empowering women in the nuclear field was evident in its implementation of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. As a Collaborating Centre, the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences played a vital role in offering capacity building in nuclear education at national and international level.

70. Pakistan had consistently met its obligations to the Agency by fully adhering to all safeguards requirements. It looked forward to strengthening and continuing that cooperation to achieve the shared objective of socioeconomic development through the application of nuclear science and technology.

71. Ms MONDINO (Argentina) said that, in the current global context of instability and geopolitical tensions, her country called for an end to the wholly unacceptable use of nuclear rhetoric and nuclear weapon threats. At the same time, Argentina echoed the Director General's call to avoid, during armed conflict, any action that could endanger or damage nuclear facilities or facilities that housed radioactive material. Nuclear safety and security must take precedence in all circumstances.

72. Argentina reiterated its concern with regard to nuclear safety, security and safeguards implementation during the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict. It recognized the importance of the Agency's missions to Ukraine and its ongoing presence there, as well as its recent visit to Kursk NPP. Argentina supported the extensive efforts of the Agency and its Director General to stay abreast of that urgent situation and reiterated its willingness to cooperate with the Agency in that regard.

73. Her country was grateful for the Director General's visit between December 2023 and January 2024, when he had had the opportunity, together with the President of Argentina and scientific experts from the IAEA Marine Environment Laboratories, to visit the Marambio Base, one of Argentina's 13 bases in Antarctica. The trip, which had been for the purpose of collecting samples within the framework of NUTEC Plastics, represented the Agency's first official activity on that continent — Argentina would present the initial results of the project during a side event at the current session of the General Conference. The Director General's visit had also served as an opportunity to deepen Argentina's ties with the Agency through the signing of a memorandum of understanding on participation in Atoms4Food. In addition, in June 2024, Argentina had signed an agreement to establish a Rays of Hope Anchor Centre with a view to addressing issues related to radiodiagnosis, radiotherapy and nuclear medicine. The visit to Antarctica and the signing of those agreements demonstrated Argentina's capabilities and what it could offer to the region and the world with regard to nuclear science, technology and applications.

74. Argentina had made great progress in the establishment of its RA-10 multipurpose research reactor, which was in the final stage of construction. The main mission of the reactor would be to ensure the supply of radioisotopes at national and international level and conduct research and development activities. Progress had also been made on the construction of a highly advanced proton accelerator for use in radiotherapy, which would be the first facility of its kind in Latin America.

75. Despite decades of political changes and economic upheaval, Argentina had accorded strategic significance to nuclear technology and its peaceful applications. Its track record in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was extensive, with almost three quarters of a century of experience of scientific and industrial development in both the public and private sectors. Guided by the principles of technological sovereignty and the inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, Argentina had become a responsible and reliable producer and exporter of nuclear technology and related components to countries on all continents.

76. A fundamental pillar of that approach was ABACC, which had proved itself to be, without doubt, an example of cooperation and trust between countries in a highly sensitive and strategic area and a unique and successful experience in terms of the enhanced guarantees that it provided. Argentina reaffirmed once again its commitment to continue strengthening cooperation with the Agency through ABACC.

77. The world was facing a future in which nuclear energy would need to play a much greater role, given the opportunities that it offered as a clean energy source. In light of the importance of cooperation in providing safe access to nuclear technologies, Argentina stood ready to provide solutions in that regard in line with its diverse capabilities and track record. It had been a pioneer in the training of human resources in the region: the Argentine regulatory authority, in cooperation with the University of Buenos Aires, had been running a postgraduate course in radiation protection and nuclear safety for more than 40 years, from which regulators from all countries in the Latin American region — and even from outside the region — had graduated. Argentina had also promoted cooperation and provided advice regarding NPP project design, NPP life extension, the manufacture of key inputs for NPP operation and the transfer of technology.

78. In that context, she highlighted the ongoing development of the low-power reactor project — designed and built entirely in Argentina — with the aim of contributing to the expansion of nuclear electricity and responding to the demand of new countries interested in nuclear power generation.

79. Noting that Vienna was the home of the waltz, Argentina hoped that the international community could move together in an equally coordinated and agile manner to achieve the Agency's noble objectives.

80. Ms BENALI (Morocco) said that the current session of the General Conference was taking place against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions, uncertainty and major challenges, which strengthened the case for ensuring the optimal — yet safe and secure — use of nuclear technology and applications for peaceful purposes.

81. The current session provided a valuable opportunity for all Member States to renew their political commitment to the safe and secure use of nuclear applications, to assess the work undertaken by the Agency and its Member States and to take collective action to strengthen the international nuclear safety and security regime. The importance of cooperation and dialogue among Member States could not be overstated, having brought the Agency to the position of being able to address global challenges related to health, agriculture, water and climate change — all of which required global efforts to shape the future.

82. Morocco had continuously reaffirmed its support for the central role of the Agency, including in providing technical assistance to Member States. It commended NUTEC Plastics, ZODIAC, Rays of Hope and Atoms4Food, which had a tangible impact in their respective areas. Her country welcomed the organization of the 2024 Scientific Forum on the important theme of 'Atoms4Food: Better Agriculture for Better Life', which presented an integrated approach to tackling climate change, food security and sustainable production. The debate was sure to lead to positive outcomes and foster collective action based on strong cooperation, innovative financing and solid partnerships.

83. Two years after the impetus provided by the Director General's official visit to Morocco, the country's cooperation with the Agency had been elevated to new levels. Morocco had received four important distinctions from the Agency: the National Centre for Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Technology had been the first facility in Africa to be designated an ICERR; the National Oncology Institute had been designated a Rays of Hope Anchor Centre; the National Centre for Scientific and Technological Research had become a Collaborating Centre in the fields of molecular biology and genomics; and the Agency had assisted the Moroccan Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security

Agency to establish the African School for Radiation Safety Regulators. Those institutions had already started offering training to the country's most important form of capital — human capital — and to many other African experts. Morocco and its institutions had been sharing their technical expertise with over 40 African States and remained committed to supporting technical cooperation and capacity building in various fields, including radiotherapy, water, nutrition and radiology. In addition, Morocco continued to assist many partners in the laboratory analysis of samples using nuclear techniques.

84. In February 2024, Morocco had hosted the annual regional meeting of National Liaison Officers and AFRA National Coordinators, in which more than 60 participants representing 43 Member States had taken part.

85. Following the successful implementation of more than 20 TC projects under its previous CPF, Morocco had signed a new CPF for 2024–2029 to reinforce its partnership with the Agency.

86. In a speech to the nation in July 2024, King Mohammed VI had highlighted the importance of water security for Morocco. It was imperative to implement robust policies that guaranteed equitable access to water resources by fostering international cooperation in sustainable water management. Effective and inclusive multilateral action that took into account the national circumstances of developing countries and that focused on disproportionately-affected vulnerable communities was needed.

87. In addition, in his message to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, King Mohammed VI had highlighted the situation of middle-income countries — such as Morocco — which were leading the battle for sustainable socioeconomic development. More specific and sustained attention was needed on the part of the international community.

88. In furtherance of the Agency's support for water policy, Morocco would present a draft resolution, submitted by the Group of 77, entitled 'Plan for producing potable water economically using small and medium-sized nuclear reactors', to be adopted at the current session of the General Conference. The draft resolution underlined the need for continued strengthening of international cooperation in the planning and implementation of nuclear desalination programmes.

89. Morocco was committed to the principles of South–South cooperation and African solidarity and would continue to act in support of multilateral efforts and the collective motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

90. Mr VELDKAMP (Kingdom of the Netherlands) said that the current session of the General Conference was taking place at a crucial time. He therefore hoped that it would be used wisely to advance the promise and potential that nuclear technology held for all.

91. The world was experiencing troubling times, with NPPs being caught in the crossfire of the conflict in Ukraine, which was being escalated by the Russian Federation's grim and irresponsible threats of nuclear violence. Such behaviour was unacceptable and should be universally condemned. All States, especially nuclear-weapon States, must act responsibly in the nuclear domain. If States needed guidance, assistance or expertise in that regard, they could always turn to the Agency; even in times of turmoil and polarization, the Agency and its Director General continued to undertake impressive and meaningful work to ensure nuclear safety and security, including through their vital role in verifying safeguards. Their work could succeed only with the unwavering trust, support and collaboration of Member States. There could be no 'ifs or buts' when it came to the Seven Pillars and to safeguards.

92. Nuclear technology had the potential to cause a catastrophe in a split second. At the same time, it had the power to fight cancer, hunger, climate change and many other urgent problems. The Kingdom of the Netherlands was therefore investing in the construction of a new reactor to supply innovative nuclear materials to treat patients in Europe and worldwide. It was also investing in nuclear energy to

help achieve climate neutrality by 2050. In fact, nuclear technology could be harnessed to help achieve all the SDGs. States should seize the many opportunities that remained to further unlock the potential of the atom for the benefit of humankind; a strong, independent and universally respected Agency was indispensable in that regard.

93. In closing, the Kingdom of the Netherlands thanked the Agency and the Director General for their tremendous work and called on the General Conference to ensure that all Member States provided their continued support — that was the only way to make sure that nuclear technology harmed no one and benefited everyone.

94. Monsignor GALLAGHER (Holy See), conveying the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis, expressed appreciation to the Director General and the Secretariat for their dedicated work for the benefit of all Member States. In particular, he said that the Holy See commended the Director General for his tireless efforts to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities threatened by the war in Ukraine and to prevent what Pope Francis had described as a “nuclear disaster”.

95. The Holy See placed considerable value on the work of the Agency — a unique international organization — especially its implementation of the NPT with a view to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and making peaceful nuclear science and technology available to developing countries.

96. As Pope Francis had stated, in order to make peace a reality, States must move away from the logic of the legitimacy of war: if such a logic had been valid in earlier times, when wars had been more limited in scope, in the present day — with the existence of WMDs, especially nuclear weapons — the battlefield had become practically unlimited and the effects potentially catastrophic. The time had come to say an emphatic ‘no’ to war. Wars could not be justified: only a stable and lasting peace, built not on the precarious balance of deterrence but rather on the fraternity that united States and that arose from the recognition of the common Father, could be considered just.

97. The current armed conflicts in many regions of the world were a cause for grave concern. An accelerated arms race fuelled by escalating wars was taking precedence over disarmament efforts and the promotion of negotiations and dialogue aimed at paving the way for a peace rooted in justice, good faith and respect for international law.

98. In light of those considerations, the Holy See called for ethical reflection on the significant risks associated with the continued possession of nuclear weapons, on the urgent need for renewed progress in disarmament and on the development of peacebuilding initiatives. As Pope Francis had stated, the use of atomic energy for purposes of war was immoral, just as the possession of nuclear weapons was immoral. It was incumbent on the international community to keep alive the crucial vision of a world free of nuclear arms. For their part, international organizations must continue their work to raise awareness of the topic and promote adequate regulatory measures. The Holy See reiterated its appeal for collective commitment to promoting a culture of care which gave primacy to human dignity and the common good. As Pope Francis had stated, the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons had become both a challenge and a moral and humanitarian imperative. In line with that perspective, the Holy See had signed and ratified the TPNW with the objective of transitioning beyond the paradigm of nuclear deterrence towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

99. The Holy See acknowledged the Agency’s pivotal role in the pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world and praised its contributions to the advancement of nuclear safety and security. In particular, it supported the Agency’s efforts to ensure safety and security at Zaporizhzhya NPP. Reported military activities in the vicinity of the plant and at Kursk NPP were deeply troubling. The Holy See commended the Director General and his inspectors for their courage and professionalism in maintaining a continuous presence on the ground at Zaporizhzhya NPP and in providing impartial and objective reports

on the situation. Furthermore, it urged the parties to the conflict to refrain from attacking those sites, as the consequences could be devastating for humanity.

100. Noting with regret that Iran had stopped implementing its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA several years previously, the Holy See welcomed the Agency's continued efforts to engage with Iran regarding its nuclear programme. In an address delivered in January 2024, Pope Francis had expressed hope for the resumption of negotiations to reinstate the JCPOA in order to ensure a safer future for all.

101. The Holy See appreciated the international community's continued, patient efforts to revive negotiations on the DPRK's nuclear programme, which posed a threat to the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. Agency safeguards made an essential contribution to promoting peace and security and helping build a climate of confidence rather than mutual recrimination.

102. Global security needed to be comprehensive and capable of embracing a wide range of issues, including access to food and water, respect for the environment, health care, energy sources and the equitable distribution of the world's goods. The Agency played a unique role in nearly all those areas, assisting developing countries in leveraging nuclear technology to enhance food production, generate electricity, manage water resources, monitor the environment, control pollution and prepare for pandemics. The Holy See welcomed the recent launch of initiatives such as Atoms4Food, Atoms4NetZero and NUTEC Plastics, which exemplified the beneficial use of peaceful nuclear science and technology.

103. The Agency's efforts to facilitate the provision of radiotherapy and nuclear medicine to cancer patients in developing countries were becoming increasingly crucial in light of the growing prevalence of the disease. Rays of Hope represented just one of the numerous avenues through which the Agency contributed to the good health and well-being of the global population.

104. In conclusion, the Holy See reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Agency's numerous contributions to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies, which must always be approached from a perspective that served the common good of humanity and the integral human development of each person.

105. Mr THIOMBIANO (Burkina Faso) said that, proud to have been entrusted with the Vice-Presidency of the current session of the General Conference, his country was sincerely grateful to the outgoing Bureau for the smooth running of the sixty-seventh regular session. It also congratulated the Director General on the quality of his Annual Report for 2023 and thanked him and his entire team for all the support provided to Burkina Faso, especially through Atoms4Food. The Agency could count on Burkina Faso to help achieve the objectives of Atoms4Food, which was perfectly in line with the country's major agricultural initiative, entitled 'Agropastoral and Fisheries Offensive 2023–2025', launched in September 2023. His country's active participation in Atoms4Food, through the involvement of its national experts in the launch event held in Nairobi in May 2024, was testimony to its commitment to the initiative. It was therefore with great enthusiasm that his delegation would participate in the 2024 Scientific Forum, with its theme of 'Atoms4Food: Better Agriculture for Better Life'.

106. Given the importance of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in meeting Member States' socioeconomic challenges, the TC programme served as the main vehicle through which the Agency could support Member States. Technical cooperation between the Agency and Burkina Faso was yielding some very interesting results in various fields, including agriculture, health, nutrition and energy. In August 2024, following just one year of implementing its CPF for 2023–2028, his country had recorded an implementation rate of 68.87%.

107. Burkina Faso had improved agricultural productivity following the development of several rice and sorghum varieties with highly beneficial traits, which were currently being tested and which would contribute to the achievement of food self-sufficiency. In addition, since the Insectary of Bobo-Dioulasso had become a Collaborating Centre, Burkina Faso had made tremendous progress in the use of SIT and was committed to supplying sufficient, high-quality sterile male insects to support African countries in eradicating tsetse fly and trypanosomosis. Burkina Faso had also made progress in animal farming and water resources management.

108. In the area of human health, Burkina Faso appreciated the Agency's support for the continuous improvement of radiotherapy and nuclear medicine services in the country within the framework of Rays of Hope.

109. Faced with an energy crisis that was proving detrimental to its development, Burkina Faso had made a commitment, at the Russia–Africa Summit held in the Russian Federation in July 2023, to develop a nuclear power programme as a safe, accessible and low-carbon energy source. His country remained strongly committed to that goal and was confident that it would benefit from the Agency's support and solidarity in the safe and secure use of nuclear energy. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for nuclear safety and security rested with each State, Burkina Faso called for greater international cooperation in the safe and reliable operation of nuclear facilities and in the management of radioactive sources, spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste.

110. Thanks to technical assistance from the Agency and AFRA, the technical and operational capacities of Burkina Faso's regulatory authority with regard to radiation protection, nuclear safety and nuclear security had been strengthened. His country was working to enhance the status of the regulatory authority as part of its plans to construct an NPP.

111. Burkina Faso attached the utmost importance to AFRA's activities and would spare no effort to pay its contributions to the AFRA Fund and to take an active part in AFRA meetings and initiatives.

112. Praising its cooperation with the Agency, Burkina Faso reiterated its intention to continue honouring its financial commitments in that regard. In addition to hosting Agency events and contributing to the training of experts from other countries, his country stood ready to further strengthen its cooperation with the Agency in researching and promoting the peaceful applications of the atom for socioeconomic development and international security.

113. Mr ESMAT (Egypt) said that, in pursuit of the SDGs, his country had continued to conduct research and development in various areas related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Agency provided valuable technical expertise and financial support for those activities through its TC projects and other programmes, including initiatives such as Rays of Hope and Atoms4Food.

114. Egypt appreciated the Agency's role in strengthening regional cooperation regarding the peaceful uses of atomic energy and looked forward to ever greater efforts in that regard. Through its membership of the AAEA and AFRA, Egypt stood ready to provide expertise, qualified human resources and research facilities in service of regional cooperation.

115. Despite the international community's appreciation for the Agency's central role in strengthening the peaceful uses of atomic energy, the Agency continued to lack the financial resources necessary to make real breakthroughs in that area. It was unacceptable that the Agency had an annual budget of only €100 million for all TC activities across more than 100 countries, when the cost of building a single nuclear facility was many times that amount. The Director General's commendable efforts to mobilize funds by launching initiatives to benefit developing States and by maintaining communication with international financial institutions had had a notable impact on discussions at the Nuclear Energy Summit 2024, in which Egypt had participated.

116. As part of its commitment to transparency in its peaceful nuclear power programme, Egypt reported that, over the preceding year, several major landmarks had been achieved in the construction of El-Dabaa NPP, among them the installation of the core catchers for Units 1 and 2 — one of the key elements of the advanced safety system at the plant. Furthermore, in early 2024, the first concrete pour had been completed for Unit 4.

117. Egypt remained committed to upholding the highest standards of safety and security in its peaceful nuclear power programme, including in the El-Dabaa NPP project. Having ratified the CNS in December 2023, Egypt had begun to prepare to participate actively in the Tenth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the CNS to that end.

118. His country attached priority to implementing the recommendations issued by the INIR mission to Egypt, which had confirmed the suitability of the country's nuclear infrastructure for constructing a facility on the scale of El-Dabaa NPP. Grateful to the Agency for its ongoing support for that project, which enjoyed the widespread backing of the Egyptian Government and public, Egypt hoped to continue to receive the Secretariat's close cooperation, including in the form of technical expertise, throughout the next stage.

119. Egypt was committed to full transparency in the implementation of its peaceful nuclear activities, in accordance with its legal commitment to the NPT and its CSA. Given the voluntary nature of the additional protocol, his country completely rejected all attempts to impose that instrument as a prerequisite for cooperation on peaceful uses or to link it to legal obligations under the NPT. Such attempts had no legal standing and were a waste of time.

120. The Agency played a vital role as the only entity authorized to conduct nuclear verification and monitor the implementation of CSAs. More must be done to universalize the CSA, as called for in the General Conference's resolutions on strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards and on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, on which Egypt presented draft resolutions to the Conference each year.

121. To that end, Egypt would again propose a draft resolution on that topic, as the universalization of the CSA in the Middle East was essential to rid the region of nuclear weapons. That objective was more pressing than ever given the unfortunate and dangerous developments in the region over the preceding year. Egypt called on all peace-loving States to support the draft resolution — which was identical to the text adopted at the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference — in line with their commitments.

122. Egypt looked forward to a proposal from the Director General setting out a new vision for making progress on the implementation of the resolution in light of the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip and the suffering of the Palestinian people, who had faced nearly a year of systematic attacks and aggression at the hands of Israel, in grave violation of international law, including international humanitarian law. The need for progress was all the more pressing given the unprecedented suggestion by an Israeli minister that a nuclear bomb could be dropped on the Gaza Strip. The international community must unite in calling for an end to the war and the suffering of the Palestinian people and in condemning all threats of further violence against civilians.

123. Egypt welcomed the positive outcomes of the first four sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Conference had gained increasing momentum as an important track for implementing the dozens of consensus-based international resolutions on ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons, especially as it had proved its legitimacy as a negotiating forum that did not seek to isolate any State in the region, having adopted the principle of consensus as the basis of all decision-making, and as it was a sincere

attempt to negotiate a treaty on ridding the Middle East of WMDs that would address the concerns of all parties.

124. In closing, he expressed his country's sincere appreciation for the efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat to serve Member States and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Ms Ouattara (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

125. Mr HUNT (United Kingdom) expressed his country's thanks to the Director General and the Secretariat for their hard work over the past year to ensure the Agency's continued success.

126. On behalf of the new UK Government, he was proud to confirm that nuclear power remained an essential part of the UK's net zero, energy security and clean power plans. His Government was backing the next generation of nuclear in the UK by facilitating the development of new technologies and fuels, establishing enabling policies and seeking to attract new talent. The UK's nuclear delivery body, Great British Nuclear, was currently evaluating bids submitted to its SMR competition, which was aimed at developing innovative technology to boost the UK's energy security and sustainability.

127. In the area of fusion energy, the UK was advancing its Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production project. Working with commercial partners, it planned to build a prototype fusion power plant by 2040.

128. The UK had updated its policies on managing radioactive substances and on nuclear decommissioning, thereby driving innovation and sustainability and providing greater flexibility regarding disposal options. In addition, his country looked forward to hosting the Women in Nuclear Global Conference in London in July 2025, which would help put its commitment to increasing gender diversity in the nuclear workforce into action.

129. In 2024, the UK had become the first European country to launch a commercial-scale high assay LEU programme — with a landmark £300 million of funding — in order to invest in domestic fuel-cycle capabilities that would benefit both the UK and its allies while driving innovation and research. It was also proud to be working as part of the Sapporo 5 group to promote genuine supply chain resilience. As a carbon-neutral future depended on a diversified nuclear fuel supply chain that was not just reliable and resilient but also free from political influence, his country had committed to banning Russian uranium from use in UK reactors by 2030, and it encouraged Member States to join it in taking assertive action to reduce dependency on the Russian Federation.

130. While the Russian Federation's war in Ukraine continued, the UK was proud to have supported Ukraine and the Agency in bolstering safety and security at Ukraine's nuclear sites under increasingly difficult circumstances. Noting that Zaporizhzhya NPP remained inaccessible to the Ukrainian authorities owing to the Russian Federation's illegal seizure and control of the plant, the UK reiterated its call on the Russian Federation to withdraw from the plant and hand control back to the competent Ukrainian authorities. The UK praised the Agency's essential work in Ukraine, including the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya, without which there would be no independent information on the situation at the plant. The Russian Federation's illegal invasion and reprehensible attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure continued to demonstrate the vital importance of nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and the wider world; the UK therefore supported the Director General's efforts to protect nuclear safety and security in Ukraine.

131. As one of the largest contributors to the NSF, the UK continued to support the expansion of nuclear security instruments, in particular the Amendment to the CPPNM, and called upon all Member States to ratify and implement those instruments as soon as possible.

132. His country welcomed the success of ICONS 2024 and thanked the Co-Presidents for their chairship. While it was disappointing that consensus on the ministerial declaration had been blocked by

one State, the UK had been pleased to support the Co-Presidents' statement and looked forward to continuing to work with Member States to make progress.

133. Unfortunately, there were still serious challenges to the safeguards regime on which all States depended. The UK remained deeply concerned at Iran's refusal to implement its legal safeguards obligations and cooperate with the Agency's ongoing investigations into undeclared nuclear material and activities detected in the country. Moreover, its failure over the past five years to provide the Agency with credible explanations for the material detected meant that the Agency could not provide assurance that Iran's nuclear programme was exclusively peaceful. Separately, Iran had continued to escalate its nuclear programme to unprecedented levels: its enriched uranium stockpile was 28 times higher than the JCPOA limit, and it continued to produce HEU with no credible civilian justification. Determined that Iran would never develop or acquire a nuclear weapon, the UK remained committed to finding a diplomatic solution to that increasingly severe threat to international peace and security.

134. The Agency could continue to count on his country's full support in strengthening the nuclear safeguards system. In that regard, the UK called on all countries that had not yet done so to agree and ratify a CSA, a revised SQP and an additional protocol.

135. The Agency must remain able to act independently, apply its unique legal and technical authority and negotiate safeguards arrangements with Member States without interference or politicization.

136. As part of the AUKUS partnership, the UK reaffirmed its commitment to setting the highest standard of non-proliferation and transparency and to keeping the international community updated as the non-proliferation approach was developed with the Agency. As the Director General had confirmed to the Board of Governors in September 2022, naval nuclear propulsion had been foreseen by the drafters of the NPT: it had been discussed during the negotiations on the model CSA, resulting in the inclusion of specific mechanisms to enable States to pursue naval nuclear propulsion.

137. The Agency's contribution went beyond safety, security and safeguards. So many countries had benefited from the Agency's technical cooperation, and the UK continued to make every effort to amplify and support that important work. His country looked forward to the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme in November 2024 as an opportunity to celebrate the TC programme's progress and achievements. It also looked forward to the International Conference on Small Modular Reactors and their Applications and the inaugural ministerial meeting of the World Fusion Energy Group, to be held in October 2024 and November 2024, respectively. The UK thanked the Secretariat and the Director General for providing those opportunities for further collaboration and offered them its wholehearted support.

138. Mr BAYRAKTAR (Türkiye), expressing confidence that the current session of the General Conference would make a fruitful contribution to the nuclear industry, said that his country was thankful to the Director General for his relentless efforts and dedication in promoting nuclear safety and security and recognized the Agency's pivotal role in fostering global nuclear cooperation.

139. Türkiye's national energy strategy prioritized sustainable development and energy security with the aim of reaching carbon neutrality by 2053. Nuclear energy was essential in that context. Given that, over the following two decades, electricity demand was expected to grow by 4% annually, his country would prioritize power generation from renewable resources, and nuclear energy would be added to its energy mix as a baseload source of electricity.

140. Türkiye was continuing to enhance its nuclear capacity in line with its long-term national energy plan. It aimed to produce 7.2 GW of nuclear power by 2035 and 20 GW by 2050, to which Akkuyu NPP, with its four reactors, would contribute a total capacity of 4.8 GW. It also had plans to commission two more NPPs, in addition to SMRs.

141. Given the importance of nuclear energy to creating a better future, Türkiye emphasized the need to remove all barriers to the development of the industry, such as sanctions and trade and financial restrictions. Such barriers not only slowed down technological progress and economic development but also hindered the ability to achieve global sustainability goals.

142. International policies must support — rather than impede — the responsible development and deployment of nuclear energy. In light of the decisions taken at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, a significant increase in nuclear capacity would be required to achieve the ambitious targets set forth in the Paris Agreement.

143. His country appreciated the Agency's efforts to advance nuclear technologies and support Member States in harnessing those technologies. Türkiye remained fully committed to the goal of ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy and would work closely with the Agency to that end.

144. In closing, he reaffirmed his country's unwavering dedication to its partnership with the Agency. Türkiye looked forward to continuing joint efforts to enhance nuclear energy for worldwide prosperity.

145. Mr RAMOKGOPA (South Africa) said that, in July 2024, the South African public electricity company Eskom had been granted a licence from the national nuclear regulator to continue operating Unit 1 of Koeberg NPP with a view to providing clean nuclear energy for an additional 20 years. The reactor would thus join approximately 120 others worldwide that had safely continued operating beyond their initial 40-year lifespan.

146. The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation was forging ahead with the development of a multipurpose research reactor project to complement the country's existing research reactor. The feasibility study had passed the gateway review and the project was now shovel-ready, with procurement preparations in progress and a request for proposals expected by April 2025.

147. South Africa had also embarked on the establishment of an off-site above-ground centralized interim storage facility for spent nuclear fuel, which would enable the safe, secure and sustainable long-term management of South Africa's spent nuclear fuel inventory.

148. According to the International Energy Agency's net zero road map, some 17 GW of nuclear power generation would be required per annum to achieve that global target. South Africa continued to work towards achieving the objectives of the 'just energy transition' in line with the renewed international drive to include nuclear energy as a critical energy source for meeting those objectives.

149. South Africa welcomed the choice of topic for the 2024 Scientific Forum, which encouraged the use of nuclear science to grow stronger, healthier and safer crops and, in turn, provide food security, especially on the African continent. In that connection, his country supported the launch of the Group of Friends of Food Security, co-chaired by Italy and the Sudan.

150. In May 2024, in an important development towards addressing cancer treatment needs in Africa, South Africa had launched the Nuclear Medicine Research Infrastructure — the first facility of its kind on the continent — which would provide assistance to Rays of Hope in accordance with the recently signed anchor centre agreement between the Agency and the Steve Biko Academic Hospital.

151. Aware of the importance of the TC programme, South Africa continued to support Agency capacity-building and training-related activities through participation at national and regional levels. His country was pleased to confirm that it would deposit its instrument of acceptance of the revised AFRA with the Agency later that same week.

152. South Africa remained steadfast in its support for advancing nuclear disarmament, ensuring non-proliferation and upholding the inalienable and unconditional right of States to pursue peaceful nuclear energy development. Moreover, it continued to support initiatives to strengthen nuclear security through active participation in the International Conference on Nuclear Security.

153. His country was gravely concerned about the growing threat to international peace and security stemming from the rising geopolitical tensions among the nuclear powers and the increasing threat of use of nuclear weapons. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Sudan were also deeply troubling, especially given their devastating humanitarian impact on civilians, in particular women and children.

154. Nuclear weapons did not guarantee security; rather, they only detracted from it. Given the Agency's central role in strengthening and coordinating nuclear security and safety frameworks globally, it remained crucial that the Agency's work was not politicized and that States did not detract from the Agency's important technical responsibilities.

155. In closing, he reiterated South Africa's continued unwavering support for the Agency's fundamental role in ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology, in pursuit of the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

156. Mr OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic), expressing support for the Director General's various initiatives launched in service of humanity, said that his country commended the Director General for his efforts to make the work of the Agency a success and to maintain the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

157. Syria had continued to cooperate with the Agency with the utmost transparency and flexibility and had spared no effort to resolve outstanding issues. It had also engaged positively with the proposals set out in the Director General's letter of August 2023. In March 2024, the Director General had visited Syria, where he had met with the President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, thereby further cementing the good relations between Syria and the Agency. A delegation from the Agency had subsequently visited two of the three sites which the Agency had asked to visit, and arrangements had been made for a visit to the third site in October 2024.

158. While Syria was complying with its CSA commitments and responding to all periodic inspection requests on time, certain States unfortunately continued to practise double standards by turning a blind eye to Israel's possession of nuclear capabilities in stark violation of resolutions of international legitimacy and outside the realm of international oversight. Israel was not exempt from responsibility by the fact of not having acceded to the NPT; in fact, as a member of the Agency, it was required to uphold the provisions of the Agency's Statute and the comprehensive safeguards system.

159. All States in the Middle East — with the exception of Israel — were parties to the NPT and the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system and were calling for the establishment of an NWFZ in the region. The creation of such a zone would be a step towards achieving the universalization of the NPT and ensuring international stability, peace and security.

160. The Zionist entity and the States that protected it and supplied it with weapons and other lethal tools were entirely responsible for the ongoing war of genocide in the Gaza Strip. The international community must hold Israel accountable for its vile crimes, in particular its killing of women, children, babies and elderly people and its destruction of innocent civilians' homes.

161. Even emergency responders and journalists were not spared the brutal death and destruction visited upon the Gaza Strip by Israel. However much it tried, Israel could not change the course of history or do away with a people who, with an iron will, had chosen to live on their own lands, whatever the cost.

162. Syria welcomed Iran's compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA and the March 2023 joint statement. Only through bilateral discussions between Iran and the Agency would the outstanding issues be resolved. Recalling that all NPT States Parties had the inalienable right to use nuclear energy for peaceful applications, Syria urged the Agency not to place any further restrictions on developing States in that regard. The additional protocol was voluntary in nature and could be implemented only upon the sovereign decision of States, in line with their national interests. No party had the right to force States to apply the additional protocol.

163. The Russian Federation was a responsible State that understood the importance of ensuring the safety and security of nuclear facilities and infrastructure. Since the start of the special military operation, the Russian Federation had repeatedly put forward practical suggestions, and it had exercised the highest level of self-restraint and shouldered its responsibilities in the face of all attempts at escalation.

164. Grateful for the central role played by the TC programme in promoting the benefits of atomic energy for peace, health and prosperity, Syria thanked the Agency and donor States for the equipment and training provided, including through Rays of Hope, in the wake of the earthquake that had struck the country in 2023.

165. Despite the economic sanctions imposed on the country, Syria had managed to implement many of the elements of its national and regional TC projects and had paid its financial dues in that regard. Syria sought the financial and technical support of the Agency and other Member States in converting its miniature neutron source reactor from high enriched fuel to low enriched fuel and in establishing a centre for the production of short-lived radioisotopes in Aleppo.

166. In closing, he reiterated his country's support for the General Conference and its desire for ever greater cooperation and partnership with the Agency.

167. Ms ŽIAKOVÁ (Slovakia) said that her country aligned itself with the official statement of the European Union, as available on the Agency's website.

168. Slovakia remained gravely concerned about the continued precarious state of nuclear safety and security at Ukrainian nuclear facilities, especially Zaporizhzhya NPP, which was a direct consequence of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. It was unacceptable that Russian forces continued to illegally occupy that plant and that all Seven Pillars continued to be compromised either fully or partially. Stressing the need to respect the Five Principles established by the Director General, Slovakia joined other States in calling on the Russian Federation to cease its aggression and withdraw all its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine. She reaffirmed her country's solidarity with Ukraine and its support for that country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

169. Slovakia praised the Director General's steadfast dedication and the Agency's tireless efforts to provide vital assistance to Ukraine in maintaining nuclear safety and security at its nuclear installations in such challenging circumstances. It was essential that the Agency continue to offer impartial assessments of the nuclear safety and security situation in Ukraine and consistently deliver up-to-date and objective information.

170. In the current deteriorating security environment, maintaining the integrity of the NPT regime was crucial. Slovakia remained strongly committed to the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, which played a key role in advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Agency's safeguards had an essential function in that context, with a CSA combined with an additional protocol constituting the current verification standard. Slovakia appreciated the Agency's impartial role and professionalism in safeguards implementation and verification.

171. The continued escalation of Iran's nuclear programme was fuelling international concerns. There was no credible civilian justification for enriching uranium to such a level. Slovakia called on Iran to reverse its nuclear trajectory, resolve all outstanding safeguards issues, implement the March 2023 joint statement and engage constructively with the Agency.

172. The current geopolitical dynamics and energy landscape demonstrated the pivotal role that nuclear energy could play in many countries, including Slovakia. As a safe, stable and carbon-free source of energy with the potential to tackle pressing energy challenges, nuclear power had the capacity to complement various renewable energy sources within the electrical grid.

173. Nuclear power enjoyed an enduring position in her country's energy mix and would continue to be a strategic imperative and a key component of its energy policy for years to come. The commissioning of Unit 3 of Mochovce NPP was an important milestone in the development of Slovakia's energy architecture and represented an important pillar in the country's efforts to ensure a stable and secure electricity supply. Full integration of the unit into the grid would increase the total share of electricity produced from nuclear power to 67%.

174. The subject of innovative technologies, including SMRs, remained a key focus area for her country. Slovakia continued its efforts to track the development of SMRs and other innovations, primarily through bilateral cooperation with other Member States and through forums such as the NHSI.

175. The application and advancement of nuclear and radiation technologies required strict adherence to safety and security standards. The Agency played a central role as a global reference point for the enhancement of nuclear safety, nuclear security and radiation protection, in particular through the development of safety standards and nuclear security guidance. Slovakia remained strongly committed to the principles set out in those documents and constantly strived for improvement in that regard, including by regularly inviting missions from the Agency's peer review and advisory services.

176. Slovakia was a staunch supporter of the Agency's mandate to promote the safe and peaceful uses of nuclear energy while addressing global challenges and providing lasting solutions in a wide range of areas, including the environment, human health, energy and climate change. It attached great relevance to the crucial role that both nuclear power and non-power applications played in meeting socioeconomic and sustainable development objectives, in particular the 2030 Agenda.

177. As the main mechanism for transferring nuclear technology and knowledge to Member States, the Agency's TC programme was highly beneficial for Slovakia, especially in the area of capacity building and knowledge transfer. Her country reaffirmed its support for a demand-driven, non-discriminatory, efficient and needs-based programme and looked forward to the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme, to be held in November 2024. Slovakia invited all Member States to continue sharing the latest scientific developments and best practices in nuclear technologies with a view to ensuring a high level of safety and security globally.

178. Slovakia praised the remarkable impact of the Agency's flagship initiatives, which provided added value while addressing pressing global challenges, including by fighting cancer, tackling hunger, ensuring high levels of nuclear and radiation safety and contributing to efforts to reach net zero by 2050, all by using nuclear science and technologies for the benefit of all.

179. In closing, she reiterated her country's strong and continued support for the Agency's mandate and for its efforts to carry out its statutory functions in an effective and efficient manner. Slovakia stood ready to continue supporting the Secretariat in the fulfilment of its statutory tasks.

180. Mr NANGOMBE (Namibia) said that his country was grateful for the Director General's relentless efforts to advance the Agency's mission to ensure that the benefits of nuclear technology were

accessible to all. Namibia was a steadfast supporter of the Agency's mandate, especially in the fields of non-proliferation, nuclear safety, nuclear security and the application of nuclear technologies. It took note of the Annual Report for 2023, which detailed the significant progress made over the past year.

181. As one of the world's major uranium producers and suppliers, Namibia placed immense value on the Agency's safeguards system, which was the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It therefore called for universal adherence to the NPT and encouraged all Member States to conclude a CSA with the Agency and to sign and ratify an additional protocol. Namibia maintained strict compliance with those documents, ensuring that its uranium resources were used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

182. During its tenure as a member of the Board of Governors, Namibia had actively contributed to advancing the Agency's objectives and had fully supported the vision encapsulated in the motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'. At a time of nuanced political tensions, his country advocated dialogue, diplomatic negotiations and consensus building as the preferred methods of resolving differences.

183. The TC programme was central to building capacity and fostering the acquisition of critical skills in nuclear science and technology. It positioned the Agency at the centre of the development agenda, which contrasted with the narrow view of the Agency as solely a 'nuclear watchdog'. Through the TC programme, Namibia had been able to enhance its expertise in various nuclear applications, including in the areas of cancer treatment, food safety and food security.

184. Namibia commended those Member States that had provided consistent financial support to the TC programme. As the programme remained the primary vehicle for the implementation of developmental initiatives that directly impacted citizens' daily lives, States had a duty to ensure and prioritize the allocation of predictable and assured funding that matched the needs of Member States.

185. In Namibia, cancer had become a leading cause of death, accounting for approximately 9% of all deaths annually. As primary health care was critical to combating that scourge, and as nuclear medicine and radiation therapy were vital in the continuum of cancer care, Namibia looked forward to strengthening such interventions through Rays of Hope.

186. As the global supply of radiopharmaceuticals continued to pose challenges, especially for small markets like Namibia, the Agency was urged to support the implementation of targeted interventions to address supply chain issues and ensure equitable access to radiopharmaceuticals.

187. Food security, food safety, health and education were central to Namibia's national developmental agenda. Namibia would continue to pursue TC initiatives aimed at enhancing food security, especially with regard to the development of high-yield, drought-tolerant crop varieties, as such initiatives had proved promising, with crop yields increased by 30% in arid regions.

188. The nuclear industry had catalysed and sustained the economic development of many industrialized countries. Developing countries aspired to carve out a similar path of accelerated socioeconomic development by harnessing nuclear technologies. In recent years, Namibia had witnessed a threefold increase in uranium production, driven by rising global demand for nuclear power. The Annual Report for 2023 projected continued growth in the sector, with Namibia being a key supplier in meeting that increasing demand. His Government was committed to exploring the feasibility of incorporating nuclear power into its national energy mix, given its potential to contribute to energy security, reduce emissions and accelerate socioeconomic development. Namibia was focused on promoting nuclear energy as a component of its national energy strategy.

189. His country attached great importance to women's empowerment and had made notable progress in increasing women's representation at all levels. It fully supported the Agency's efforts to enhance

women's representation and to continue striving for the equitable geographical representation of all women across all levels. In closing, he reiterated his country's readiness to contribute constructively to the discussions and decisions of the General Conference.

190. Mr ALHAMMADI (Qatar) said that, as geopolitical tensions grew around the world, hopes of achieving the objectives of the UN Charter were fading, especially the aim of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war. The threat of nuclear war and nuclear proliferation was growing, bringing with it the risk that humanity could be wiped out by nuclear weapons or famine, for which no one was being held accountable. The ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip was a stark example of what could happen in the absence of the rule of law.

191. Given the indivisible nature of global security, the only solution was to unite in support of the rule of law, democracy and multilateralism. The first and most pressing step to be taken was to secure a permanent and sustainable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. As history had shown, occupation, genocide, forced displacement and collective punishment had only ever added further fuel to the fire of conflict and violence.

192. Despite the gravity of the situation, the continued victories of multilateralism and the rule of law in international relations provided fresh hope. The International Court of Justice and the Agency were just two examples of what multilateralism could achieve with regard to strengthening the rule of law in international relations and improving human well-being through the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology and the enhancement of nuclear safety and security.

193. Now more than ever, the international community needed the Agency — its bastion against nuclear proliferation and its leader on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. The Agency's Annual Report for 2023 provided the best examples of its valuable efforts to strengthen infrastructure and promote nuclear applications for combating disease, improving food, water and energy management and addressing climate change with the aim of fostering safe and sustainable development in Member States. Qatar was particularly in favour of the Agency's initiatives in the areas of medicine and human health, such as Rays of Hope, and in zoonotic disease control.

194. Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards further undermined stability and security in the Middle East. Qatar urged the Agency to make greater efforts to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East.

195. Qatar had seen significant developments in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology and an expansion of its national capacities in the areas of health, the environment, food, industry and agriculture. The Agency and its TC programme had played an important role in that regard through the provision of training, technical support, guidance and field visits. The Agency had also helped Qatar develop a strategy on nuclear and radiation safety and security and response to nuclear and radiological emergencies, in order to ensure the protection of people and the environment from the risks of radiological contamination or radiation exposure.

196. In closing, he reiterated his country's firm backing of the Agency in its efforts to carry out its noble purpose. Grateful to the Director General and the Agency's staff for their work in that regard, Qatar announced that it would make a donation of US \$600 000 to the Agency.

Mr Ham Sang Wook (Republic of Korea), President, resumed the Chair.

197. Mr TOURE (Côte d'Ivoire), commending the Agency on the remarkable progress made in 2023 under the leadership of the Director General, said that his country — which enjoyed good relations with the Agency — was grateful for the effective and comprehensive support that it had received.

198. Côte d'Ivoire's national programme in the field of nuclear science and technology focused on several strategic priorities, which it sought to address by improving its technical infrastructure and building its human capacity.

199. Strengthening national infrastructure for radiation protection, nuclear safety and nuclear security and revising the 2013 national law on that topic were essential to better protecting the population against the harmful effects of radiation. Côte d'Ivoire had successfully ensured nuclear security at the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament held in the country in 2024, thanks to the excellent cooperation and significant support provided by the Agency in the form of loans of detection equipment, training of national experts and scientific visits. Following the tournament, an Ivoirian had been recruited by the Agency as an expert in nuclear security and regularly took part in Agency missions in that capacity.

200. The Alassane Ouattara National Centre of Medical Oncology and Radiotherapy, which was equipped with two linear accelerators, was in the process of acquiring new equipment, including a Halcyon system and a simulation scanner. The Grand-Bassam radiotherapy centre, which was currently under construction, would also be equipped with two linear accelerators. In addition, Côte d'Ivoire planned to acquire equipment to support cancer diagnosis and monitoring, including SPECT-CT and PET-CT devices with a cyclotron.

201. Several professionals from Côte d'Ivoire had received training in the use of the Agency's energy planning tools. Efforts were ongoing to raise awareness among national stakeholders regarding the country's electronuclear programme — which was aimed at covering long-term energy needs — notably through the establishment of an atomic energy commission to promote nuclear applications.

202. Côte d'Ivoire had established a genetic improvement programme for cattle, led by the Ministry of Animal and Fishing Resources, with the aim of increasing milk and meat production. In addition, various national laboratories were working on issues related to food safety, environmental monitoring and public health.

203. His country praised the Agency and its Director General for the initiatives introduced to help meet the major challenges facing States, notably Rays of Hope, Atoms4Food and NUTEC Plastics, which testified to the Agency's clear ambition and determination to make available to Member States a range of techniques, applications and scientific training opportunities in the nuclear field in order to consolidate international responses to the challenges associated with human health, the environment, food safety and sustainable development.

204. The theme of the 2024 Scientific Forum was of great relevance to Africa, and in particular to Côte d'Ivoire, the economy of which was heavily dependent on plant and animal agriculture. His country had been honoured to deliver a statement at the opening session of the Forum.

205. The global nuclear context was marked by the duality between the need to develop nuclear energy to meet States' growing energy needs and fight climate change on the one hand, and the rise of concerns regarding nuclear proliferation and security on the other. In that respect, Côte d'Ivoire welcomed the numerous field missions carried out by the Agency and the Director General with a view to providing enhanced monitoring of nuclear risks and ensuring compliance with the Seven Pillars. Côte d'Ivoire supported the ongoing efforts to monitor the situation on the ground and maintain global stability.

206. His country appreciated the confidence placed in it by the Agency in selecting it to host a regional workshop on conducting transport security inspections, held in September 2024, a sub-regional workshop on nuclear law, to be held in November 2024, and a workshop on energy planning for the West and Central African region, to be held in December 2024.

207. Côte d'Ivoire was grateful for the efforts of the Director General and his staff to ensure the successful implementation of the TC programme in the country, especially in the fields of health, food security, agriculture and livestock production. It was also grateful to Japan for its financial contribution of some €700 000, primarily to assist the improvement of local livestock productivity through the application of nuclear and molecular techniques. Lastly, he thanked the Director of the Division for Africa and the focal point for Côte d'Ivoire for their constant efforts to support his country.

208. Côte d'Ivoire reaffirmed its confidence in the Agency's ability to support countries in pursuing their missions, meeting challenges and guaranteeing the peaceful use of nuclear technologies for economic development and the social well-being of their populations.

209. Mr TURK (United States of America), expressing thanks to the Director General and the Secretariat for their leadership over the past year, read out the following message from President Biden:

“The United States remains fully committed to advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear technology around the world, while supporting the IAEA's nuclear safety, security and safeguards missions. The IAEA's implementation of international safeguards is essential not only to verification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations but also to laying the foundation for nuclear disarmament.

“The NPT is, and will continue to be, key to achieving the IAEA's objective to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of nuclear energy, science and technology to peace, health and prosperity. The United States remains deeply committed to the NPT, and sincerely appreciates the Secretariat's critical role in upholding it.

“As I look to the future, I am encouraged by the role civil nuclear energy can play to help keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach. The United States is committed to deploying civil nuclear energy to meet global net zero targets, including our pledge alongside 24 partners to triple globally installed nuclear generation capacity by 2050, and strengthen energy security while ensuring adherence to the strongest safety, non-proliferation and nuclear security norms and best practices.

“Lastly, I condemn Russia's continued brutal aggression in Ukraine. The United States reaffirms our support for the people of Ukraine and for the IAEA's critical efforts to prevent a nuclear disaster as a result of Russia's ongoing actions, which endanger Ukraine's peaceful nuclear facilities and critical energy infrastructure.”

210. Resuming his remarks, he said that the USA's efforts to promote responsible nuclear stewardship stood in stark contrast to the Russian Federation's reckless and irresponsible words and actions.

211. His country was concerned at Iran's lack of cooperation with the Agency, especially in light of the recent statements by current and former Iranian officials regarding Iran's technical capability to produce nuclear weapons. The USA and its partners stood resolutely behind the Agency in calling on Iran to implement its safeguards obligations fully and immediately.

212. For more than 30 years, Member States had adopted a General Conference resolution condemning the threat posed by the DPRK's unlawful nuclear activities, with all countries demonstrating broad support for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The USA and its partners called on the DPRK to fulfil its obligations under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and urged it to return to diplomacy without delay.

213. Nuclear security was more important than ever. The USA commended the Agency for its leadership in convening ICONS 2024 and encouraged all Member States to join the 28 others that had signed the Joint Statement on the Role of Nuclear Security in Harnessing the Power of Nuclear Energy.

Nuclear security, together with nuclear safety, safeguards and EPR, fostered public confidence in nuclear technology.

214. Given the important role of civil nuclear power in the urgent and comprehensive transition to a net zero economy, the USA was heartened by the progress made at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, with the historic inclusion of nuclear in the Global Stocktake and the launch of the Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy, aimed at achieving such an increase by 2050. Domestically, the USA had made huge strides towards reinvigorating its civil nuclear industry. In April 2024, the second new reactor in as many years had entered commercial operation, providing the USA with more than 2 GW of new clean electricity. In July 2024, the President had signed into law new provisions that would accelerate the licensing and deployment of advanced nuclear reactors.

215. At the same time, the US civil nuclear industry was providing products and services to help partner countries achieve their civil nuclear goals while incorporating effective and efficient considerations regarding nuclear security, safety and safeguards early in the design and deployment process.

216. As it worked to deploy existing clean energy solutions, the USA was also investing like never before in additional transformative options, including fusion energy — and it was doing so responsibly, as should all other Member States. Its Bold Decadal Vision for Commercial Fusion Energy was catalysing breakthroughs in its laboratories and fostering unprecedented partnership with a range of cutting-edge companies.

217. Beyond clean energy, nuclear technologies also held enormous potential to help attain the SDGs and improve quality of life around the world. The USA remained deeply committed to Rays of Hope; in 2024, it had pledged an additional US \$6 million for the initiative, bringing its total contribution to more than US \$55 million.

218. All States must focus on developing the workforce of the future, including by addressing gender and geographic inequality. Noting that the year 2023 had marked 70 years of ‘Atoms for Peace’, he said that the USA was looking to the potential offered by nuclear technologies to help solve many shared problems. Together, States could build a future defined by partnership and peace and fuelled by the astounding power of the atom.

219. Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand) said that, in the current context of increasing complexities caused by unprecedented geopolitical uncertainties, the rapid advances in nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes had transformed societies remarkably, underscoring the Agency’s indispensable role in upholding international peace and security through its three pillars of nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

220. Thailand was deeply concerned at the situation in Ukraine, in particular the growing risk to nuclear facilities and the well-being of the personnel involved. It commended the Agency’s continued presence and assistance at the NPPs in Ukraine in order to ensure their safe and secure operation. Thailand strongly urged the parties concerned to uphold the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles.

221. Sharing the international community’s concerns regarding the developments on the Korean Peninsula, Thailand called on the DPRK to comply fully with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It appreciated the Agency’s continued monitoring of the DPRK’s nuclear programme and its readiness to resume its verification mandate once a diplomatic solution had been reached.

222. Highlighting the importance of the efforts to revive the JCPOA — one of the most extensive nuclear safeguards verification mechanisms — Thailand commended the Agency for carrying out its verification and monitoring activities, as mandated under the Plan, in an impartial, professional and

independent manner. All parties involved must exert the utmost effort to reach a diplomatic solution that would allow them to return to their full commitments under the JCPOA.

223. For decades, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy had contributed significantly to socioeconomic development and the achievement of the SDGs. Key Agency initiatives such as ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Atoms4Food — the last of which was the theme of the 2024 Scientific Forum — were pivotal in that regard.

224. Thailand would be taking a significant step by hosting the first Rays of Hope Anchor Centre in Southeast Asia, with the signing ceremony scheduled for later that week. Based at Ramathibodi Hospital, the centre would enhance access to radiation medicine, thereby improving cancer care for all.

225. Reaffirming its commitment to the TC programme as a crucial mechanism for capacity building, Thailand was pleased to pledge its full share to the TCF. Under its CPF for 2023–2029, Thailand would work closely with the Agency to expand nuclear applications across various areas, including food and agriculture, health and nutrition, water management and the environment, industry and energy, and nuclear and radiation safety and nuclear security. It would take gender perspectives into account during all such activities.

226. At the regional level, the RCA and ASEANTOM were key mechanisms for strengthening cooperation. In that regard, Thailand looked forward to the renewal of the Practical Arrangements between ASEAN and the Agency with a view to enhancing cooperation between the two bodies for the benefit of the people of the region.

227. In its pursuit of the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, Thailand had adopted a comprehensive national nuclear security regime and a national plan for nuclear and radiation EPR. It had actively engaged with the Agency's peer review and advisory service missions, having received multiple ORPAS missions, a second INIR-RR mission and a recent INSServ mission, and looked forward to the IRRS and IPPAS missions scheduled for 2025.

228. In recognition of the vital role of international cooperation, Thailand had joined RANET with a view to providing assistance to other countries in the event of a nuclear or radiological emergency. Furthermore, it would chair the 15th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network, to be held in the country in November 2024.

229. Thailand recognized the Agency's critical role in strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime while promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the NPT, and underscored the complementarity between the NPT, the TPNW, the CTBT and other frameworks and organizations.

230. The resolution on the restoration of sovereign equality of Member States in the Agency adopted at the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference² represented a much-needed step forward in addressing that long-standing issue, which affected the rights of Member States to equal representation and participation in the Agency's decision-making bodies. Continued constructive engagement and dialogue among Member States and across area groups, in line with the spirit of consensus, were essential to reaching mutually agreed solutions.

231. Appreciative of the Agency's professionalism in fulfilling its mandate in a transparent and objective manner, Thailand reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to cooperating with the Agency and fellow Member States in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and strengthening nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

² GC(67)/RES/15

232. Ms CULLINANE (Ireland) said that her country aligned itself with the official statement of the European Union, as published online.

233. The General Conference was once again meeting against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, in clear breach of international law and the UN Charter. The Russian Federation's brutal invasion of Ukraine, in violation of the latter's sovereignty and territorial integrity, continued to pose serious risks to Ukrainian and global nuclear facilities. The Russian Federation still showed no sign of complying with the numerous resolutions adopted by the Board of Governors and General Conference in that regard.

234. Ireland was deeply concerned that the situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP remained precarious and that the Seven Pillars continued to be either fully or partially compromised. It strongly supported the reinforced Agency presence at the plant to monitor and report on the implementation of the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles. Given that nuclear safety and security were essential in all circumstances, including in armed conflict, the Agency's reports of continued military activity in the vicinity of Zaporizhzhya NPP and the presence of Russian armed troops and military equipment at the site were extremely worrying. There was an easy solution to the increasingly dangerous situation: the Russian Federation must withdraw all its troops from Ukrainian nuclear facilities and the entire sovereign territory of Ukraine. Ireland would stand with Ukraine for as long as necessary.

235. 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. Ireland regretted that the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference had ended without the adoption of a consensus outcome document. As work was under way to prepare for the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee, Ireland called on all States to engage in the discussions in good faith and to embody the spirit of compromise to ensure the effective implementation of the NPT. The Agency's role in that regard was invaluable. Ireland called for universal adherence to the additional protocol, which — together with the CSA — constituted the current verification standard under the NPT. States that were developing their civilian nuclear programmes were urged to amend or rescind their SQPs, sign and ratify the additional protocol as a matter of priority and recall the importance of universal adherence to Agency safeguards.

236. All States possessed the sovereign right to develop nuclear technologies for energy and other peaceful uses. While nuclear and radiation technologies could provide a wide variety of socioeconomic and environmental benefits, nuclear power must be used safely and securely in line with the highest international standards. Ireland underscored the Agency's central role in that regard and had welcomed the opportunity to discuss the future of global nuclear security at ICONS 2024.

237. Although the links between nuclear security, non-proliferation and disarmament were well known, progress on disarmament was sorely needed. Ireland was pleased to have participated in the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in 2023. The TPNW was fully complementary to the NPT, with both treaties working together to maintain and reaffirm the disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Moreover, the TPNW created a legal framework to support the implementation of Article IV of the NPT.

238. Ireland remained deeply concerned at Iran's nuclear activities, which were inconsistent with the JCPOA. It was essential that Iran and the international community work urgently to find a diplomatic solution in order 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 affected the Agency's operations. It was troubling that Iran had not made progress in resolving the remaining outstanding safeguards issues as required for the Agency to provide

assurances that its nuclear programme was exclusively peaceful. Iran must engage constructively and fully with the Agency.

239. Ireland condemned the DPRK's unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile activities, which were in flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions, and called on the DPRK to immediately end its destabilizing actions and take steps to abandon its missile, WMD and nuclear weapon programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. The DPRK must return to compliance with the NPT, cooperate fully with the Agency and sign and ratify the CTBT without delay.

240. Ireland took note of Syria's renewed engagement with the Agency and welcomed the launch of a process aimed at clarifying the outstanding safeguards issues. Syria was urged to cooperate fully with the Agency and to sign, bring into force and fully implement an additional protocol as a matter of urgency.

241. Ireland remained committed to ensuring the effective and efficient functioning of the Agency. Commending the Agency and its Director General for their continued work to advance gender parity, Ireland reiterated its strong support for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and the integration of a gender perspective across all three pillars of the NPT.

242. An inclusive workforce and inclusive discussions contributed directly to technological and diplomatic innovation. Ireland called on all States to engage in a collaborative manner and in good faith with the work of the General Conference to address the challenges faced and achieve real and lasting progress for the benefit of all.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.