IAEA
Atoms for Peace and Development

General Conference

GC(68)/OR.1
Issued: December 2024

General Distribution
Original: English

Sixty-eighth regular session

Plenary

Record of the First Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Monday, 16 September 2024, at 10.05 a.m.

Temporary President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)
President: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)

Contents

[1] GC(68)/21

Contents (continued)

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(68)/INF/5

Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
G-20	Group of Twenty
HEU	high enriched uranium
ICONS	International Conference on Nuclear Security
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
LEU	low enriched uranium
MeV	megaelectronvolt
MW	megawatt
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
PET	positron emission tomography
PHWR	pressurized heavy water reactor
PMO	Policy-Making Organ
RASIMS	Radiation Safety Information Management System
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEED	Site and External Events Design
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SPECT	single photon emission computed tomography
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
UCF	Uranium Conversion Facility
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

– Opening of the session

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared the sixty-eighth regular session of the General Conference open.

2. In accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, she invited the delegates to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.

3. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT said that she wished to express her sincere gratitude to all Member States for their broad support, commitment and cooperation, which had been instrumental in the successful conclusion of the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference. That collective effort reflected the importance that Member States placed on the Agency's vital work and noble mission of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and advancing global security and development.

4. She had been honoured to serve as President of the previous regular session of the General Conference and thanked the South East Asia and the Pacific Group for entrusting her with that important responsibility. She also conveyed her heartfelt appreciation to the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and the Vice-Presidents of that session for their cooperation, to the members of the Secretariat for their professionalism, knowledge and support, and to the Director General and the Deputy Directors General for their leadership, tireless efforts and commitment to the work of the Agency.

5. At the heart of the Agency's enduring success lay its ability to foster diplomacy and international cooperation, empowering nations to work together towards common goals. Nevertheless, as a member-driven organization, its future accomplishments were in the hands of its Member States, and they therefore had a shared responsibility to ensure that the guiding principle of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' remained relevant and led to lasting global benefits.

6. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the Agency remained a cornerstone of international cooperation for peace, security and sustainable development and ensured the responsible use of nuclear technology for exclusively peaceful purposes. Over the past year, the Agency had continued to adapt to emerging global challenges, addressing pressing issues — such as climate change, public health crises and food security — through its diverse initiatives with unwavering dedication. Its commitment to both collaboration and innovation had solidified its role as a key driver of progress on multiple fronts.

7. Over the preceding year, the Agency had held numerous significant meetings, seminars and workshops, including the first Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels in March 2024 and the fourth ICONS 2024 in Vienna in May 2024. Furthermore, the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme would be held in November 2024. Such activities offered valuable insights into key challenges and lessons learned, while also strengthening cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

8. It was universally agreed that the TC programme was a key driver in Member States' efforts to achieve socioeconomic development and fulfil the 2030 Agenda. Through the provision of capacity building, technical support and essential equipment, the Agency was helping address pressing global challenges.

9. Cancer remained a significant global health challenge, especially in developing countries. As the number of new cases and deaths rose, Rays of Hope shone as a beacon of optimism, with anchor centres being established around the world to strengthen cancer treatment infrastructure and deliver life-saving care to long-underserved populations.

10. Highlighting the often-overwhelming level of plastic pollution in rivers and coastal areas, she noted the considerable progress made under NUTEC Plastics towards nuclear-enabled plastic recycling through pilot projects in the Asia-Pacific region.

11. Moreover, through ZODIAC, the Agency had made impressive progress in its mission to combat zoonotic diseases by expanding the associated laboratory network. Furthermore, Atoms4Food — which had been highlighted at the 2024 Scientific Forum — was a timely and essential new initiative to address global food insecurity.

12. It was encouraging to know that the Agency had played a crucial role at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP28), highlighting the contribution of nuclear energy to climate mitigation and adaptation and to energy security through, among other things, the use of SMRs to achieve net zero emissions. Member States could look forward to the first International Conference on Small Modular Reactors and their Applications, to be held in Vienna in October 2024.

13. Member States should fully support the Agency in strengthening international nuclear safety and security standards and in conducting its continuous nuclear verification and monitoring activities, which were crucial for ensuring compliance with international non-proliferation agreements and guaranteeing the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

14. Commending the Agency's unwavering commitment to the empowerment of women within the nuclear field, she highlighted the role of initiatives such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment where women played an integral part in shaping the future of nuclear technology.

15. In closing, she voiced the hope that flexibility, open communication and mutual understanding — embodying the Vienna spirit that had guided negotiations the previous year — would continue to shape the current session of the General Conference. Thanks to that commitment to dialogue and adaptability, Member States were better positioned to reach consensus and set clear, unified directions for the Agency's work in the years to come. She wished Member States enriching and productive discussions, and the incoming President every possible success.

1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee

16. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.

17. Mr TSENGEG (Mongolia), speaking on behalf of the Far East Group, proposed Mr Ham Sang Wook (Republic of Korea).

18. Mr TILEUBERDI (Kazakhstan) said that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan aligned themselves with his statement.

19. Currently, 14 Member States continued to be deprived of their fundamental right to be elected to the Board of Governors and the Bureau of the General Conference, a state of affairs that violated the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in Article IV.C of the Agency's Statute by preventing

the Agency from extending the rights and benefits of membership to all its Member States. In 2023, the General Conference had adopted resolution GC(67)/RES/15 — a landmark text initiated by Kazakhstan — with the aim of finally restoring sovereign equality within the Agency. Unfortunately, some Member States continued to ignore that resolution, despite having voted for it.

20. The Far East Group, all six members of which had supported the resolution, had nominated the Republic of Korea as President of the current session of the General Conference; Kazakhstan did not intend to break the consensus on that important issue at the current stage. However, any Member State intending to assume the highest leadership position in the Agency's PMOs should bear increased responsibility, display greater impartiality and adhere strictly to the principles of the Statute and the UN Charter. It should also fulfil its obligations and commitments within the framework of the Agency and should not in any way prevent 'arealess' States from joining regional groups. The failure to fulfil the strong desire of those States for membership of a regional group was regrettable. Kazakhstan would speak further on the matter under the agenda item on the restoration of sovereign equality in the Agency.

21. Kazakhstan hoped that the Republic of Korea, during its presidency of the General Conference, would carry out its duties impartially and reconsider its position with regard to the 'arealess' States.

22. Mr Ham Sang Wook (Republic of Korea) was elected President by acclamation.

23. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT congratulated Mr Ham Sang Wook and wished him a successful Conference.

Mr Ham Sang Wook (Republic of Korea) took the Chair.

24. The PRESIDENT said that he wished to express his deepest gratitude for the Far East Group's encouragement and support and for the confidence shown by Member States in electing him as President. Despite having repeatedly witnessed the disruption of the cherished Vienna spirit, he remained convinced that consensus was the only path to achieving common goals and sincerely hoped that cooperation and shared commitment would lead to the successful conclusion of the current session of the General Conference.

25. He thanked the Ambassador of Thailand for her exemplary leadership during the previous regular session of the Conference and commended the Director General for his continued tireless efforts, his leadership and his commitment to the nuclear agenda throughout his remarkably successful second term. He also conveyed his sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for its consistent and invaluable support for the Conference and for the broader mission of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'. He bore the great honour of serving as President with a profound sense of duty and the determination to further the Agency's unique contributions to peace, development and prosperity throughout the world.

26. The significance of the Agency's work was exemplified by the Republic of Korea's exceptional journey in the field of nuclear energy. Since joining the Agency as a founding member in 1956, it had striven to advance nuclear energy and technology for both national reconstruction and economic development, with the invaluable support of the Agency and the international community. Today, his country ranked fifth globally in nuclear power generation, with 26 reactors in operation, and was one of six countries capable of exporting nuclear reactors and technology. Those successes were matched by its unwavering commitment to non-proliferation and the safe and secure use of nuclear technology.

27. The Republic of Korea's evolution from TC beneficiary to donor country underscored the dramatic change in the global nuclear landscape. Having benefited from international cooperation, it was now in a position to give back and share its knowledge and resources worldwide. As such, his country's story was not its alone, but rather a shared achievement of the international nuclear community and the Agency.

28. The role of nuclear energy had never been more critical. The world faced the unprecedented challenges of climate change, increasing electricity demand driven by technological advancements such as artificial intelligence, and concerns over energy security. Nuclear power was an essential part of the solution, offering a reliable, zero-carbon energy source to meet collective climate goals and ensure a stable energy supply for future generations.

29. Furthermore, technological developments were expanding the scope and impact of nuclear applications throughout the world, from providing critical cancer treatment and giving hope to those in need, to protecting the environment and ecosystems by monitoring and reducing pollution, defending humans and animals against emerging diseases, and enhancing food security and agricultural productivity to ensure a sustainable future.

30. In embracing the potential of nuclear technology as a pathway to prosperity, however, the paramount importance of maintaining the highest standards of safeguards, safety and security must also be recognized. Those were not merely technical requirements; they were the foundation of the trust and confidence underpinning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and ensured that nuclear technology remained a force for good, contributing to the well-being of all humankind.

31. The current session of the Conference was taking place at a pivotal moment. The agenda was full of significant issues that underlined the urgency of addressing non-proliferation concerns, fostering the conditions for the adoption of next-generation SMRs and ensuring robust nuclear safety and security in response to the global expansion of nuclear technology. The decisions and actions taken in the days ahead would have far-reaching implications. It was therefore imperative that the Vienna spirit of compromise and cooperation prevail in discussions. Only through collective action and a shared commitment to common goals could those complex challenges be addressed.

32. He called on Member States to seize the opportunity to reaffirm their dedication to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, strengthen their collaborative efforts and advance the shared vision of a safer, more prosperous world.

33. Turning to procedural matters, he said that the Conference was required, under Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure, to elect eight Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and five additional members of the General Committee to constitute a General Committee of 15, which he would chair.

34. However, in the current year, he understood that the General Committee would be composed of 16 members, consisting of eight Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and six additional members, so that the Far East Group, in addition to providing the President of the Conference, could also have a Vice-President. That would involve the suspension of Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, as had been done in comparable situations in the past.

35. The President’s proposals were accepted.

36. The PRESIDENT, noting that the Middle East and South Asia Group had not yet proposed a candidate to serve as an additional member of the General Committee, proposed that the delegates of Burkina Faso, Canada, Iraq, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines, Serbia and the United Kingdom be elected as Vice-Presidents, that Mr Lodding of Sweden be elected as Chair of the Committee of the Whole, and that the delegates of Ecuador, France, the Russian Federation, the Sudan and the United States of America be elected as additional members of the General Committee.

37. Mr MOHANTY (India), speaking on behalf of the Middle East and South Asia Group, said that no expressions of interest had been received for nomination to the General Committee. Given the pressing need to fill the post to ensure the smooth conduct of the Conference’s business, India stood ready to offer its candidature.

38. The PRESIDENT proposed that the delegate of India also be elected as an additional member of the General Committee.

39. The President's proposals were accepted.

40. The PRESIDENT congratulated the Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and the additional members of the General Committee on their election.

5. Arrangements for the Conference
(GC(68)/INF/7 and 8)

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

41. The PRESIDENT proposed that, before receiving the General Committee's recommendation on the provisional agenda, the General Conference should suspend Rule 42 of its Rules of Procedure, in line with past practice, and proceed with consideration of items 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 — in that order — so as not to delay the start of the regular session.

42. It was so decided.

2. Applications for membership of the Agency
(GC(68)/17 and 18)

43. The PRESIDENT drew attention to documents GC(68)/17 and 18 containing applications for membership by the Cook Islands and Somalia, respectively. The applications had been endorsed by the Board of Governors, which had submitted, in those documents, two draft resolutions for adoption by the General Conference.

44. He took it that the Conference wished to adopt the draft resolutions by acclamation.

45. It was so decided.

46. The PRESIDENT congratulated the Cook Islands and Somalia on being approved for membership of the Agency.

47. Mr HAADOOW (Somalia), speaking under Rule 30, said that his country was grateful to the Agency for the invaluable opportunity to become a Member State. The approval of its application for membership represented a significant milestone on Somalia's journey towards growth and development.

48. Unwaveringly committed to international cooperation, peace and the responsible use of advanced technology for the betterment of its citizens, Somalia sought to draw on the Agency's invaluable expertise to unlock the transformative potential of the safe, secure and sustainable use of nuclear science and technology in tackling some of the most pressing challenges faced, including by enhancing health care and agriculture, improving the management of natural resources and increasing resilience to climate change. It was also eager to collaborate with the Secretariat and Member States in the global exchange of knowledge and best practices and in the promotion of nuclear applications as a catalyst for development, security and peace.

49. Vowing to uphold the Agency's principles and the provisions of international law, standards and regulations, Somalia reaffirmed its commitment to the NPT and the advancement of international initiatives to ensure the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear technology.

3. Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

50. Ms WALY (Director General, United Nations Office at Vienna) expressed solidarity with Austria and its neighbouring countries in light of the loss of life and immense damage caused by recent severe flooding.

51. She read out the following message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

> "I send my warmest greetings to participants at the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.
>
> "As the guardian of the global nuclear safeguards regime, the Agency's work is more vital than ever.
>
> "We are living through a moment of rising geopolitical division and mistrust with grave nuclear undertones.
>
> "I call on all States to support the Agency's role in ensuring the strictly peaceful use of nuclear energy. To this end, I once again urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to resume complete cooperation with the IAEA and call for all relevant parties to return to the full implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.
>
> "As the war continues to rage in Ukraine, the risk of an accident at a nuclear power plant remains a daily possibility that must be avoided at all costs. The IAEA continues to provide invaluable support to ensure the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant and other nuclear facilities affected by the war.
>
> "Amidst these challenges, harnessing the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology is critical. Through more than 1000 active technical cooperation projects worldwide, the Agency continues to ensure that nuclear energy benefits people and sectors around the world — from health and nutrition, to food, agriculture, water and environmental sustainability.
>
> "I look forward to strengthening the valuable cooperation between the IAEA and the United Nations, and I wish you a successful Conference."

4. Statement by the Director General

52. The DIRECTOR GENERAL, expressing heartfelt sympathy on behalf of the Agency to Austria in light of the extreme weather phenomenon affecting the country, said that the Secretary-General's message was a reminder that the Agency's role and mission were indispensable. Despite the current unprecedented tensions and uncertainties, the Agency should not be deterred or forget the absolute importance of its work, which could not be put on hold until those tensions eased.

53. The Agency played a critical role in preventing the erosion of the nuclear non-proliferation regime that underpinned global peace and security, ensuring that nuclear safety and security prevailed even in times of war and promoting the efficient application of nuclear science and technology with a view to reducing poverty and difficulties around the world.

54. One of the most pressing global issues was food security. Every night more than 700 million people went to bed hungry — an obscenity that all UN organizations and their member States were trying to address. Through Atoms4Food, launched jointly with the FAO in 2023, the Agency sought to remedy that global crisis by using nuclear technology to irradiate food, control pests and improve soil and crops. In that connection, he invited Member States to attend the launch of the 2024 Scientific Forum, which was focused on addressing the issue of food insecurity through Atoms4Food.

55. Over the next five days some 200 000 people worldwide would be diagnosed with cancer — roughly half of whom would die from preventable or curable forms of the disease — while many more, especially in developing States, would remain undiagnosed because of a lack of diagnostic capacity. To remedy that situation, the Agency, in close coordination with the WHO, had launched Rays of Hope to provide support to low- and middle-income countries in particular — some of which did not have a single radiotherapy machine — in the form of equipment and training, and in some cases even by constructing cancer centres. The Agency continued to count on Member States' support for that noble mission.

56. NUTEC Plastics had put the Agency at the forefront of multilateral efforts to stem the global microplastic pollution crisis. In addition, through ZODIAC — the successor to the Agency's biggest yet campaign, in which it had provided equipment and other support to more than 130 countries in response to the COVID-19 pandemic — the Agency was working in more than 100 countries, following the One Health approach, to take preventive action against zoonotic diseases, including through the provision of nuclear-related equipment to veterinary laboratories to combat diseases such as mpox.

57. Turning to the energy crisis, which had been compounded by climate change, he said that the Agency had continued to promote the potential of nuclear energy as a clean energy source. Nuclear power currently accounted for around a quarter of the clean energy produced around the world. Moreover, in the first Global Stocktake, conducted at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, the participating UN member States had agreed that the development of nuclear energy should be accelerated. That global consensus demonstrated just how far the Agency had come, bearing in mind that nuclear power had previously been shunned in international conferences. The Agency would work with Azerbaijan to continue that very important effort at the 29th session of the Conference (COP29).

58. In addition to traditional forms of nuclear power generation, new generations of power reactors such as SMRs were also making an important contribution. The first International Conference on Small Modular Reactors and their Applications, to be held in October 2024 in Vienna, would provide an opportunity to take stock of progress in that regard and explore how developing States in particular could benefit from SMRs for energy diversification and clean power production. Moreover, fusion, with its potential for highly efficient, clean power generation, had always been considered one of the most promising scientific areas. The Agency had therefore launched the World Fusion Energy Group, which was scheduled to meet in Rome in November 2024 with a view to moving the conversation forward.

59. Given the ever-present possibility of a nuclear accident resulting from the ongoing war in Europe, the Agency had maintained its presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP, having provided 23 rotations of Agency experts, who were working to keep the international community informed of developments. In addition, a few days before the current session of the General Conference, he had visited Kursk, where the

situation was serious. Under no circumstances should a peaceful NPP, irrespective of its location, ever be attacked.

60. The Agency would continue to uphold the nuclear non-proliferation regime. He looked forward to continued engagement with the new President and Government of Iran with a view to being able to give the international community credible assurances that the Iranian nuclear programme was and would remain peaceful. The challenges ahead were not insurmountable. The Agency stood ready to continue those efforts, as it had done in Syria, where, for the first time in more than a decade, progress was being made in clarifying some of the issues at the root of important concerns.

61. The progress made in the nuclear field would not have been possible without a skilled workforce, in which young professionals and women were essential. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme had opened possibilities for hundreds of women who had lacked the opportunity or the means to continue their careers in the nuclear field. Likewise, the Lise Meitner Programme was promoting the development of mid-career women in the nuclear sector, an area that would not remain male-dominated forever. Those efforts must continue, given the millions of technicians and engineers who would be needed in the years to come — women were essential in that regard. Progress was also being made towards achieving gender balance in the Secretariat, where the proportion of women in the Professional categories had risen from a meagre 28% at the start of his tenure to 48.5% and was expected to hit 50% very soon.

62. In closing, he said that, from working on the front lines of war to providing radiotherapy units and supporting food systems and environmental protection, the Agency would remain at the service of its Member States in noble pursuit of ‘Atoms for Peace and Development’.

6. Contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2025 (GC(68)/16)

63. The PRESIDENT, recalling that, in June 2024, the Board had recommended a figure of €98 000 000 as the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 2025, drew attention to document GC(68)/16 showing the contribution that each Member State would need to make in order to meet its share of the target.

64. The early pledging and payment of contributions to the TCF greatly helped the Secretariat in planning the Agency’s TC programme. All delegations in a position to do so were urged to notify the Secretariat during the current session of the contributions that their Governments would be making for 2025. He was pleased to note that 33 Member States had already made their pledges.

65. He would provide an update at the end of the session on the contributions pledged and hoped to be able to report favourably on the percentage of the 2025 target figure already pledged.

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

66. Mr ESLAMI (Islamic Republic of Iran), reaffirming the full commitment of the new Government and President of Iran to expanding balanced, constructive and professional international relations, said

that the atrocities being perpetrated by the Israeli apartheid regime in Palestine posed a serious concern for the international community. The Israeli regime had so far slaughtered over 41 000 civilians, mainly innocent women and children, and had wounded more than 100 000 others. It continued to carry out its crimes and genocide shamelessly under the protection of the USA and other countries.

67. Member States could not ignore the ongoing genocide of innocent people whose lands had been occupied for more than seven decades, in flagrant violation of various UN resolutions and with the full support of certain countries. The UN apparatus was being continuously challenged, owing to the inaction of the authorities responsible for maintaining peace and security. In that respect, the self-proclaimed representatives of the international community must be held accountable.

68. By assassinating Iranian scientists and committing various acts of sabotage and terrorism, the Israeli regime was leading an extensive propaganda campaign against Iran's peaceful nuclear programme, seeking to divert public attention from its own crimes and atrocities.

69. Nuclear disarmament was the highest priority of the international community, and it was essential that nuclear-weapon States fulfil their obligations under Article VI of the NPT. It was more important than ever to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East. On several occasions during the past year, the child-killing Zionist apartheid regime had threatened to use nuclear weapons against the oppressed people of the Gaza Strip, as well as the great nation of Iran. The Israeli regime's refusal to join the NPT and place its nuclear activities and facilities under the Agency's safeguards posed a threat to international peace and security.

70. Turning to the topic of climate change, he said that global challenges required global solutions. The use of clean energy, in particular nuclear energy, as a reliable baseload power source played a significant role; in that regard, the Agency had a statutory obligation to facilitate access to the necessary technology and equipment for all Member States, especially developing States, without discrimination.

71. Iran, for its part, was determined to increase the share of nuclear power in its energy portfolio to 20 000 MW by 2040, in line with its comprehensive 20-year strategy for the development of the nuclear industry.

72. In May 2024, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, his country had held both the 30th National Nuclear Conference and the first International Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology in Isfahan, with the participation the Director General and his accompanying delegation. The latter Conference had showcased the peaceful nuclear achievements made by Iran — which would be presented at the country's General Conference side event — despite its subjection to the most severe, oppressive and unilateral sanctions.

73. Iran continued to cooperate with the Agency in an honest and extensive manner. The number of designated Agency inspectors in his country was incomparable to that in any other Member State. In addition, more than 20% of all Agency inspections in 2023 had taken place in Iran, even though the country had only 3% of the total number of nuclear facilities worldwide. That indicated his country's good faith.

74. In de-designating Agency inspectors, Iran had exercised its inherent and sovereign right in line with its CSA. The insistence that it reverse its decision set an unjustified and troubling precedent.

75. Iran should not be pressurized to convert voluntary measures undertaken in relation to the JCPOA into obligations. The Plan was an agreement made with other participants; its implementation depended fundamentally on all of them fulfilling their agreed commitments, especially in relation to the lifting of sanctions on his country. Iran remained ready to continue its exemplary efforts to resolve the relevant issues.

76. Against the backdrop of current global crises, his country expected the Agency, in accordance with its Statute, to seek to improve quality of life for all by helping reduce tensions and increase cooperation. It also expected all Member States to act with the utmost responsibility and in good faith. Iran stood ready to play its part to achieve that goal.

77. Mr MUDAVADI (Kenya) said that the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 painted a concerning picture. With only six years remaining, the current pace of progress fell significantly short of the intended targets, having been compounded by the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising conflicts, geopolitical tensions and the worsening climate crisis. Without sustainable investment and greater efforts, the attainment of the SDGs would remain out of reach.

78. Given the immense potential of nuclear technology to support sustainable development, the Agency and its Member States must scale up action to create a more resilient and prosperous world and ensure that no one was left behind. Kenya remained committed to supporting the Agency's statutory objectives of promoting access to peaceful nuclear applications for sustainable development, enhancing nuclear safety and security and strengthening global nuclear verification and non-proliferation efforts.

79. Kenya's collaboration with the Agency had been pivotal in enhancing the country's ability to leverage nuclear science and technology to promote sustainable development, increase energy security and independence while mitigating climate change, and improve cancer care access, agricultural productivity, water resources management and environmental protection, in line with the country's Vision 2030 and its Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda.

80. In line with international best practice, Kenya was following the Agency's guidelines for the implementation of its nuclear power programme, which was currently in its second phase. The construction of an NPP was expected to commence in 2027, with connection to the electric grid in 2034. Kenya appreciated the Agency's continued support for capacity building and expert reviews of its national nuclear infrastructure as the country endeavoured to introduce nuclear power into its energy mix.

81. The second US–Africa Nuclear Energy Summit, held in Nairobi in August 2024, had underscored the opportunities provided by nuclear power to reach net zero by 2050 and the significance of nuclear power for the continent's socioeconomic development.

82. Kenya welcomed the progress made in the implementation of Rays of Hope. Thanks to that initiative, it had made significant strides in the fight against cancer, having established two major cancer centres in Nakuru and Mombasa.

83. In February 2024, Kenya had expressed its political commitment to the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Management of Disused Radioactive Sources, which was a testament of its dedication to strengthening its national regulatory framework for nuclear safety and security.

84. Through its collaboration with the Agency over the years, Kenya had established a non-destructive testing laboratory and a dosimetry laboratory, the latter supporting both the industrial and health care sectors by providing traceability to the International System of Units through its calibration services.

85. His country aimed to establish the Kenya Bureau of Standards as a regional designated centre for non-destructive testing and looked forward to collaborating with the Agency to implement local schemes for training, qualification and certification to ensure a competent human resource base. Kenya was also pursuing the establishment of a nuclear research reactor to enhance its ability to undertake scientific research in the field of nuclear energy.

86. In the area of environmental protection and water resources management, the Agency had provided invaluable support to his country, including in the form of equipment and training to enhance Kenya's groundwater assessment and management capabilities for the provision of clean and safe water. Having identified the blue economy as the next frontier for socioeconomic development, his country supported the Agency's work in environmental protection, in particular through NUTEC Plastics, and appreciated the support provided to establish a pollution monitoring programme covering major contaminants.

87. Kenya continued to back the Agency's work to promote climate smart agriculture and combat transboundary zoonotic and animal disease outbreaks. It also welcomed Atoms4Food and looked forward to the Agency's continued support in providing much-needed transformational solutions to the growing food crisis. The Agency was urged to continue its efforts to source funds from traditional and non-traditional partners in support of the initiative.

88. Kenya stood ready to share its expertise and institutions and to continue partnering with the Agency, including by hosting fellows from the region. It was pleased to report that the Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority was now a regional designated centre for education and training in radiation protection.

89. In closing, Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear technology and looked forward to continued collaboration with the Agency and Member States in harnessing the power of nuclear science to drive sustainable development and improve quality of life for all.

90. Mr LIKHACHEV (Russian Federation) said that the first ever NPP had begun operation in Obninsk in the USSR 70 years previously. The President of the Russian Federation had noted in his address on the anniversary of that occasion that that momentous event had been the starting point for the establishment of nuclear power both in his country and far beyond its borders.

91. The Agency had made significant contributions to the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, even in the current challenging conditions, it continued to act within its mandate, which was the key to its high standing globally. The USSR had helped to establish the Agency and, since then, his country's position had remained unchanged: to continue to support the Agency's activities with both expertise and financial resources.

92. The past year had been significant for the global nuclear power industry, with work in two long-standing areas of particular importance for the future of nuclear power in the twenty-first century — the closing of the nuclear fuel cycle and SMRs — moving from development to implementation in the Russian Federation.

93. As part of the flagship Breakthrough Project, a Generation IV power facility was being built in the country, including a 300-MW BREST reactor, which was an inherently safe fast neutron reactor, with an on-site closed nuclear fuel cycle. That comprehensive solution would allow the spent nuclear fuel to be repeatedly reused, eliminating irradiated nuclear fuel management issues, making nuclear power more environmentally friendly and significantly expanding its resource base and increasing its economic appeal. Testing of the equipment for the production of the innovative nuclear fuel for the BREST reactor had begun in March 2024, and the Director General had taken part in the ceremony to mark the occasion.

94. Minor actinides had begun to be burned for the first time at the operational BN-800 fast neutron reactor at Beloyarsk NPP, and a positive conclusion had been reached by the State expert review for the BN-1200 unit, which was currently under construction.

95. Interest in joint work on Generation IV nuclear power was growing among the Russian Federation's foreign partners. In 2023, it had signed a comprehensive programme of long term

cooperation in the field of fast neutron reactors and closing the nuclear fuel cycle with China, and representatives from India had visited the site of the Breakthrough Project in May 2024.

96. Also in May 2024, the first export contract in the world for a small NPP, consisting of six units, had been signed. His country had begun work on creating the infrastructure for the plant and was continuing to support Uzbekistan in developing the safety regulation system. The Russian Federation was also working on similar arrangements with a number of other countries.

97. His country, which already had the world's only floating NPP, Akademik Lomonosov, was building four more powerful floating nuclear power units. It was also continuing work on the country's first onshore small scale NPP with a RITM-200N reactor unit. Noting the systematic work of the Agency on SMRs, the Russian Federation looked forward to the first Agency conference on the topic, to be held in October 2024.

98. The Russian Federation continued to fulfil all its obligations under international agreements. Despite the pressure of unprecedented and illegal sanctions, all of the country's construction projects had continued. His country had put the Belarusian NPP into commercial operation and was carrying out planned construction work in Bangladesh, Egypt, Hungary, Iran and Türkiye: nuclear fuel had been delivered to Rooppur NPP in Bangladesh, and the first concrete of the fourth unit of El Dabaa NPP in Egypt had been poured. The Russian Federation also continued to provide assistance in the construction of NPPs in China and India, regularly supplying long lead items, and had arranged the delivery and installation of a research reactor vessel at the Centre for Nuclear Technology Research and Development in Bolivia.

99. Turning to activities in the Russian Federation itself, he noted that the physical startup of Unit 1 at Kursk NPP-2 would be carried out by the end of 2024. The first concrete for the third unit at Leningrad NPP had been poured, and surveys had been completed and the site was being prepared for Smolensk NPP-2. The country was also continuing to develop its unique nuclear-powered fleet, with the construction of the new icebreaker, the 'Leningrad', having commenced. The largest radiopharmaceutical production plant in Europe was being built in Obninsk, and a new international nuclear educational centre — Obninsk Tech — had been established, which could accommodate up to 10 000 people at a time for scientific, educational and youth events and which took training for the global nuclear industry to a new level.

100. With regard to the situation at the Russian Zaporizhzhya NPP, he recalled that nuclear safety and security remained his country's main priority. The Russian Federation provided a stable supply of heat, water and power to the plant and carried out all necessary maintenance. The personnel at the NPP were experienced and professional, and his country was ready to restart the plant as soon as the military situation allowed. The Russian Federation was also prioritizing the development of the social infrastructure of Enerhodar, where the nuclear workers lived.

101. The Russian Federation, which ensured the living and working conditions at Zaporizhzhya NPP, highly valued the Agency's contribution to the safety of the plant. The Director General had led the rotation of Agency experts that had taken place there in early September 2024, making it the fifth time that the Director General had had the opportunity to assess the situation in person.

102. For the first time since November 2022, the Kyiv regime had resumed attacks on Zaporizhzhya NPP in April 2024, when a number of strikes had been carried out against facilities on the NPP site. In addition — to take just one example of many — in August 2024, one of the cooling towers had been seriously damaged after a drone strike. Agency experts had recorded the consequences of the attacks. Moreover, the geographical area over which such provocations were taking place was expanding. In August 2024, Kursk NPP had come under massive attack by the Ukrainian armed forces, with the Ukrainian authorities making no secret of their intentions to seize it by force.

103. It was important to be crystal clear that such reckless behaviour by the Kyiv regime posed a threat not only to individual Russian nuclear facilities but also to the development of the global nuclear industry as a whole. A proper response was required, including from international organizations. The Russian Federation, including through its armed forces, would continue to do everything in its power to ensure the safety of Russian NPPs.

104. The year 2025 would mark the 80th anniversary of the Russian nuclear industry, the achievements of which included several world firsts: the first NPP, the first nuclear icebreaker, the first floating NPP, the first commercial fast neutron reactor and the first magnetic plasma confinement apparatus — the tokamak. More was yet to come.

105. He closed by noting that the Agency had stated at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2023 that net zero needed nuclear power, and the Director General had noted the global consensus in that regard. The Russian Federation supported that assertion. That ambitious goal, however, could only be achieved by joining forces on a professional and depoliticized basis.

106. Mr MOHANTY (India) said that the welcome admission of Bahrain and Nepal to the Middle East and South Asia Group would enable the two countries to play a more active role within the Agency.

107. Noting that 2024 marked the 70th anniversary of India's Department of Atomic Energy, he highlighted the achievements made by his country over the preceding year in power and non-power applications with a view to harnessing the atom for the benefit of society and the environment. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board had continued to ensure the safety and security of activities at nuclear and radiation installations. It had granted permission for the first approach to criticality, low-power physics experiments, phase-C commissioning and the progressive raising of the power of Unit 4 of Kakrapar Atomic Power Station. In addition, as the closed fuel cycle was the cornerstone of India's nuclear power programme, core loading had begun at the 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor, paving the way for the first approach to criticality.

108. To provide additional capacity, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited had started the commercial operation of two indigenous 700 MW PHWR units at Kakrapar Atomic Power Station, and initial fuel loading had been completed at another 700 MW PHWR unit at Rajasthan Atomic Power Station.

109. With a view to strengthening the fuel supply chain, the green-field Nuclear Fuel Complex in Kota in Rajasthan had been progressed to the advanced commissioning stage. The complex would mainly supply the country's upcoming fleet of indigenously built PHWRs.

110. As part of India's road map to becoming a developed State, the Government envisaged a significantly greater role for nuclear energy in the next two decades in order to ensure energy security while meeting climate goals. To that end, his country had recently announced its partnership with the private sector to set up Bharat Small Reactors and to conduct research and development on SMRs and other new nuclear power generation technologies.

111. Given the important role of clean hydrogen in the energy transition and the potential use of nuclear energy for clean hydrogen production, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre had begun a pilot-scale demonstration of the copper–chlorine thermochemical cycle for hydrogen production. An integrated pilot-scale nuclear hydrogen production facility had been installed and commissioned for that purpose.

112. With regard to radiation technology applications in health care, food security and industry, the Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology and the Agency had held a session showcasing the advanced radiation technology provided by the Board to support the flagship Rays of Hope and Atoms4Food initiatives. All delegates were invited to attend India's related exhibition on the sidelines of the General Conference.

113. The National Cancer Grid — a national network of 310 cancer centres and hospitals, spearheaded by the Tata Memorial Centre — treated approximately 60% of India's cancer patients. The global network NCG Vishwam Cancer Care Connect was also making its mark in providing standardized, cost-effective and accessible care to vulnerable populations around the world.

114. For the first time, India's Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre, in collaboration with Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology, had used a 30 MeV cyclotron facility to trial the production of lead-203 from a low-cost, natural thallium target for use in SPECT imaging and cancer treatment. Pilot-scale production of yttrium-90 and phosphorus-32 for societal applications had also commenced at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research.

115. The Heavy Water Board, the largest global producer of heavy water, continued to export heavy water to several countries for non-power applications, including in medicine and health care. In addition, the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership had recently renewed its memorandum of understanding with Agency and had continued to host various multilateral programmes.

116. India's presidency of the G-20 Summit in 2023 had culminated in the participating States reaffirming the need to include nuclear power in their energy mixes and emphasizing the supplementary role of SMRs with regard to large reactors. India had also participated in the Nuclear Energy Summit 2024, where it had reiterated its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2070.

117. At the dawn of the nuclear renaissance, India stood ready to partner with the Agency and like-minded Member States to harness the potential of nuclear science and technology to build a future defined by growth, innovation and energy security. India remained committed to the research and application of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

118. Mr SZIJJÁRTÓ (Hungary), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the full version of his statement would be made available on-line.

119. The world was living through a dangerous time, and the threats had become even more acute since the previous regular session of the General Conference. The nuclear sector was not isolated from those dangers, with NPPs becoming caught in the crossfire of two warring countries and with nuclear energy becoming a focus of ideological debate. Meanwhile, the rapidly changing global economy had led to an acceleration in the use of cooling and heating systems, the electrification of transportation and enhancements in industrial performance, thereby exponentially increasing electricity demand. Only nuclear power could meet that demand in a safe, cheap and environmentally friendly way and enable countries to successfully fight global warming, meet their 2030 climate targets and achieve climate neutrality by 2050, pursuant to the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.

120. The European Union attached the utmost importance to nuclear safety and its continuous improvement and called on all States to work in close partnership with the Agency on the matter. Drawing attention to its own advanced, legally binding and enforceable legal framework for nuclear safety, which was applicable to Euratom member States, the European Union stressed the importance of ensuring the highest level of nuclear safety in accordance with the Agency's safety standards, especially given the development of new technologies such as SMRs. It was hoped that the European Industrial Alliance on SMRs, established by the European Commission in February 2024, would contribute to that goal.

121. The European Union and its member States also reaffirmed their long-standing commitment to the Agency's TC programme.

122. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that all countries had a sovereign right to determine their national energy mix, and the safe supply of their energy should not be impeded any other country.

The Agency must play a stronger role in making sure that countries permitted the safe transit of nuclear fuel to that end.

123. Nuclear cooperation could bring rationality, common sense and the hope of peaceful coexistence back to global politics. For its part, Hungary was constructing two new nuclear reactors at Paks NPP, which would increase the share of nuclear power generation in its national energy mix to 70%, while reducing gas consumption by 3 billion cubic metres and carbon dioxide emissions by 17 million tonnes annually – a clear testament to nuclear energy's credentials as a green and sustainable energy source. Moreover, the main Russian contractor on the project, which had been building the two reactors under a lawful contract signed in 2014, was working happily with subcontractors and partners from Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland and the USA, demonstrating that partnership and cooperation in the nuclear field was still based on professionalism.

124. Soil improvement works for the project were 35% complete, with the work under one of the nuclear islands having already been completed. Some 25 000 piles had been drilled into the ground, and pit excavation would soon commence. In addition, there were 1000 workers on the site, and the first concrete would be poured by the end of 2024. In parallel, Hungary was extending the life cycle of the four existing reactors at the NPP and looked forward to Agency support in that regard.

125. He expressed support and appreciation for the Director General's personal commitment and his neutral and impartial approach to his work, which were crucial when it came to nuclear energy. The Director General was one of the few leaders of an international organization in a position to reach out to all parties. Given the paramount importance of nuclear safety, he hoped that the Director General would be able to undertake that task.

126. Mr LIU Jing (China) read out the following message from the Premier of China:

Translated from Chinese

"On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of China's membership in the Agency. I would like, on behalf of the Chinese Government, to extend my warm congratulations on the convening of the sixty-eighth regular session of the General Conference of the IAEA.

"The IAEA undertakes the important missions of promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and has played a central role in this regard. As a designated member of the Board of Governors, China has been supporting the work of the Agency through concrete actions.

"Over the past four decades, both sides have established an all-round cooperative relationship in the development and utilization of nuclear energy, nuclear safety and security, safeguards and non-proliferation, yielding fruitful results, which not only provides strong support to China's nuclear undertaking, but also contributes to global nuclear governance and cooperation in development.

"China is making overall efforts to advance the Chinese path to modernization and nuclear energies, taken as a significant energy option for achieving the target of carbon peak and carbon neutrality. Nuclear science and technology are considered key drivers for promoting social and economic growth and enhancing people's well-being. At a new historic standpoint, with the guidance of the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China will pursue the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative; further strengthen cooperation with the IAEA and other Member States; work together to achieve more just and equitable global nuclear governance, more inclusive and universally beneficial nuclear energy development and more open and orderly nuclear energy cooperation;

and work tirelessly to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

"I wish the sixty-eighth regular session of the General Conference complete success and hope that the cooperation between China and the Agency will make a greater contribution to the well-being of people in the world."

127. Continuing his remarks, he said that, under the Director General's leadership over the previous year, the Agency had successfully held the first Nuclear Energy Summit and the second International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power, promoted the safe and reliable deployment of SMRs around the world and participated in the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC — which, for the first time, had included nuclear energy as part of the global response to climate change. Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics, Atoms4Food and other initiatives had continued to support developing countries in using nuclear technology to address challenges to sustainable development in areas such as health, environmental governance, food and agriculture. Such work and achievements were appreciated.

128. China's nuclear energy sector had continued to make progress in 2024. The Chinese Government had recently approved five new nuclear power projects, with a total of 11 new units. China currently had 56 nuclear power units in operation and 46 new units under construction, making the country an important engine of global nuclear energy development and a contributor in the international transition to green, low-carbon energy.

129. China had always supported the Agency's central role in global nuclear cooperation through practical action. Over the previous year, it had supported the NHSI, held a interregional workshop on the application and development of SMRs, promoted the establishment, in cooperation with the Agency, of the SMR joint training centre for sharing experience with embarking countries and building human resources, supported Atoms4NetZero and hosted the International Conference on Enhancing the Operational Safety of Nuclear Power Plants. In support of Rays of Hope, China had provided training to radiotherapy physicists from 15 African countries. Trilateral cooperation between China, the Agency and third parties had expanded, and China had engaged in sustainable nuclear technology cooperation with numerous developing countries from ASEAN and Africa to improve livelihoods and sustainable development in those States.

130. China had paid its 2024 assessed contribution of €64 million and its TCF contribution of €14 million in full and on time and had pledged its full TCF contribution of €14.38 million for 2025. China planned to increase the sharing of its nuclear research facilities, by opening up 12 facilities to countries from the Global South and the rest of the world in the interest of technological innovation and development cooperation.

131. China stood ready to join the Agency and fellow Member States in seizing opportunities and in tackling the challenges of global sustainable development. His country would collaborate in promoting the building, governance and sharing of nuclear safety to respond to traditional and emerging risks in nuclear safety, security and proliferation and to enhance the resilience and security of the global nuclear supply chain. China would also collaborate on promoting synergy and innovations in nuclear energy technology, systematically expanding the sharing of nuclear science research facilities and experimental platforms, seeking cooperation, promoting innovation and sharing development with global partners. It would be collaborating on inclusive nuclear energy development by increasing investment and providing more support to countries in the Global South for the peaceful use of nuclear energy, promoting modernization and sustainable development.

132. The discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from Fukushima Daichii NPP into the ocean was a matter of widespread concern for the international community. China reiterated its firm opposition to

Japan's discharge plan and called for strengthened long term international monitoring of the discharge through effective stakeholder participation so as to protect human health and the marine environment.

133. China's development could not be separated from the rest of the world, and the world's prosperity also depended on China. His country stood ready to use the 40th anniversary of its membership of the Agency as an opportunity to strengthen its cooperation with the Agency and fellow Member States, and to increase its contributions to the use of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

134. Mr JACQ (France) said that it was deplorable that the General Conference was once again being held against the backdrop of the continuing attack by the Russian Federation — an Agency Member State — on a sovereign European country, in violation of the UN Charter. France reiterated its unwavering support for Ukraine in its fight to regain its territorial integrity.

135. In addition to the human tragedy and material damage caused by the war, France remained extremely concerned about the safety of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, in particular as a result of the utterly condemnable attacks on Zaporizhzhya NPP. The Russian Federation bore sole responsibility for the current situation and must immediately end its occupation of the plant and return full control to the Ukrainian authorities.

136. The work being done by the Agency and its Director General in Ukraine, in spite of the risks to Agency staff, was appreciated. France deplored the Russian Federation's continued defiance of the March 2022 Board of Governors resolution[2] on the topic and called on that country to unconditionally withdraw all its armed forces from the entire territory of Ukraine.

137. As part of the fight against nuclear proliferation, France, in close coordination with Germany, the UK and the USA, had been engaged for several years in efforts to return Iran to compliance with its JCPOA commitments. It was regrettable that Iran had turned down several diplomatic opportunities to return to the Plan by insisting on demands that it knew to be unacceptable.

138. Iran had been escalating its nuclear programme without any credible civilian justification for more than five years. The Agency's discovery, in January 2023, of uranium particles enriched to over 83% — close to the 90% generally considered suitable to manufacture a nuclear weapon — illustrated the seriousness of the situation.

139. Iran had also substantially reduced its cooperation with the Agency. France condemned Iran's de-designation in 2023 of several experienced Agency inspectors as a clear attempt to prevent the Agency from effectively exercising its safeguards mandate. Moreover, Iran had still not provided the Agency with any explanations regarding the Agency's discovery of nuclear material at several sites not declared under its safeguards agreement. The discrepancy in the nuclear material balance observed by the Agency during uranium metal dissolution operations carried out at the UCF in 2022 was also troubling.

140. France therefore called on Iran to implement fully and without delay the commitments undertaken in the March 2023 joint statement issued by the Agency and Iran, as well as all the obligations under its CSA.

141. The DPRK continued to develop its nuclear and ballistic programmes in defiance of its international obligations. The six nuclear tests carried out since 2006 in clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions constituted an attack on the integrity of the non-proliferation regime and a threat to regional and international peace and security.

[2] GOV/2022/17

142. France noted with concern the reported possible commissioning of the light water reactor at Yongbyon, which could contribute to the DPRK's nuclear programme, and the reported continued preparations for a seventh nuclear test at the Punggye-ri site. His country urged the DPRK to refrain from any further nuclear tests, immediately abandon all its nuclear weapons in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner, and return to its NPT commitments.

143. Despite the threat posed by nuclear proliferation and international conflict, nuclear energy was making a major contribution to the ongoing energy transition. Global warming indicators revealed the urgency of moving to renewable and sustainable forms of energy and of decarbonizing societies.

144. Against that backdrop, France continued to advocate the role of nuclear power in achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Accordingly, it was preparing an ambitious national nuclear programme, including the construction of at least six new nuclear reactors and the continued operation of existing reactors under exemplary safety conditions, and had allocated nearly €1 billion of public funding to innovation and SMR technology development.

145. France welcomed the growing number of countries that also recognized the great potential of nuclear energy. In particular, it welcomed the declaration recognizing the need to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050, endorsed by 25 countries at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. The involvement of the Agency and its Director General in that regard and their promotion of a range of nuclear energy applications was valued.

146. France supported the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear safety and security, especially through the universalization of international legal instruments, and encouraged it to continue its activities relating to the safety of innovative reactors.

147. While grateful to the Agency for holding ICONS 2024, his country regretted the failure to adopt a ministerial declaration owing to the opposition of a single Member State.

148. In closing, France called on the Agency to continue its work to develop nuclear energy while ensuring the highest safety, security and safeguards standards and to promote the benefits of nuclear energy in high-level international forums on climate and energy. His country would continue to support such initiatives and stood ready to offer its expertise to States wishing to benefit from nuclear energy.

149. Mr YOO Sang-im (Republic of Korea) said that his country highly valued the Agency's work to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and had actively cooperated with the Agency in that regard. The Republic of Korea had successfully hosted the Lise Meitner Programme in March 2024 and planned to contribute over €1.75 million to support key Agency projects, including ZODIAC and the SMR Platform. As a responsible Member State, his country would continue to fully support the Agency's mission.

150. Nuclear energy was critical to achieve carbon neutrality. The Republic of Korea had safely operated NPPs for over 60 years and had produced world-class nuclear technology. It also supported other countries in using nuclear energy safely, thereby helping solve global energy challenges.

151. In particular, his country was helping drive the global shift to sustainable energy through investment in and development of SMRs, which were safer, more economically efficient and compatible with renewable energy aspirations. To accelerate SMR commercialization, his country was collaborating with the private sector on technology development and demonstration, while also establishing new regulatory standards and workforce training for an SMR-centred nuclear ecosystem.

152. Seeking to share its extensive experience in safe reactor operation and next-generation nuclear technologies with Member States, the Republic of Korea had hosted the 22nd INPRO Dialogue Forum on Successful Development and Sustainable Deployment of Small Modular Reactors in May 2024 and

looked forward to a successful International Conference on Small Modular Reactors and their Applications in October 2024.

153. The Republic of Korea's world-renowned nuclear technology industry would be further strengthened by an IRRS mission planned for November 2024 — the first such mission to his country in ten years — to review the national safety regulatory framework. His Government would extend its full support to the mission team.

154. The contaminated water stored at Fukushima Daiichi NPP should be disposed of in a completely safe, scientific and objective manner, in compliance with international laws and standards. To that end, the Republic of Korea requested that the Agency continue to ensure the effective operation of its system for monitoring the disposal of that water and the transparent sharing of all relevant information.

155. The Republic of Korea strongly condemned the DPRK's unlawful nuclear and missile programmes, which violated multiple UN Security Council resolutions, and which posed a grave threat to the international non-proliferation regime and to regional and global security. The DPRK was urged to immediately cease all provocations, return to full compliance with Agency safeguards and the NPT and accept his country's proposal for dialogue without conditions.

156. The Republic of Korea would actively cooperate with the Agency and the international community towards the DPRK's complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. The increasing military cooperation between the Russian Federation and the DPRK threatened global peace and stability. Both countries were urged to immediately cease their unlawful cooperation and fully comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

157. Deeply concerned by the prolonged threats to the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, including Zaporizhzhya NPP, the Republic of Korea sincerely appreciated the efforts made by the Agency's Director General and staff to address the situation.

158. His country would continue to fully support all concerted, Agency-led global nuclear security efforts, including through its contribution of US $2 million to the Nuclear Security Fund, pledged at ICONS 2024.

159. In light of the evolving nuclear landscape and Member States' growing commitment to the Agency, it had never been more urgent to achieve the entry into force of the amendment to Article VI of the Statute, which provided for the expansion of the membership of the Board of Governors with a view to fostering a more democratic and representative governance structure. Member States that had yet to do so were strongly urged to accept the amendment without further delay.

160. Mr GALUSHCHENKO (Ukraine) said that 936 days had passed since the outbreak of the Russian Federation's unprovoked full-scale aggression against his country. During the past year, Ukraine's energy system had suffered unprecedented Russian attacks, resulting in severe damage and destruction. Many people had lost their lives: brave soldiers who had defended Ukraine, engineers who had restored power equipment after the Russian attacks and ensured reliable NPP operation, and peaceful civilians, including children — the future of Ukraine. Nevertheless, his country continued to resist that evil of the twenty-first century.

161. While the rest of the world made progress in sustainable development, nuclear technologies and new nuclear power generation capacities, the Russian Federation — which, for the previous decade, had occupied Crimea and the research reactor at Sevastopol National University of Nuclear Energy and Industry — had spent the past two and a half years deliberately and barbarically destroying Ukraine's occupied Zaporizhzhya NPP, in complete defiance of international law.

162. The situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP was deteriorating, with all of the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles having been violated. The occupiers continued to militarize the plant, using it as a cover for artillery strikes on Ukraine-controlled territories and settlements. On-site Agency experts constantly reported the sounds of shelling and explosions near the NPP. The Russian Federation was systematically doing everything in its power to put the plant out of operation for good. In August 2024, a fire had broken out at one of the plant's cooling towers, located about a kilometre from the plant's power units; it had fortunately not affected nuclear safety or raised radiation levels in the area, however, as the cooling towers were not in operation.

163. Ukraine appreciated the efforts of the Agency, and in particular of the Director General, to keep the situation stable and under control. It also thanked the Agency's brave experts stationed at all its NPPs for their significant contribution to maintaining nuclear safety and security.

164. Despite all those efforts, the Russian Federation's massive and deliberate missile attack on Okhmatdyt National Specialized Children's Hospital in July 2024 demonstrated that the international community's current response to nuclear terrorism was insufficient. The hospital — a beneficiary of the Agency's TC programme in the area of radiotherapy — was the largest paediatric facility in the country, providing treatment for up to 20 000 children annually, especially those with severe illnesses such as cancer. Thankfully, the 27 ionizing radiation sources held in the oncology department at the time had escaped damage. The attack was yet another manifestation of the Russian Federation's utter disdain for its obligations and commitments under international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law.

165. For the past month and a half, the Russian Federation had been sending drones near or even over Ukraine's NPPs, which had experienced 12 blackouts since the beginning of the full-scale invasion as a result of the damage to substations and power lines caused by Russian shelling. Those disconnections from the grid increased the risk of a nuclear or radiological accident and had left millions of Ukrainians without electricity.

166. In August 2024, as part of its latest large scale attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, the Russian Federation had used 127 missiles and 109 drones to target generation facilities, power lines — including open switchgears — and substations critical for NPPs. Ukraine was therefore deeply grateful to the Agency and the Director General for the recent start of substation monitoring missions.

167. That Russian attack had had a direct impact on Ukrainian NPPs, with three units having to go into emergency shutdown. Only the professional actions of plant personnel had prevented a nuclear incident. The estimated cost of that single attack was between $1.2 billion and $1.3 billion — money that the Russian Federation could have invested more usefully in nuclear research and development, food safety and other vital areas to the benefit of all humankind.

168. He wondered how long the Russian Federation would persist in its deliberate violation of the Agency's Statute and the resolutions of the Board of Governors and the General Conference. Given its intentional undermining of nuclear safety and security, it did not deserve its privileged status within the Agency and its Board of Governors.

169. The sole objective of Ukraine's resistance to the Russian war of aggression was to regain its entire internationally recognized territory, including Zaporizhzhya NPP — the largest NPP in Europe — which would only be safe and secure under Ukrainian control.

170. His country was grateful for the Agency's assistance in operating its NPPs and in regaining the Chornobyl exclusion zone and the NPP itself from the Russian occupiers, as well as the Agency's provision of support for the health care system following the destruction of the Kakhovka dam.

171. In closing, he thanked Member States for their solidarity in supporting Ukraine's fight against the ongoing Russian war of terror.

172. Mr YASIR (Iraq), noting that the 11-month-long genocidal assault on the Gaza Strip had claimed the lives of some 40 000 Palestinian civilians, said that his country condemned in the strongest terms the grave violations committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people, including the targeting of infrastructure, residential complexes and shelters housing hundreds of displaced persons and the complete destruction of the health system, in flagrant violation of all international conventions and international humanitarian law.

173. Iraq welcomed the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice in July 2024 with regard to the legal consequences arising from the Israeli entity's policies and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. His country called on the Israeli entity to respect the opinion and accept its legal elements in order to strengthen efforts to restore stability in the occupied Palestinian territories and the wider Middle East.

174. States had a legitimate right to pursue the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology so as to enhance their development, economic and health programmes and support their future plans for energy diversification. In 2024, as part of its strong commitment to the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology to achieve the SDGs, Iraq had acceded to several conventions in that area, including the CNS and the Joint Convention, and had enacted a number of related laws, including the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission Act and the National Authority for Nuclear, Radiological, Chemical and Biological Control Act. It was also finalizing its draft nuclear law, which had been reviewed with Agency experts during a meeting in Vienna in July 2024 to ensure that it addressed the four areas of nuclear law, namely safety, security, safeguards and civil liability for nuclear damage.

175. Iraq continued to cooperate constructively with the Agency to build national capacities in all peaceful nuclear applications by participating in the Agency's TC programmes, providing training and development opportunities for young people, and approving numerous national and regional projects. Praising the efforts of the Department of Technical Cooperation, he noted that Iraq was in the process of signing its CPF for 2024–2029 and expressed his country's hope that it would continue receiving Agency support through the TC programme, which was crucial to promoting the peaceful and safe uses of nuclear technology.

176. The Director General's visit to Iraq in March 2024 had encouraged the country to launch a new era of development in the peaceful use of atomic energy, in line with its international commitments and the highest levels of transparency. A parallel visit by Agency experts to Baghdad to review progress in radiological decontamination and radioactive waste management, evaluate clean-up plans for destroyed Iraqi nuclear facilities and identify the key challenges faced by Iraq in that important area had helped create effective solutions and drive projects forwards.

177. In that connection, in June 2024 Iraq had hosted an Agency expert workshop to help write its first national report for the Joint Convention, demonstrating his country's commitment to providing the utmost transparency and to starting a new, constructive phase of cooperation with the international community to ensure the peaceful use of the atom.

178. Through direct and productive technical cooperation with the Agency, Iraq's national authorities had been cleaning up radioactive contamination resulting from the futile wars of the past. Several governorates, among them Salah al-Din, Dhi Qar and Al-Anbar, had been declared free of radioactive contamination in 2024.

179. His country considered the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East — the basis of the indefinite extension of the NPT — to be the fourth pillar of the Treaty and the mainstay of efforts to strengthen

regional and international peace and security. Moreover, that resolution was an important step towards establishing a Middle East NWFZ.

180. Iraq, like many other countries, was being adversely affected by climate change, with unprecedented high temperatures, increased drought, desertification and a lack of water exacerbating electricity shortages in many regions. Iraq was therefore seriously considering introducing nuclear power to address the acute electricity shortage and tackle the effects of climate change. His country called on Member States and the wider international community to provide support and technical cooperation for Iraq's initiatives and projects, in line with international treaties and conventions and the Agency's Statute.

181. Lastly, Iraq looked forward to the General Conference producing successful outcomes that would enhance cooperation among Member States for the optimal and peaceful use of nuclear technology and applications in the service of humanity, peace and international security.

182. Mr RAFIKOV (Uzbekistan) expressed his country's deep gratitude for the support that it had received from the Agency to develop nuclear technologies and strengthen nuclear safety. Uzbekistan was working to further reinforce its nuclear security measures and was a strong supporter of, and active participant in, international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, fulfilling its obligations under the NPT and its safeguards agreement.

183. Since first cooperating with the Agency, Uzbekistan had done a great deal of work to improve radiation and nuclear safety domestically and in Central Asia as a whole. Notably, it had established a State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material in accordance with international requirements. In addition, modern nuclear technologies were being introduced in various sectors of the national economy, and hundreds of specialists from different organizations were improving their qualifications.

184. The ever-stronger partnership between Uzbekistan and the Agency provided a solid foundation for progressive and effective cooperation, as vividly reflected in the reports of the successful INIR, SEED and imPACT missions to Uzbekistan and in his country's comprehensive work plan for cooperation to develop its national nuclear infrastructure. His country was determined to further expand and strengthen its cooperation in the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

185. Uzbekistan had recently adopted a decision on the construction of a small NPP, marking a new stage in the development of the national nuclear industry. The project would not only provide a source of clean energy but would also be a powerful driver in the development of Uzbekistan's scientific and technical potential. The Agency's readiness to provide comprehensive support for that project was appreciated.

186. Technical cooperation within the framework of the Agency was an effective instrument of international collaboration in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Having reached an agreement on the implementation of Rays of Hope in the country, Uzbekistan thanked the Agency for its support in that regard and expressed its readiness to deepen its cooperation in the field of nuclear medicine. In that connection, Uzbekistan announced with satisfaction the opening of the new Republican Specialized Scientific–Practical Medical Center of Oncology and Radiology, equipped with the most modern medical equipment, in Tashkent in August 2024.

187. Uzbekistan was successfully implementing more than ten TC projects, including four national projects on building nuclear energy infrastructure, strengthening human resources, modernizing nuclear medicine facilities and improving the safety of the research reactor at the Institute of Nuclear Physics.

188. His country appreciated the Agency's assistance in enhancing the qualifications of nuclear specialists and conducting joint research, which were key to the safe and effective use of nuclear

technology. Uzbekistan reaffirmed its readiness to further strengthen that partnership to achieve joint goals with regard to global nuclear safety and sustainable development.

189. Mr SATKALIYEV (Kazakhstan), commending the Director General and his team for their professional efforts to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy and run the Agency effectively, said that the year 2024 marked the 30th anniversary of his country's membership of the Agency. Throughout that time, Kazakhstan had consistently supported the peaceful uses of atomic energy under the auspices of the Agency and had actively contributed to international efforts aimed at ensuring global stability and security.

190. Kazakhstan was a world leader in uranium mining, capable of producing nuclear fuel components and fuel assemblies and possessing significant human resources and relevant experience. It intended to further develop its nuclear energy sector.

191. In 2023, in full keeping with key UN principles and values such as democratic participation, self-determination, transparency and accountability, the President of Kazakhstan had announced a national referendum on the construction of the country's first NPP, giving every citizen the opportunity to express an opinion and determine the future direction of national energy policy. Should the vote go in favour of the NPP, Kazakhstan would proceed to further develop its national nuclear programme in accordance with the Agency's principles and recommendations. The Agency's expert assistance and support in that regard would be highly appreciated.

192. Kazakhstan had been privileged to serve alongside Australia as Co-President of ICONS 2024. At national level, Kazakhstan had implemented a range of measures to technically re-equip and strengthen physical security systems within the nuclear industry. It had also acceded to the key legal instruments in the field of nuclear security — it encouraged other Member States to follow suit.

193. Kazakhstan took a balanced approach to the development of its nuclear industry and stood ready to help further strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The unique LEU Bank — which contained a strategic reserve of LEU — continued to operate successfully at Ulba Metallurgical Plant. The Agency had finished the second phase of its cylinder recertification programme at the Bank in June 2024, successfully demonstrating that LEU-filled cylinders could be recertified for transport without decanting.

194. To support non-proliferation, Kazakhstan had continued to implement projects to convert research reactors from HEU to LEU, with the research reactor at the National Nuclear Center of the Republic of Kazakhstan having been fully converted to LEU in 2023. The Center had developed the world's only technology for diluting and immobilizing irradiated HEU fuel — that technology could be applied to similar fuels in other countries participating in the HEU minimization programme. Kazakhstan, together with its partners, would showcase that experience in a General Conference side event.

195. Radiopharmaceuticals for diagnosing diseases played a key role in improving health and quality of life. In 2024, as part of a TC project, the Institute of Nuclear Physics had continued to develop radiopharmaceuticals and had successfully taken receipt of a technetium-99 generator. Given its experience in radiopharmaceutical production and research reactor development, Kazakhstan put itself forward to host the next International Conference on Research Reactors.

196. In recent decades, thermonuclear energy had emerged as one of the most promising areas in the development of clean and sustainable energy, providing a potential solution to global energy challenges such as climate change and the depletion of traditional resources. In that regard, the importance of the World Fusion Energy Group for the future of global energy could not be overestimated. Kazakhstan would participate in the Group's first ministerial meeting, to be held in Rome in November 2024.

197. Turning to the pressing issue of sovereign equality, he recalled that 14 Member States remained deprived of their fundamental right to be elected to the Board of Governors and the Bureau of the General Conference. Since the General Conference's adoption, in 2023, of a resolution on the matter with overwhelming Member State support, the number of 'arealess' Member States had decreased from 17 to 14, but the problem nonetheless persisted. Member States were urged to implement the resolution pursuant to their international obligations. The Statute upheld the sovereign equality of all Member States, echoing Article 2 of the UN Charter. Kazakhstan would pursue the issue to its successful conclusion.

198. Ms DRÁBOVÁ (Czech Republic) said that, despite rising tensions, deepening divisions and escalating threats to the non-proliferation regime, global interest in the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies was growing. Strong support for 'Atoms for Peace and Development' was more crucial than ever. The Czech Republic reaffirmed its commitment to that mission and expressed its deep gratitude to the Agency's Director General and staff for their expertise, professionalism and impartiality.

199. The General Conference was, once again, meeting against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine. Compounded by nuclear blackmail, such utterly deplorable action — especially by a nuclear-weapon State and Board member — blatantly violated international law and the core principles of the Agency's Statute, bringing dishonour on the Russian Federation. That country must respect the numerous Agency and UN resolutions on the topic, abide by international law and completely withdraw from the entire territory of Ukraine, thus ending the nuclear safety and security risks that it was causing.

200. The Agency had the Czech Republic's unwavering support in implementing its indispensable safeguards activities to ensure global peace and security. Universalization of, and full compliance with, CSAs and additional protocols were essential to bolster the non-proliferation framework.

201. Deeply concerned by the alarming escalation of Iran's nuclear programme — which clearly exceeded any credible civilian justification — and its lack of cooperation in resolving outstanding safeguards issues, her country urged Iran to reverse course, promptly meet its legal obligations and cooperate fully with the Agency in an earnest and sustained manner, including by reversing all detrimental actions taken thus far, such as the de-designation of several experienced inspectors.

202. The DPRK's continued nuclear and ballistic missile programmes remained a major concern. The Czech Republic called on the DPRK to stop its dangerous and escalatory actions and work actively towards lasting peace and security.

203. The Czech Republic remained a strong advocate of nuclear technologies, which were essential in addressing global challenges. Nuclear energy was among the safest and cleanest energy sources, offering a clear path to climate neutrality. Its role should be highlighted accordingly, as had been done at the Nuclear Energy Summit 2024.

204. Already in possession of one of the world's highest shares of nuclear energy, the Czech Republic was further advancing its plans to build four large reactors with a view to generating almost two thirds of its electricity from nuclear power. SMRs also formed part of that strategy. Expertise and support to overcome regulatory and deployment challenges was crucial, especially for the safe and efficient implementation of such plans.

205. The Czech Republic had reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear security through its active participation in ICONS 2024 and through its co-sponsorship of the revised joint statement on mitigating insider threats[3]. It commended the ICONS 2024 Co-Presidents for their leadership and work.

[3] INFCIRC/908/Rev.1

206. Highlighting the 30th anniversary of the CNS, she noted that, at their Third Extraordinary Meeting, the Contracting Parties had adopted numerous proposals to streamline the review process and ensure that the Convention remained a dynamic tool for advancing safety. As President of the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting, she thanked all the Contracting Parties and her Vice-Presidents for their committed efforts and congratulated the newly elected presidency.

207. The Czech Republic remained a steadfast supporter, in word and deed, of the Agency's efforts to make the world a better place. It paid its contributions in full and on time and, in 2024, had made further increased voluntary contributions to ensure the continuation of the Agency's indispensable work, which merited Member States' full trust and backing.

208. Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman AL SAUD (Saudi Arabia) said that the General Conference reflected the Agency's pivotal role in promoting international cooperation with the goal of harnessing the atom for peace and development.

209. Saudi Arabia appreciated the Agency's valuable efforts to build its technical capabilities and launch distinguished initiatives in order to enhance the technical support that it provided to help Member States develop their own programmes and human resources in the area of nuclear technology and oversight.

210. Given the importance of nuclear energy for socioeconomic development, his country was continuing to implement all parts of its national nuclear energy programme, including the project to establish the country's first NPP with a view to adding nuclear power to the national energy mix and achieving sustainable development in accordance with national and international obligations.

211. To that end, Saudi Arabia had completed the essential administrative preparations required by its nuclear regulatory framework and its CSA. In July 2024, it had submitted a request to the Agency to rescind its SQP and implement its CSA in full, and it was working with the Agency to finalize the subsidiary arrangements for the effective rescindment of the protocol by the end of December 2024. Saudi Arabia continued to comply with all legally binding international obligations related to its national nuclear energy programme and the non-proliferation regime, including in its national legislation and institutional structure, which satisfied all requirements for the control of nuclear materials and technology and their export. The contributions made by the Director General and the Deputy Director General for Safeguards in that regard were appreciated.

212. Given both the need to strengthen nuclear and radiological EPR and the Agency's fundamental role in that crucial and sensitive area, Saudi Arabia had agreed to host the International Conference on Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies in Riyadh at the end of 2025. His country looked forward to Member States' cooperation in ensuring a successful conference with a view to substantially boosting global efforts in nuclear and radiological EPR and expanding the work of the Agency and its Incident and Emergency Centre. Keen to share its capabilities with all Member States in furtherance of their common interests, Saudi Arabia was helping strengthen the Centre's radiation monitoring and early warning capabilities. It would also be happy to make its resources available to the Agency and the Centre in other areas, including in predicting the environmental consequences of nuclear and radiological incidents.

213. As part of efforts to develop its cooperation with the Agency, Saudi Arabia had deposited its instrument of acceptance of the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Atomic Energy Agency in August 2024 and had committed to a number of international nuclear-related instruments, including in the areas of nuclear safety, security and safeguards. His country was also collaborating with the Agency to host a workshop on the Joint Convention for non-parties in order to promote its universalization.

214. Saudi Arabia had received an IRRS mission in October 2023, which had praised the country's commitment to upholding the highest radiation security standards, developing its regulatory framework and applying international best practices. The distinguished review mission and advisory services provided by the Agency were a practical affirmation of its vital role.

215. Emphasizing that States were fully responsible for maintaining nuclear safety and security in accordance with their national and international obligations, Saudi Arabia welcomed the success achieved by the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre — to which it had been the main financial donor — and its tangible impact in enhancing the national capacities of Member States and strengthening the global nuclear security system.

216. Saudi Arabia had nothing to hide. Its sole guiding objective was to become a model for the production and export of all types of energy. His country had become — and would remain — open to all; anyone wanting to satisfy themselves of the sincerity of its intentions and the purposes of its programmes was strongly encouraged to visit the country and to partner with it.

217. Ms MINDAOUDOU SOULEY (Niger) said that her country commended the Agency's Director General and staff on their initiatives and ongoing efforts to promote the proven and decisive role of nuclear science, technology and applications in achieving the SDGs, which was in the interest of all humankind.

218. The President of Niger's patriotic vision for making the country truly independent and prosperous was based on four strategic areas aligned with the country's 2035 Strategy for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth and with the SDGs. Her country's national strategic guidelines also reflected the synergy and solidarity of the framework provided by the Alliance of Sahel States, which had become a leading space for regional integration and co-development.

219. The Niger fulfilled all its obligations under the agreements, conventions and treaties to which it had acceded, thereby building a solid foundation to implement nuclear activities that would help eradicate all forms of vulnerability and insecurity and support sustainable socioeconomic development. In that respect, her country appreciated its many years of cooperation with the Agency, which had been characterized by mutual respect and bilateral commitments and which had enabled all national stakeholders to benefit from multifaceted support.

220. The Niger's CPF for 2022–2027 was crucial to meeting its urgent needs and building long term resilience to the challenges that it faced. Through TC projects with the Agency, including its most recent project on food production, preservation, safety and quality, the Niger's food safety laboratories had been able to build sustainable capacities.

221. Committed to integrated water resources management, the Niger had adopted a water, hygiene and sanitation sectoral programme and a national action plan for integrated water resources management, with a view to improving water resources knowledge, mobilization and development while preserving the environment and developing climate change resilience. Regional project RAF7021 on the enhancement, planning, management and sustainable utilization of water resources remained essential for attaining water security, as part of an efficient and sustainable approach to strengthening groundwater resources management in the Sahel. In addition, a national water quality and pollution control laboratory, financed by the World Bank, would be built in the Niger and equipped with the Agency's assistance.

222. In the area of human health, the Niger's national cancer treatment infrastructure had been strengthened by the acquisition and installation of a linear accelerator, which was in the final stages of testing. Furthermore, Rays of Hope had enabled the acquisition of additional equipment for

brachytherapy, dosimetry and radiation protection. The Niger intended to expand its radiotherapy and nuclear medicine services by acquiring a PET scanner.

223. The Niger possessed considerable uranium and thorium resources and currently had 29 exploration licences in force. With one mine in operation, one under construction and another being dismantled and restored, her country had been able to guarantee substantial uranium and thorium production in 2023. Renewed global interest in NPPs and the rising price of uranium all augured well for a resurgence in uranium research and exploitation.

224. In order to guarantee its energy sovereignty and an independent supply of clean electricity, the Niger remained committed to implementing its nuclear power programme and had achieved significant results in the first phase with Agency support. It was considering including SMRs in that programme as soon as possible in order to improve short term rates of access to electricity. Its nuclear activities under the programme were fully transparent and consistent with both the principle of national sovereignty and the country's relevant international obligations.

225. The Government was in the process of adopting a national industrial policy, pursuant to which the country's nuclear power programme was expected to make a significant contribution to national industrial development, providing sufficient energy for the development of high value added processing activities. The policy also addressed the development of national standards and the upgrading of local industries. Several other draft policy and strategy documents had been drawn up in line with the Agency's recommendations and with national models.

226. Nuclear safety, security and safeguards were crucial to the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology to achieve stable and sustainable development. In the Niger, all national institutions relevant to nuclear security contributed to the design, development and maintenance of a sustainable national nuclear security regime for preventing, detecting and responding to malicious or unauthorized acts involving nuclear and other radioactive material. In particular, the Niger's inclusive National Nuclear Security Committee had been identified as a good practice during the IPPAS mission conducted in May 2021.

227. With Agency assistance, her country had performed a self-assessment of its national capabilities to respond to a nuclear security event and had developed a capacity building plan, which was in the process of implementation. A national training workshop on measures to counter internal threats had also been organized with Agency assistance. In addition, the Niger had made ten nuclear security experts available to the Agency to conduct IPPAS missions, review sustainability plans and carry out training and tabletop exercises in several African countries.

228. Firmly committed to developing the most robust nuclear safety and security infrastructure possible, the Niger had made significant progress in drafting and adopting national legislation and had considerably improved its RASIMS profile.

229. The Agency regularly verified the correctness and completeness of the Niger's declarations under its CSA and additional protocol. It had confirmed that no indication of undeclared nuclear activities had been observed and that the Niger was complying with its CSA and additional protocol and with the NPT.

230. Emphasizing the Agency's crucial safeguards mandate, the Niger called for the promotion of forward-looking development cooperation based on agreements and facts and consistent with the Agency's fundamental principles. The good-faith implementation of commitments under international agreements, conventions and treaties was essential to consolidate multilateralism, and all countries must refrain from any act or behaviour aimed at undermining such commitments.

231. As education and training in nuclear science and technology were critical for technology transfer, ownership and the sustainability of nuclear activities, the Niger was striving to implement an ambitious

programme of human resource development and intended to acquire a research reactor to support those activities. It encouraged the Agency and AFRA to continue providing their invaluable support through TC projects and the Director General's initiatives to aid the achievement of national and regional objectives and urged the international community to provide the Agency with the necessary financial resources to that end.

232. Thanking the Agency for its constant support for development activities, the Niger expressed its intention to consolidate its achievements and bolster its cooperation with the Agency and encouraged the Agency to continue strengthening its knowledge transfer policy.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.