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Plenary

Record of the Sixth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Wednesday, 18 September 2024, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)
Later: Ms ARROYO-BERNAS (Philippines)
Later: Mr LULASHNYK (Canada)
Later: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AAEA	Arab Atomic Energy Agency
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFCONE	African Commission on Nuclear Energy
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
AP	additional protocol
ARASIA	Co-operative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Regional Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEANTOM	ASEAN Network of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy
Chemical Weapons Convention	Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Early Notification Convention	Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
EPREV	Emergency Preparedness Review
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
HEU	high enriched uranium
ICONS	International Conference on Nuclear Security
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INSServ	International Nuclear Security Advisory Service
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
LDC	least developed country
MESA	Middle East and South Asia Group
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
OPCW	Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
PET	positron emission tomography
PMO	Policy-Making Organ
Quadripartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAP	South East Asia and the Pacific Group
SEED	Site and External Events Design
SIDS	small island developing States
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SPECT	single photon emission computed tomography
SQP	small quantities protocol
SSAC	State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

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

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

1. Mr GRAFF (Luxembourg), expressing his country's appreciation of the tireless work of the Director General, Deputy Directors General and their teams in the current turbulent times, said that Luxembourg associated itself with the written statement of the European Union, as published on the General Conference website.

2. While Luxembourg respected the inalienable right of all countries to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in line with Article IV of the NPT, it did not deem nuclear power a sustainable option for achieving climate neutrality, as the resulting waste represented a major challenge for future generations. Until such time as the issue of nuclear waste was resolved, efforts should be focused on developing renewable energy solutions. Moreover, the use of nuclear energy led to dependency.

3. If countries chose to use nuclear technology, it was critical for them to comply with the strictest safety and security standards. Luxembourg therefore fully supported the Agency's indispensable work and was proud to be continuing its support for the TCF in 2025.

4. Luxembourg had observed for decades that nuclear installations were particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, human error and armed conflict. NPPs were not designed to withstand armed conflict and any damage to them could have serious consequences, both for the environment and for people in the regions concerned and beyond. There was also a need to examine more closely the risks posed to nuclear safety by the effects of climate change.

5. His country was especially concerned about the precarious situation of nuclear facilities in Ukraine that had been caused by the unjustified and unprovoked war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Since 2014, the Russian Federation had been flouting international order based on the rule of law and attempting to call into question the entire multilateral system. A staunch defender of multilateralism and international law, Luxembourg underscored that NPPs enjoyed special protection under Article 56 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.

6. Luxembourg fully supported the efforts of the Agency and the Director General to help Ukraine ensure the nuclear safety and security of its NPPs and to maintain Agency safeguards on all nuclear material and activities. It was critical for all parties to ensure compliance with the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles, and Luxembourg therefore deplored the fact that all of the Seven Pillars had been compromised at Zaporizhzhya NPP. His country also condemned in the strongest terms the attacks on Ukraine's civilian and energy infrastructure. The attacks carried out by the Russian Federation on the 'Okhmatdyt' National Specialized Children's Hospital were not only a violation of international law but also represented a flagrant disregard for the fundamental principles of the Agency and international nuclear safety standards.

7. Turning to worrying developments in other regions, he noted that the DPRK's nuclear activities were aggravating the international security situation and undermining efforts to achieve lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. Luxembourg therefore called upon the DPRK to comply with all of its international obligations and to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. In that regard, his country underscored the importance of the entry into force of the CTBT.

8. Iran's nuclear programme was also developing at an alarming rate, in a context where the Agency was not able to verify or monitor it. The scope of the programme had no credible civilian justification, in particular with regard to the accumulation of HEU. Luxembourg called upon Iran to return to compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA and resume dialogue with the Agency.

9. Luxembourg once again expressed regret that there had been scant clarification provided regarding the Dair Alzour site in Syria; it was encouraging, however, that the Agency had been able to visit certain sites linked to the facility, and Luxembourg continued to call upon Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency.

10. The Agency played an essential role in the global non-proliferation architecture, as effective and objective verification was vital for the implementation by all States of their commitments under the NPT. In order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the NPT, the Agency must be able to carry out its verification activities impartially and independently. It was therefore essential that the Agency benefit from continuous and predictable funding, and Luxembourg encouraged all Member States to honour their commitments and pay their contributions in full and without delay.

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

12. The current international landscape was highly fluid and marked by major geopolitical challenges and accelerating technological change, with serious risks of escalation that could lead to miscalculations with grave humanitarian and environmental consequences. Member States must therefore seize the opportunity to re-establish the value of effective multilateralism and, in particular, to strengthen the NPT.

13. Mexico would remain a strong backer of the Agency's verification mandate under the NPT. Safeguards, as international obligations to which NPT States Parties committed under CSAs and additional agreements with treaty status, were non-negotiable and should not be politicized. Mexico was among those countries to have assumed additional voluntary obligations, such as an AP, export controls and other obligations under the Tlatelolco Treaty, the CTBT, the TPNW and various nuclear safety and security treaties and conventions. It called on all Member States to adhere to those instruments.

14. His country shared the Agency's concerns about the safety risks posed to Ukraine's nuclear and radiological facilities arising from the Russian Federation's invasion of that country. Reaffirming the importance of respecting the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles, Mexico expressed support for the Agency's work in Ukraine and commended the professionalism of the missions deployed on the ground. The threat of an attack on a nuclear facility was unacceptable, as any accident involving the release of radioactive material would have global humanitarian and environmental consequences. Preventing such a scenario must therefore be the international community's priority.

15. Mexico supported the Agency's professional and transparent reporting on the technical aspects of its safety, security and safeguards mandate. It shared the Director General's concern about Iran's failure to engage with the Agency for more than two years to address the outstanding issues regarding its safeguards agreement and AP. His country called on Iran to comply with all its obligations under the subsidiary arrangements to its safeguards agreement and fully implement the modified Code 3.1. It also looked forward to a return by all parties to the JCPOA.

16. Mexico urged the DPRK to promptly return to full compliance with the NPT, as stipulated in various Security Council resolutions, and with the Agency safeguards regime, and to abandon all existing military nuclear programmes to achieve the shared objective of the complete, verifiable and

irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In addition, Mexico looked forward to the restoration of peace in the Middle East and encouraged the region to continue its efforts to establish an NWFZ subject to Agency verification.

17. Mexico urged more countries to join it in supporting the statement by the Co-Presidents of the ICONS 2024: Shaping the Future — Australia and Kazakhstan — which established a basis for cooperation in order to sustain and strengthen the comprehensive nuclear security of radioactive material and facilities.

18. In addition to the inspections and other work carried out by its National Commission for Nuclear Safety and Safeguards, Mexico responsibly implemented its SSAC and applied Agency verification measures under its safeguards agreement. His country had also worked to increase controls on depleted uranium used in containers for radioactive material, which it had identified, accounted for and reported to the Agency in the relevant reports. With the Agency's support, Mexico was implementing its INSSP, approved in 2023, and continued to enhance training for persons involved with radioactive material or sources. Action had also been taken to increase capacities in ensuring nuclear security during major events, in particular the upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup.

19. Mexico attached the highest priority to nuclear safety and was committed to participating in the Tenth CNS Review Meeting, to be held in March 2025.

20. With regard to regional cooperation, FORO provided a valuable model for the exchange of knowledge and experience in radiation protection and nuclear safety and security, and the Agency should continue to support its work and highlight its contribution in the General Conference resolutions. In addition, ARCAL, which was celebrating its 40th anniversary, was identifying strategic partners and new forms of financing in order to continue to implement ambitious plans and deliver excellent results.

21. The continued development of nuclear science, technology and applications clearly enhanced the ability of States to implement the 2030 Agenda. Accordingly, Mexico's National Institute for Nuclear Research maintained a close relationship with the Department of Technical Cooperation and the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications.

22. Mexico appreciated the early implementation of the Agency's flagship initiatives such as Atoms4Food, ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope. With cancer care remaining a national priority, his country valued the cooperation provided by the Agency under Rays of Hope, through which it had received two linear accelerators for cancer treatment and several mammography units. It also thanked the USA for its generous donation in that regard.

23. In the face of climate change, the Agency was making an increasingly relevant contribution to informed debate and decision making, promoting nuclear power as a responsible and safe alternative to help decarbonize economies. Mexico was keenly following developments under the NHSI, in particular those aspects related to licensing and regulation. It participated in the Agency's related training programmes and hoped that SMR technology, given its versatility and its complementarity with renewable energy sources, would provide a viable alternative to meet domestic and regional needs, including water desalination.

24. The Agency's highly valuable TC programme must continue to be supported and strengthened with the necessary sustainable funding. To that end, all Member States were urged to meet their financial commitments to the Agency on time.

25. In closing, he emphasized that the work of the General Conference was to ensure that the Agency remained a technical organization, enabling all Member States to have fair and timely access to the benefits of nuclear science and technology and further strengthening the Agency as a mainstay of international peace and security.

26. Mr BIGGS (Australia), congratulating the Cook Islands and Somalia on joining the Agency, expressed pride in welcoming another country from the Pacific region to share in the benefits of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes.

27. As a founding member of the Agency, Australia remained steadfastly committed to the Agency's goals. At a time of deteriorating international security, the mandate of the Agency, as the international authority on nuclear safety, security and safeguards and the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, acted as an anchor for the global community.

28. In Australia, nuclear science and technology were used to drive real-world outcomes in nuclear medicine and cancer care, health, food and environmental research, and to benefit and grow national industries. Recognizing that a country's decision to use nuclear energy depended on national circumstances, he noted that Australia had chosen not to deploy nuclear energy for electricity generation. Given the abundance of renewable energy sources in the country, nuclear power, including through the use of small modular reactors, was not a suitable option for inclusion in the national energy mix with a view to decarbonization. In countries without an existing nuclear power industry — such as Australia — factors including affordability, long deployment times, and supply chain and workforce challenges meant that nuclear power was often not a viable means of working towards net zero or securing reliable and affordable energy for consumers.

29. Nevertheless, Australia recognized the broader benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology for people and the environment. The country deployed its leading nuclear science and technology expertise and world-class nuclear science infrastructure to address global challenges, and its nuclear agencies continued to provide support in kind to the Agency across the full range of its activities. Australia was therefore pleased to announce that it would contribute a further $8 million in 2024 to support the Agency's technical cooperation and nuclear applications work, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific region. That funding would help to combat food insecurity in the Pacific region through the Atoms4Food initiative, with Australia also intending to join the Group of Friends of Food Security in Vienna. It would also support the Agency's work in assisting Member States in monitoring plastic pollution and managing water resources, through contributions to NUTEC Plastics and the Global Water Analysis Laboratory Network. Furthermore, it would support technical cooperation in Asia and the Pacific through the RCA, and the further development of cancer care and radiotherapy capabilities in the region through Rays of Hope.

30. In addition, Australia was pleased to provide further support to the Agency's efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in the nuclear sector by making a contribution to the Lise Meitner Programme. Women were among the great innovators, engineers and scientists in the nuclear and radiological fields but continued to be under-represented in the sector. His country was therefore proud to help address that issue through its extrabudgetary support, and it encouraged the Agency to continue its efforts to build an inclusive workplace that supported individuals in all their diversity.

31. Harnessing the benefits of nuclear science and technology was not possible without concerted efforts to ensure that the technology was safe and secure. Australia remained fully committed to improving nuclear safety and radiation protection worldwide, including through its support for the Agency, and meeting the objectives of the CNS and the Joint Convention. His country had served as Co-President, together with Kazakhstan, of ICONS 2024, helping to drive forward the international community's vital work to strengthen the global nuclear security architecture.

32. Noting that ensuring that nuclear material was safe, secure and safeguarded could be the most challenging element of the Agency's work, and even hazardous at times, Australia commended the Agency's commitment to monitoring the situation at Ukraine's nuclear facilities, including

Zaporizhzhya NPP, despite the challenging circumstances. Australia continued to condemn, in the strongest terms, the Russian Federation's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine. It reiterated its call on the Russian Federation to withdraw all its forces immediately, completely and unconditionally from within the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and looked forward to supporting the draft resolution on nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine being proposed at the current session of the General Conference.

33. Iran's failure to resolve outstanding safeguards issues in a full and technically credible manner was of deep concern, and the steady growth of that country's HEU stockpile had no credible civilian justification. Australia called upon Iran to cease its escalatory actions, to reverse all steps away from the JCPOA and to recommit to full compliance with its nuclear-related commitments, including implementation of its AP. Australia commended the Agency for its efforts to revive the March 2023 joint statement, and also welcomed the Director General's call for dialogue with the Iranian President, urging Iran to accept that offer.

34. Australia continued to condemn in the strongest terms the DPRK's ongoing pursuit of WMDs and their delivery systems, which was in flagrant violation of the DPRK's obligations under numerous UN Security Council resolutions and posed a grave threat to international peace and security — as did the continued transfer of weapons from the DPRK to the Russian Federation. The indications that the DPRK likely remained ready to conduct a nuclear test at the Punggye-ri site were deeply concerning. Australia appreciated the Agency's ongoing preparedness to play an essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme and commended its efforts to enhance and maintain that capability. His country would again co-sponsor the draft resolution on the DPRK and called upon all Member States to follow suit.

35. The full benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology could only be enjoyed when the world was protected against the misuse of nuclear material and technology, and Australia therefore welcomed the Agency's continued progress, in cooperation with Member States, on measures to strengthen the effectiveness, and improve the efficiency, of Agency safeguards.

36. Australia continued to work with the Agency in relation to the pathway to its acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS partnership, including through ongoing bilateral technical consultations on a robust safeguards and verification approach. The AUKUS partners were confident that such an approach would enable the Agency to continue to meet its technical safeguards objectives for Australia at all stages of the initiative. Australia remained committed to keeping the international community updated on relevant developments.

37. On 5 August 2024, Australia, the UK and the USA had signed the treaty-level Agreement for Cooperation Related to Naval Nuclear Propulsion, which would facilitate the continued exchange of naval nuclear propulsion information between the AUKUS partners and enable the transfer of nuclear material and equipment from the UK and the USA to Australia. The Agreement reaffirmed and was consistent with the three countries' non-proliferation obligations and commitment to setting the highest non-proliferation standard. It also made the key principles underlying Australia's strong non-proliferation approach legally binding, including the commitment not to enrich uranium, produce nuclear fuel or reprocess spent fuel for naval nuclear propulsion. A statement by the Director General issued on 15 August 2024 had outlined the key features of the Agreement and confirmed that Australia had provided the Agency with the relevant updates in its AP declarations.

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

39. Mr VIGIL PUGA (Panama), reaffirming his country's commitment to nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy, said that Panama believed firmly in the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons and use nuclear energy responsibly for the benefit of humankind. Panama was therefore deeply concerned at the increasing use of nuclear threats in the current geopolitically tense climate. Nuclear weapon proliferation remained one of the greatest dangers to international peace and security.

40. The peaceful use of nuclear technology and applications was essential to achieve the SDGs, providing powerful tools to address challenges in health, agriculture, energy and the environment in developing countries.

41. Technical cooperation was a crucial vehicle for nuclear technology transfer and had allowed his country to make progress in a number of strategic sectors through capacity-building projects. Panama underlined the importance of ARCAL and expressed deep appreciation for the work of the Director General, the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications and the Department of Technical Cooperation, especially the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean. Their efforts had been vital for the implementation of projects that had benefited Panama and the region as a whole.

42. Panama had enhanced its national capacities in cancer diagnosis and treatment through Rays of Hope and was also taking a keen interest in the new Atoms4Food initiative, which had the potential to revolutionize food security and nutrition in the country by improving agricultural productivity with nuclear technology. It appreciated the Agency's provision of human and institutional capacity building, given that education and training in nuclear technology were key to development.

43. It was crucial that all Member States comply strictly with Agency safeguards to ensure that nuclear activities were conducted in a safe and secure manner and for exclusively peaceful purposes, thereby maintaining international peace and security. Panama remained committed to ensuring nuclear security, including by taking effective measures to prevent nuclear terrorism and keep nuclear and radioactive material out of the wrong hands. Closer international collaboration was essential to address shared safety and security challenges, and the Agency played a central facilitating role in that regard.

44. Panama fully supported the Agency's initiatives to promote women's participation in the nuclear field, recognizing the fundamental importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women for the achievement of its national objectives.

45. In closing, Panama reaffirmed its commitment to working hand in hand with the international community to ensure that nuclear energy remained a force for good and contributed to global peace and security and sustainable development.

46. Mr REGMI (Nepal), praising the Director General's committed, dedicated and effective leadership in advancing the noble cause of the Agency, said that the Annual Report for 2023 reflected the Agency's effective and efficient performance and the progress made across numerous sectors, in particular in promoting nuclear energy through platforms such as the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, launching new food security initiatives, enhancing access to nuclear technologies and applications for health, agriculture and environmental protection, conducting safeguards verification in conflict zones and advancing nuclear safety and security globally.

47. Welcoming the introduction of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme, Nepal also reiterated the importance of Atoms4Food, Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, especially for LDCs. Given adequate resources, such initiatives could contribute greatly to improving food production, eradicating poverty, protecting the environment, ensuring human and animal health and enhancing technological development, which in turn helped to promote global peace, security and development.

48. Nepal's commitment to general and complete nuclear disarmament was total and unwavering. As a dedicated party to the key international instruments related to disarmament, including the NPT and the SQP, Nepal firmly believed that nuclear science and technology must be used strictly for peaceful purposes.

49. In line with the Agency's objectives, Nepal had a long-standing national nuclear policy, designed to regulate, control and monitor the use of nuclear energy pursuant to Agency guidelines. Various pieces of legislation had been adopted to that end — including a law on the utilization and regulation of radioactive material in 2020, related regulations in 2022 and radiation safety directives, nuclear medicine services standards and radiodiagnosis equipment and services standards in 2024 — all of which reflected the country's commitment to Agency norms.

50. Since signing an agreement on technical cooperation and partnership with Nepal in 2012, the Agency had been providing the country with valuable technical support and collaboration. Over the years, their joint endeavours had encompassed a diverse range of projects, many of which had a direct impact on the well-being of the population and were closely aligned with the SDGs.

51. Nepal's CPF for 2022–2027 covered the legal framework, radiation safety and nuclear security, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, water and the environment, energy and industry, and nuclear knowledge development and management. With the Agency's steadfast support and collaboration in those areas, Nepal hoped to enhance the quality of life and economic prospects of its citizens. It urged the Agency to expand its cooperation with the country and increase the resources available for such cooperation. In that connection, Nepal looked forward to the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme.

52. Upholding the principle of sovereign equality among Member States and ensuring their fair representation in the Agency's PMOs was a matter of utmost importance. He therefore expressed his country's sincere gratitude to all MESA members, especially the Group's Chair, with regard to the decision to admit Nepal to the Group in 2024.

53. Nepal was nonetheless mindful that several countries remained outside any regional group, which limited their ability to engage fully in the Agency's PMOs. The matter must be given the attention that it deserved by all Member States, regional groups and the Secretariat without further delay and without further complicating the issue.

54. In closing, he reiterated his country's commitment to supporting the Agency's efforts to achieve a better world through the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

55. MR GUNAAJAV (Mongolia) said that, in the face of great social, economic, environmental and security challenges, the Agency had a more important role than ever to play in ensuring the safe and enhanced use of atomic energy for peace, health and prosperity. In that regard, Mongolia attached great importance to nuclear safety and security, safeguards and the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology.

56. Nuclear non-proliferation was the most pressing issue on the agenda, for the simple reason that it was fundamental to global peace and security, and Mongolia therefore remained committed to its obligations pursuant to its safeguards agreement and AP.

57. Mongolia had improved its legislative framework and developed standards, rules and regulations on radiation safety, radiological protection and the safe management of radioactive sources, in accordance with the Agency's guidance. It was continuing to make efforts to accede to the CNS, the Joint Convention, the Amendment to the CPPNM and the modified SQP.

58. Given the importance of promoting education on nuclear energy and its peaceful uses, Mongolia had organized numerous capacity-building workshops for nuclear professionals, including, in collaboration with the Agency, regional workshops in 2024 on major vectors and potential carriers of zoonotic diseases and on safety culture in medical applications. Such activities were important for improving efficiency in the use of nuclear technology, identifying and assessing nuclear and radioactive threats and designing appropriate and effective physical protection systems.

59. Mongolia continued to make efforts to incorporate nuclear power in its domestic energy mix. In its 2024–2028 action programme, the Government had included plans to complete all necessary basic research, in line with Agency guidance, for an NPP megaproject. Mongolia appreciated the Agency's assistance in implementing national nuclear power projects and hoped to further develop that cooperation.

60. The Agency's TC programme was key to meeting common objectives; Mongolia was therefore deeply appreciative of the Agency's essential contribution to the country's development efforts in that regard. Since joining the Agency, Mongolia had implemented numerous TC projects that had produced concrete results across all sectors. Within the framework of its CPF for 2022–2027, national projects were being carried out in the areas of food and agriculture, human health, water and the environment, nuclear science and technology, and nuclear and radiation safety, energy and industry.

61. The RCA had proven to be an effective tool for promoting, coordinating and implementing cooperative research, development and training projects in the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in the Asia and the Pacific region. Through the RCA, Mongolia had expanded its relations and cooperation in the nuclear sector, which extended to the signing of an MOU between the country's Nuclear Energy Commission and the RCA Regional Office in the field of human resources training and cooperation in the nuclear energy sector.

62. Mongolia appreciated the Agency's efforts to develop and expand nuclear applications to address the challenges facing the world, through initiatives such as Rays of Hope, Atoms4Food, ZODIAC, Atoms4NetZero and NUTEC Plastics. Having launched various domestic campaigns to promote sustainable development, Mongolia remained ready to actively contribute to all such Agency initiatives.

63. Under Rays of Hope, a national project to improve cancer care management, implemented in collaboration with the Agency and the Republic of Korea, was bearing fruit. Furthermore, in May 2024 and at the request of Mongolia, the Agency had conducted an imPACT review to assess the country's cancer control capacities and needs.

64. In closing, he reiterated his country's staunch commitment to continuing its close cooperation with the Agency, fulfilling its obligations as a Member State, further expanding the scope of its cooperation and actively participating in the Agency's activities.

65. Ms BAKHTARI (Afghanistan) expressed her country's thanks to the Director General for his leadership in navigating critical nuclear challenges in a complex and ever-evolving international landscape. Before the tragic Taliban takeover of her country in August 2021, Afghanistan had been working closely with the Agency in areas crucial to the country's development, including nuclear safety, food and agriculture, human health and nutrition and human capital development, which had contributed significantly to the welfare of its people and to achieving the common goal of promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

66. Her country faced an uncertain future, however. Following the takeover, Afghanistan was experiencing significant challenges in increasing the Agency's assistance and effectively utilizing nuclear science and technology across various sectors. The people of Afghanistan nonetheless still hoped for a future of peace, prosperity and international cooperation and the bonds built through the Agency's

TC programme remained valuable. She urged the General Conference to keep in mind the needs of the people of Afghanistan, especially in the areas of health and development, where nuclear technology could make a difference.

67. Initiatives such as ZODIAC, Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics were essential for enhancing well-being and addressing global challenges. Afghanistan fully supported those initiatives and remained committed to ensuring that nuclear technology benefited the most vulnerable.

68. The Taliban had further intensified its violations of human rights, especially against women and girls. In August 2024, they had issued new 'vice and virtue' laws that had pushed Afghanistan deeper into extremism. Those laws forced women to fully cover their faces, banned them from speaking or singing in public, restricted their movement, prohibited solo travel without a male guardian and forbade all interactions with men other than close relatives. The adoption of such legislation marked a renewed, brutal assault on women's rights, amounting to nothing less than gender apartheid.

69. As the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan had stated at the 57th session of the Human Rights Council, a comprehensive, survivor-centred and gender-responsive approach proportionate to the gravity of the situation was urgently needed in Afghanistan. She called on all Member States to support that approach and help end the cycle of impunity in her country.

70. Despite the challenges faced, the women of Afghanistan remained determined to contribute to fields such as nuclear science, where their involvement could foster peace, innovation and progress. Consequently, Afghanistan strongly supported the Agency's efforts to promote gender parity, especially through initiatives such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme, and called on the Agency and its Member States to support the participation of the women of Afghanistan in those two programmes to ensure that they had the opportunity to pursue advanced studies and contribute to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

71. The Taliban's return had aggravated the security situation in Afghanistan, creating fertile ground for terrorism and illicit narcotics trafficking. Such growing instability posed significant risks to nuclear safety, security and safeguards and undermined international efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The absence of effective governance and the rule of law accelerated the threat of radioactive pollution from uranium mining and production in the region, while increasing the likelihood of smuggling and illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear material — issues that transcended borders.

72. It was crucial that the countries of the region and the wider international community recognized that Afghanistan's security issues had far-reaching consequences and posed a greater international threat than they realized. Afghanistan's problems were not merely domestic but rather international, and they demanded urgent global attention.

73. In closing, she expressed her country's gratitude to the Agency for its continued support and cooperation and called on the Agency and its Member States to remain partners of the people of Afghanistan.

74. Mr HORVATIĆ (Croatia) said that his country was grateful to the Agency and the Director General for their continuous, dedicated efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security and maintain safeguards over all nuclear material and activities during the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Regrettably, over the past year, military operations in the area around Zaporizhzhya NPP had continued. The highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards must be upheld to prevent any possible nuclear accident. Any attack on an NPP or any other nuclear facility was utterly unacceptable, regardless of its location. NPPs must not be targets of military operations nor must they be used as a shield or launching point for any kind of military activity. Given the crucial

importance of ensuring the physical integrity of nuclear facilities, Croatia appealed for maximum restraint from all parties involved in order to avoid a nuclear accident, which could have serious radiological consequences for all.

75. Croatia was following with deep concern the developments in Iran, Syria and the DPRK. As stability could be achieved only through constructive dialogue, her country welcomed the Agency's continuous efforts to promote dialogue and cooperation between countries with the aim of ensuring long-term nuclear safety and security and maintaining Agency safeguards. Croatia called on Iran to renew its cooperation with the Agency, implement its NPT safeguards agreement and provide clear and indisputable evidence that its nuclear programme was used exclusively for peaceful purposes. His country welcomed the two technical missions that the Agency had conducted in Syria with a view to fostering dialogue, in addition to the third planned mission. In the same vein, it strongly condemned the DPRK's complete lack of cooperation with the Agency and continuous escalation of its nuclear programme and testing, in direct contravention of UN Security Council and Agency resolutions.

76. Despite the human and material harm caused by the consequences of climate change, over the summer of 2024, energy consumption for air conditioning had again reached new record levels. Nuclear energy therefore had a pivotal role to play in the transition to net zero carbon emissions, as did the Agency in assisting Member States in turning ambitions into real progress. SMRs were a key element in the transformation of the nuclear power sector and in industrial development. Their development and deployment would rely heavily on the global standardization and harmonization of regulatory and industrial approaches, to which the International Conference on Small Modular Reactors and their Applications would contribute significantly.

77. His country had continued to cooperate successfully with the Agency on improving its nuclear and radiation safety and nuclear security systems through the incorporation of international standards in national regulations. Throughout 2024, national scientists and experts had continued to participate in regional projects in accordance with the priorities set out in Croatia's CPF, covering the areas of medicine, nuclear energy, education and various scientific fields with a view to ensuring the security of food, energy and human health through innovative approaches to nuclear technology. Three national projects had been proposed for the 2026–2027 TC programme cycle, addressing the disposal of radioactive waste, the protection of the population and workers from the harmful effects of radon and the establishment of a specialization course in medical physics.

78. Croatia continued to maintain and intensify its traditional bilateral cooperation with the neighbouring countries of Hungary and Slovenia, especially with regard to the timely exchange of information in the event of a nuclear or radiological threat. It also remained committed to close cooperation with the Agency.

79. Ms GIL (Colombia) said that, despite the perceived decline of multilateralism, the Agency — in the current tumultuous geopolitical climate and under the Director General's committed and skilful leadership — was testament to the results that an international organization could achieve when all its members were able to benefit from its work. 'Atoms for Peace and Development' was not an empty slogan; the Agency's work had tangible, measurable effects in countries and improved the quality of life of their populations. Member States therefore had a responsibility to support the Agency and safeguard it from the disagreements that weakened, and even paralysed, other international bodies.

80. The entire spectrum of activities carried out by the Agency under its mandate were crucial, from the promotion and facilitation of R&D on atomic energy and its use for peaceful purposes to the application of safeguards to uphold the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

81. Colombia noted with concern the erosion of the consensus forged over many years on nuclear security and the role of safeguards in international stability. Supportive of the Director General's

exercise of his functions, her country commended his dynamism, perseverance and endeavours to build bridges in situations marked by high levels of conflict in order to preserve the integrity of the Agency's Statute, the NPT and other disarmament and non-proliferation instruments.

82. As a country of the region that had been a pioneer in establishing nuclear peace with the signing of the Tlatelolco Treaty, Colombia maintained a policy of general and complete disarmament and would therefore continue to advocate, in all forums, the complete destruction of nuclear weapons as the only way to eliminate the threat of nuclear war.

83. Colombia was concerned about the heightened operational alert status of nuclear arsenals and the increasingly aggressive rhetoric surrounding their use; the presence of undeclared nuclear material and any possible diversion or transfer of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices; and the siege of NPPs — wherever they were located — which jeopardized nuclear security. It was most troubled, however, by the systematic, massive and unscrupulous targeting of an entire people by a State with nuclear capabilities, especially when that State was not, and did not intend to become, a party to the NPT. It was an ethical, moral and political obligation to defend, in all forums, the fundamental rights of people whose only crime was to have been born Palestinian.

84. Colombia thanked the Agency for its efforts to develop and promote transformative solutions to challenges such as the climate crisis, poverty and hunger, fostering sustainable development.

85. As hosts of the sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia invited the Agency and its Member States to foster an approach to international cooperation that was in harmony with the environment. It was imperative to devise a new economic model that did not rely on the exploitation of nature.

86. Colombia was a proud member of the Global South and saw the Agency as a vehicle for development. Nuclear applications had been essential for successes achieved in radiation medicine and the fight against cancer, as well as in water resources management. Her country was grateful for the equipment provided to the University Hospital of Caldas and the Tibaitatá Research Center of the Colombian Agricultural Institute. Colombia looked forward to soon receiving equipment for the San José del Guaviare Hospital, a medical centre on the border of Colombia's Orinoquía region and the Amazon rainforest, which it hoped would contribute to saving the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities.

87. It was essential that nuclear technologies reach those who needed them most, and Colombia hoped to participate in Atoms4Food to generate a direct impact on its most vulnerable communities.

88. Commending work under ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope, Colombia reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to supporting the Agency in its efforts to promote gender equity and women's empowerment in the nuclear sector and achieve gender parity across the Agency, including through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

89. Ms GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ (Costa Rica) said that her country acknowledged the Agency's important role in nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and in technical cooperation and the promotion of R&D to advance the civilian applications of nuclear energy and technology in order to tackle the most pressing global challenges.

90. Nuclear energy was important in driving socioeconomic development, providing solutions in priority areas such as human health, including cancer treatment; industry and agriculture, through pest control and the enhancement of crop resilience; marine pollution; and emerging zoonotic threats. In that regard, Costa Rica commended the Director General's flagship initiatives — ZODIAC, Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics and Atoms4Food — and looked forward to the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme to be held in

November 2024, which would highlight the critical role of nuclear technology and techniques and the intrinsic connection between knowledge and development.

91. Costa Rica praised the successful organization of ICONS 2024, noting its forward-looking approach and analysis of current approaches and trends, but was disappointed at the failure to adopt the Co-Presidents' joint statement.

92. Costa Rica recognized the Agency's essential work in improving nuclear security regimes through the promotion of international cooperation, the exchange of good practices, innovation and knowledge and the strengthening of legal instruments and national legislative and regulatory frameworks. it appreciated the Agency's review missions and advisory services and had benefited from an INSServ mission in March 2024. Grateful for the guidance received, it remained committed to implementing the mission recommendations and to continuing its close collaboration with the Agency to strengthen the national nuclear security regime.

93. Costa Rica had also received assistance in numerous areas through the TC programme. In the current TC cycle, it was carrying out projects to build capacity in forecasting severe rainfall events using nuclear technology, apply mutation breeding techniques to develop bananas resistant to Fusarium wilt and contribute to the efficient management of this disease, and strengthen national radiation safety infrastructure. Her country was grateful for the assistance provided by the Department of Technical Cooperation to develop its CPF for 2024–2030 and for the technical cooperation provided through ARCAL, whose 40th anniversary it welcomed.

94. As a low-carbon energy source, nuclear power could support climate change mitigation, counteracting global dependence on fossil fuels and its devastating effect on the environment. In that regard, Costa Rica was closely following industrial developments that should be enhanced through tried and tested technologies based on the preservation of soil, ocean and atmospheric ecosystems.

95. The use of nuclear technology entailed important nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation obligations. It was more critical than ever that the Agency and its Member States continue to fully and robustly implement nuclear safeguards, which were essential to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities.

96. It was deeply regrettable that some actors continued to directly challenge international peace and security and undermine the credibility of the Agency safeguards system. Costa Rica acknowledged the Secretariat's diligent efforts to continuing monitoring the nuclear activities of the DPRK in accordance with that country's safeguards agreement. Her country urged the DPRK to completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon all its nuclear weapons and related programmes in line with all relevant Security Council resolutions and to cease nuclear testing. The DPRK should also sign and ratify the CTBT and return immediately to full compliance with the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and with its CSA. Costa Rica advocated the creation of a climate conducive to dialogue and diplomacy as the only means to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula and regional peace and security.

97. Costa Rica strongly supported the Agency's verification and monitoring activities in Iran as an essential contribution to regional and global security. Regrettably, Iran continued to limit the Agency's verification authority and had still not provided credible technical explanations concerning the outstanding safeguards issues. It was also of grave concern that Iran had increased its enriched uranium stockpile and was enriching uranium to levels that deepened doubts about the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. Costa Rica reiterated its call on Iran to comply with its safeguards obligations.

98. The General Conference should not overlook the developments at Zaporizhzhya NPP in Ukraine. It was imperative that the competent authorities regain full control of the plant to ensure its safe and secure operation. Costa Rica reiterated its unwavering support for the Agency's monitoring role in

Ukraine and for the Five Principles and the Seven Pillars, which must be fully observed at all nuclear facilities by all parties.

99. The nuclear disarmament obligation enshrined in the NPT had yet to be fulfilled, and the commitments under the Treaty were increasingly far from being met. The need for instruments such as the TPNW to complement and strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime — with the NPT as its cornerstone — was clearer than ever. Her country also called for the entry into force of the CTBT, which, together with the NPT and the TPNW, constituted a fundamental part of the international legal framework for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

100. Recognizing the progress made in the areas of gender equality and diversity, and gender parity and geographical representation within the Agency, Costa Rica expressed its continued support for the Women in Nuclear initiative, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme and urged the Agency to further mainstream gender in all its policies and practices.

101. The Agency continued to play an effective and essential role in the collective response to increasingly complex challenges and in protecting the non-proliferation regime, strengthening safeguards and furthering the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for global peace and development. Costa Rica was confident in the Agency's impartiality, professionalism and technical ability in discharging its mandate.

102. Mr ASSAF (Lebanon) said that his country supported the Agency's continued development of important programmes and activities related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in particular ZODIAC, Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics and Atoms4Food. As a member of the Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear, Lebanon was particularly supportive of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the Lise Meitner Programme.

103. Over the next five years, Lebanon planned to focus on public health in its technical cooperation, especially the diagnosis and treatment of cancer using radiation, and was therefore keen to build its public health capacities through Rays of Hope. It also hoped to enhance the use of nuclear technology for environmental purposes through joint projects between universities and the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission. Lebanon intended to sign a CPF for the period 2025–2030 by the end of 2024.

104. As the current Chair of ARASIA, Lebanon noted that ARASIA member States continued to work together constructively to enhance regional technical cooperation and launch successful initiatives.

105. In collaboration with the competent security agencies and government departments, the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission was implementing the INSSP, which had been drawn up with the close cooperation of the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security. Lebanon was also grateful to the Department of Safeguards for its constructive cooperation as the country continued to examine the process for concluding an AP and build its regulatory capacities to implement the instrument. The US Government had also provided valuable cooperation to Lebanon in strengthening the expert capacities of its regulatory and customs authorities with regard to safeguards.

106. The Agency's safeguards system was a fundamental pillar of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. As the application of safeguards in the Middle East region was of strategic importance to the success of that regime, it was gravely worrying that Israel remained the only non-party to the NPT in the region and the only party to possess nuclear capabilities outside all systems of international oversight. In that context, Lebanon underscored the importance of the negotiating track provided by the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

107. Israel's ongoing and indiscriminate war against civilians in the State of Palestine, especially the Gaza Strip, had claimed the lives of more 40 000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, and had destroyed even the most basic necessities of life. Israel continued to commit war crimes and violate the tenets of international humanitarian law with abandon, despite the many international resolutions issued by the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council and the Human Rights Council, as well as the orders of the International Court of Justice, which had issued an advisory opinion in July 2024 confirming that Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territories was illegal and calling on Israel to put an end to its occupation and all settlement practices in those territories. More than ever, the Middle East needed to see an end to occupation and the cycles of violence that it generated and a return to efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, in line with the two-State solution set out in international reference documents, most notably the Arab Peace Initiative.

108. Mr ABDULHADI (Libya), praising the Director General's efforts to ensure the success of the Agency's work and reinforce international peace and security in the face of challenging circumstances, said that, as a Member State since 1963, his country looked forward to continued cooperation with the Agency, including in the application of safeguards and instruments on nuclear safety and security and the implementation of TC programmes.

109. Libya accorded priority to the peaceful use of nuclear technology in service of the SDGs, including SMR deployment and the use of non-power applications through Agency initiatives such as Rays of Hope, Atoms4Food and NUTEC Plastics, and to action to increase the transport of nuclear and other radioactive material. It was essential to step up efforts to ensure the security of nuclear material and radioactive sources and develop initiatives that supported well-being and environmental protection. The Agency's TC activities were crucial in that regard.

110. In addition to its national TC projects in various fields, Libya was participating in regional and international projects, including under AFRA, and had received various equipment and supplies within that framework. Libya had begun the design phase for the projects that it had proposed as part of the current TC cycle and had identified its national priorities and development needs, taking into account its CPF and the lessons learned from previous TC projects.

111. Libya had paid its dues to the Agency for 2024. The Agency had provided welcome support in the implementation of its INSSP, especially in carrying out a project to improve the physical protection system at the cobalt-60 irradiation unit in Tripoli Central Hospital and in finalizing the technical design phase for the physical protection system at the country's nuclear research centre, which was expected to be implemented in 2025. Libya also hoped to be able to continue the project to develop a physical protection system at the uranium ore storage facility near Sabha.

112. In addition, Libya was counting on the Agency's support to implement several new projects, including establishing a national temporary storage facility for orphan and disused sources, providing fixed, mobile and portable radiation detection devices to staff at border crossings, promoting a nuclear security culture among customs inspectors and security agents and improving staff performance in technical procedural areas.

113. Owing to the security situation in the country, Libya continued to face challenges with regard to implementing projects and activities, participating in Agency activities and hosting Agency experts. It also faced difficulty in securing travel visas for its own experts. Libya nonetheless stood ready to receive further Agency assistance. It appreciated the Secretariat's efforts to adapt to the situation in the country and hoped that all obstacles would eventually be overcome with that support. Grateful to donor States that had provided funding to support projects to develop physical protection systems in the country, Libya looked forward to the early completion of the project to install control and safety systems at Tajoura Nuclear Research Center, conducted in cooperation with Argentina and the Agency.

114. Libya was grateful for the Agency's provision of radiation monitoring stations and for its efforts to use information and communication technology to hold remote meetings and training sessions, which reflected the crucial role that the Agency played in transferring nuclear knowledge to support the attainment of the SDGs.

Ms Arroyo-Bernas (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

115. Mr SIMÕES COELHO DE ALMEIDA E SOUSA (Portugal), reiterating his country's full support for the Agency and its central role in promoting, sustaining and strengthening the global nuclear safety and security architecture, thanked the Director General for his leadership and for upholding the Agency's independence, impartiality and technical reliability and praised the Agency's staff, in particular to those currently taking part in monitoring missions in challenging circumstances, such as in Ukraine.

116. Portugal remained strongly committed to nuclear safety and security. It attached the utmost importance to the full implementation of its obligations emanating from the international nuclear safety and security instruments, notably the NPT. Calling on all States that had not yet done so to accede to those instruments without reservation for the sake of collective security, Portugal recalled that all Member States had the obligation to comply in good faith with the rules and commitments derived from that international framework.

117. In line with its obligations under the CNS, Portugal had participated in the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting, the Third Extraordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Organizational Meeting for the Tenth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety. In addition, it had submitted its national report under the Joint Convention and would continue to fulfil all related obligations throughout the upcoming cycle.

118. Portugal fully supported the Agency's role in establishing — and monitoring the implementation of — CSAs and remained committed to the implementation of its own CSA.

119. In 2018, his Government had signed an MOU with the Agency to provide education and training to professionals from developing countries between 2019 and 2024. That arrangement had reached over 90% implementation, and the Government was working towards its renewal.

120. Portugal welcomed the Agency's efforts to promote a gender balance and support the career development of women in the nuclear field. It looked forward to stepping up its cooperation with the Agency through the Lise Meitner Programme and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

121. An independent and well resourced regulatory system was the cornerstone of radiation protection and nuclear safety. For its part, Portugal's regulatory body played an active role in protecting people and the environment. Portugal had actively participated in the Agency's review services, namely by supplying experts to IRRS, EPREV and ARTEMIS missions and other consultancy missions, thereby contributing to the continuous improvement of nuclear safety and radiation protection. In 2022 and 2023, Portugal had hosted its own IRRS and ARTEMIS missions with a view to conducting a thorough review of its regulatory framework for radiation protection, nuclear safety and radioactive waste management. It remained committed to implementing the recommendations produced by those missions under a combined action plan.

122. Highlighting the important role of FORO in promoting the highest levels of safety in practices involving ionizing radiation in the Ibero-American region, Portugal stressed the importance of close cooperation between FORO and the Agency and reiterated its support for FORO activities to promote the exchange of experience and knowledge in nuclear and radiation safety.

123. At the current session of the General Conference, Portugal would, jointly with Ireland, the European Commission and the Agency, host a side event to showcase the need to adopt plans to address and minimize the risk posed by exposure to radon — a carcinogenic radioactive gas and one of the leading causes of lung cancer. Given the great importance that his country attached to protecting against ionizing radiation, the Portuguese Environment Agency had established an action plan on radon, which was being successfully implemented.

124. The TC programme was an essential component of the Agency's work and made a welcome contribution to global efforts to attain the SDGs. For its part, Portugal was committed to raising awareness of the potential offered by the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It fully supported the Agency's flagship initiatives, notably Atoms4Food, which, with its huge potential to increase food security in developing countries in particular, provided a much needed contribution to the global fight against hunger. In that context, Portugal congratulated the African Group for the initiative to establish the Group of Friends of Food Security, with which it looked forward to collaborating. Portugal also anticipated increasing its participation in Rays of Hope, which it hoped would provide new options for treating cancer, especially in light of the unacceptable disparities in access to cancer diagnosis and treatment among countries.

125. The Agency was a versatile organization, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy was crucial to a wide range of areas, as testified by the Agency's flagship initiatives and by the TC programme. Never before had the Agency been so close to realizing its motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

126. Mr MOFADAL EL NOUR (Sudan) said that, in light of the increasingly significant potential of atomic energy to address the challenges facing humanity, efforts to strengthen international cooperation on peaceful uses must be redoubled and the Agency must be granted the human and financial resources needed to perform its tasks to the fullest extent. The continued support provided by the Agency to enhance national capacity building in agriculture, health, livestock, water resources management and education had contributed greatly towards the Sudan's achievement of the SDGs.

127. Given the growing international importance of food security in the face of climate change, drought, desertification, declining soil fertility, population growth, migration, urban development and armed conflicts, the Sudan offered its wholehearted support to Atoms4Food. As one of the first States to have expressed interest in joining the initiative, the Sudan remained convinced that nuclear technology and applications had a central role to play in achieving food security in Africa and the Arab world. Calling on partners to support the initiative, the Sudan announced the establishment of the Group of Friends of Food Security in Vienna — co-chaired by Italy and the Sudan — which had been created with the aim of drawing attention to the issue among the Vienna-based organizations, mobilizing resources and encouraging cooperation and partnerships among stakeholders. A side event on the topic would be held during the current session of the General Conference.

128. Although continued conflict with the Rapid Support Forces had prevented some Sudanese experts from participating in various Agency events over the preceding year, his country was grateful for the Agency's efforts to ensure that Sudanese experts remained up to date with scientific and practical developments in key areas. The Sudan hoped to receive more opportunities to participate in events in the future. In addition, combined efforts were needed to rebuild its institutional infrastructure, and the Sudan looked forward to receiving support and sponsorship from the Agency and from its partners in that regard.

129. The Sudan thanked the Agency for including it as a beneficiary of Rays of Hope and reaffirmed its readiness to meet all the agreed commitments. It applauded the progress made in combating marine plastic pollution through NUTEC Plastics and looked forward to cooperating with the Agency in that area to protect the Red Sea. In addition, the Sudan commended the Agency's major role in strengthening

the infrastructure of veterinary research laboratories in the country and the national public health laboratory under ZODIAC, which had helped to significantly reduce the risk posed by COVID-19.

130. The Sudanese Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Authority was continuing to review and publish the policies and regulations required to achieve its legally defined objectives and had recently updated its radiation safety information management with the Agency's support. In that context, the Sudan remained committed to complying with its modified SQP. Moreover, the National Technical Committee for Nuclear and Radiological Emergencies continued to coordinate on EPR with all relevant State authorities. In that connection, the Sudan commended the Agency's support for the project to establish an Arab environmental radiation monitoring and early warning network, including the provision of equipment.

131. The Sudan continued to implement its INSSP with the involvement of all stakeholders, taking into account the challenges presented by the conflict and the priorities identified in the plan. The INSServ mission to the Sudan conducted at the end of 2022 had been crucial for reviewing the national nuclear security infrastructure, and his country was committed to implementing the recommendations and proposals produced. In light of the ongoing insurrection in the country, the competent authorities were working to ensure the security of radioactive sources. The Sudan looked forward to the support of the Agency and partners in that regard.

132. The Sudan appreciated the Division for Africa's support for national and regional technical cooperation, especially in restoring all cancer treatment centres that had been put out of operation by the war. The Sudan stood ready to participate actively in regional projects under AFRA and to share experiences and lessons learned with a view to strengthening relations among the parties involved. His country also highly appreciated the Agency's tireless efforts to encourage Member States to adopt nuclear energy as a clean energy source and its work to support the Sudan in that regard.

133. Mr LENAGALA (Sri Lanka), highlighting his country's excellent working relationship with the Agency since becoming one of its founding members in 1957, said that Sri Lanka recognized the Agency's remarkable achievements and its work to ensure the delivery of its mandate and sincerely appreciated the tireless efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat to ensure the delivery of the Agency's programmes and provide innovative solutions to global challenges.

134. Technical cooperation was vital for developing countries such as Sri Lanka. The high implementation rate maintained by the Department of Technical Cooperation throughout 2023 was appreciated. Sri Lanka also welcomed the progress achieved through major initiatives such as Rays of Hope, ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Atoms4Food.

135. Maintaining a solid financial footing was crucial for the effective implementation of the Agency's six Major Programmes. Taking note of the Agency's Budget Update for 2025[2], Sri Lanka appreciated the cost-saving efforts made and was confident that the Agency would continue such efforts in future.

136. His country's policies and strategies for the energy sector emphasized energy security, fuel diversification, environmental conservation and the provision of electricity at minimum cost, encouraging the use of clean and green energy sources such as nuclear power in order to achieve the SDGs. Its nuclear programme was aligned with its nationally determined contributions to the global response to climate change, with a view to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050.

137. Accordingly, to tackle climate change and the challenges of energy security, Sri Lanka was seeking to increase and diversify its power production capacity by exploring nuclear power as a safe,

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clean, reliable, affordable and low-carbon energy source, in line with the country's green policies and its ambitious plan to increase the share of renewable energy in its electricity mix to 70%, achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and attain net zero by 2050.

138. In February 2024, the Government had granted approval for steps to be taken towards introducing nuclear power. Sri Lanka was therefore in the process of developing its nuclear infrastructure, under the auspices of its Atomic Energy Board and Atomic Energy Regulatory Council, focusing on capacity development and regulatory aspects such as the establishment of new legislation and the expansion of regulatory infrastructure for nuclear safety, security, safeguards and liability. In January 2024, a delegation of representatives of stakeholder institutions in Sri Lanka had engaged with the Agency to that end, during which they had drawn up an Integrated Work Plan — currently under implementation — and had identified a list of future actions to be taken with Agency assistance, in the form of workshops, training, scientific visits and expert missions.

139. In June 2024, a high-level delegation comprising national legal and technical experts had engaged constructively with Agency experts in Vienna to ensure that the proposed amendments to the country's Atomic Energy Act were consistent with the relevant international instruments, safety standards and nuclear security guidance and supported the establishment of a comprehensive national nuclear legal framework. A new draft of the proposed amendments was expected to be presented to Parliament in the first quarter of 2025. He expressed his country's appreciation for the Agency's cooperation in that regard, especially the support provided by the Nuclear and Treaty Law Section of the Office of Legal Affairs.

140. In 2024, at his country's request, a SEED mission had been successfully conducted in Sri Lanka. In collaboration with the Geological Survey and Mines Bureau, the Agency team had reviewed the site survey report for the proposed NPP. The team had also conducted interviews and discussions with representatives of the relevant technical agencies, conducted a visit to a candidate site in the Eastern Province and provided observations.

141. Sri Lanka was currently implementing six TC projects focused on priority areas such as nuclear and radiation safety and security, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, water resources management, energy and industry, environmental monitoring, food safety, human health, energy and industry, and human resources development. For the next TC cycle, Sri Lanka had proposed five new projects in the areas of nuclear power infrastructure development, nuclear medicine, animal health, food safety and radiation safety infrastructure development. In addition, an agreement had been signed between the Atomic Energy Board and a private entity to establish a medical cyclotron facility to produce fluorodeoxyglucose for PET scanners.

142. In July 2024, Sri Lanka had deposited its instrument of acceptance of the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It was now making in-kind contributions to the TC programme by hosting regional events.

143. Underscoring the significant benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and reiterating its commitment to leveraging advancements in that area to enhance its development goals, Sri Lanka expressed appreciation for the Agency's expertise and the support that it provided to Member States with a view to fostering an environment where the benefits of nuclear technology could be shared effectively and responsibly. Sri Lanka looked forward to continuing its fruitful cooperation with the Agency in the years ahead.

144. Mr BIN HAJI AHMAD (Brunei Darussalam) expressed his country's deep appreciation for the remarkable efforts of the Director General and the Agency's dedicated staff, whose unwavering commitment to promoting nuclear safety, security and safeguards globally was invaluable. Reaffirming his country's full support for the Agency's goals, he said that Brunei Darussalam was grateful for the

assistance extended to it since it had joined the Agency, which had been instrumental in supporting its national development.

145. Having worked closely with Brunei Darussalam on drafting its Radiation Protection Act, promulgated in 2018, the Agency was continuing to help strengthen the country's legal framework to ensure that it addressed nuclear safety, security, safeguards and civil liability comprehensively, including by providing an expert mission from the Office of Legal Affairs in January 2024, which had produced clear outputs for moving forward.

146. In July 2024, Brunei Darussalam had applied to become a member of SEAP, the members and Chair of which were making valuable efforts to ensure the success of that application. Its anticipated collaboration with SEAP would enhance its efforts to address challenges and make progress in nuclear safety and security.

147. In a reflection of its dedication to upholding international standards and contributing to global nuclear safety, Brunei Darussalam had implemented the requirements set out in the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and was making progress towards declaring a political commitment to the Code. Given the importance of acceding to the legal instruments deposited with the Agency, his country had formulated strategies to commit to those instruments in a phased manner, beginning with the Early Notification Convention and the CPPNM and its Amendment.

148. Brunei Darussalam had recently begun building its capacities with a view to establishing a continuous environmental radiation monitoring system in order to ensure safety and facilitate effective emergency response.

149. As a member of ASEANTOM, Brunei Darussalam remained an active and committed contributor to the collaborative regional project on establishing a regional early warning radiation monitoring network for ASEAN countries and enhancing national networks with a view to strengthening nuclear EPR. Furthermore, the Agency's Department of Technical Cooperation had been instrumental in helping to establish the country's first national cancer centre and build the capacities of its regulatory workforce.

150. Having successfully held two INSSP workshops in recent years, Brunei Darussalam was grateful to the Agency for its invaluable guidance during those meetings, which had allowed the country to formulate a concrete framework for strengthening the national nuclear regime, thereby enabling it to meet international standards and safeguard the nation effectively.

151. His country had made significant progress since concluding a modified SQP in 2021 and remained committed to strengthening its safeguards capacity to ensure that it met all legal obligations. At the regional level, Brunei Darussalam was advancing towards membership of the Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network, which would enhance its regional engagement by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experience and information with other safeguards practitioners in the region. His country fully supported the Agency's work to carry out safeguards verification and strengthen disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, which were crucial for increasing peace and security on a global scale.

152. Ms ROȘA (Republic of Moldova) said that the General Conference was meeting at a critical juncture marked by multiple crises, including the Russian Federation's ongoing military aggression against Ukraine — a blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter that posed a serious threat to nuclear safety and security in the region. The illegal occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP continued to heighten those risks; the Republic of Moldova remained gravely concerned about the deteriorating nuclear safety situation there.

153. Commending the Director General for his leadership and the Agency's staff for their tireless work to ensure the safety of nuclear installations in such difficult circumstances, the Republic of Moldova expressed its strong support for the Agency's efforts to monitor and report on the situation and joined

the international community in calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Russian military forces from Zaporizhzhya NPP and all other nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

154. Her country remained fully committed to strengthening the global nuclear security architecture. As the Agency's safeguards system played a crucial role in promoting the goals of the NPT, it had continued to advocate the universalization of the CSA and the AP.

155. The Republic of Moldova also remained deeply committed to the Agency's TC programme, which was essential for enhancing national capabilities in key areas such as nuclear safety, radiation protection and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Through the TC programme, the Republic of Moldova had received vital technical assistance and access to expertise, thereby enabling it to improve its regulatory frameworks and better protect public health and the environment.

156. In the current TC cycle, the Republic of Moldova had participated actively in projects focused on human health, especially in the field of radiotherapy and nuclear medicine with a view to improving cancer treatment and diagnostics. It had also made significant progress in radioactive waste management, an area of high priority for the country, through national projects to support the safe handling, storage and final disposal of radioactive material.

157. Her country had submitted two proposals for national projects under the 2026–2027 TC cycle, on enhancing the management of radioactive waste with the goal of improving safety standards in line with international best practices and on promoting nuclear applications in health care with the aim of expanding national capacities in nuclear medicine and diagnostics, which would have a direct and positive impact on the health of citizens.

158. In addition to strengthening national capacities, the TC programme also fostered regional collaboration and international solidarity in the pursuit of nuclear safety, security and development. In that connection, the Republic of Moldova was actively participating in regional and interregional projects, through which it was able to share knowledge and best practices with other countries while benefiting from the collective expertise of the international community. The Republic of Moldova continued to engage in multilateral efforts to strengthen nuclear security, especially in combating the illicit trafficking of radioactive material; in that context, it had collaborated with the Agency, the European Union and the USA on initiatives to implement detection systems at border checkpoints and provide training for front-line officers.

159. The support provided by the Agency and by international partners such as the European Union, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency had been instrumental in advancing her country's nuclear safety and security agenda and in meeting the objectives outlined in its National Strategy on Radioactive Waste Management, including the decommissioning of the RADON-type radioactive waste disposal facility. Her country looked forward to further cooperation through the TC programme in all areas.

160. Committed to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology in areas such as health, agriculture and environmental protection, the Republic of Moldova particularly appreciated the role of nuclear technology in addressing the challenges of climate change and sustainable development and, in that connection, welcomed the Agency's ongoing efforts to support Member States in harnessing the potential of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in line with the 2030 Agenda.

161. In closing, she reiterated her country's strong support for the Agency's mandate and its continued commitment to cooperation in promoting nuclear safety, nuclear security and the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

162. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) said that the brutal Israeli aggression against the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank, which had been ongoing for 11 months, had led to thousands of casualties.

In the face of that humanitarian catastrophe — and even when an Israeli minister had threatened to wipe out the population of the Gaza Strip by dropping a nuclear bomb — the international community had remained silent. Yemen called on Member States to put an end to the violence and hold accountable those responsible for the heinous massacres that had been carried out. The Palestinian people must be enabled to exercise all their legitimate rights over their lands and establish an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

163. In light of the importance of the TC programme, in June 2024 Yemen had signed a CPF for the period 2024–2029, reflecting the willingness of the country's institutions to continue carrying out TC projects despite the difficult conditions caused by the Iranian-backed Houthi militant coup.

164. He expressed his country's thanks to the Agency for its substantial efforts to continue supporting TC projects in Yemen, especially in the area of cancer treatment. Given the rising cancer rate in the country, Yemen looked forward to receiving further support from the Agency in that area, especially in the form of a visit to Aden to conduct a needs assessment with a view to establishing a new national cancer diagnosis and treatment centre.

165. Yemen also looked forward to participating in ZODIAC, Rays of Hope and Atoms4Food. It called on the Agency to support the Arab Roadmap for Cooperation in Radiological and Nuclear Emergency Preparedness and Response, developed by the AAEA and the League of Arab States, which had been announced at a side event during the current session of the General Conference. In that connection, Yemen commended the ARASIA secretariat for their efforts to promote technical cooperation between the member States and provide training opportunities.

166. Underlining the need for greater focus on TC projects, Yemen encouraged the Agency to keep working to find alternative means to ensure the continuation of TC projects in countries where conflict or exceptional circumstances prevailed. The Secretariat should consider establishing a team to develop new policies to facilitate TC project implementation in countries that were experiencing conflict and should ensure that such projects were not compromised for the sake of other Agency programmes.

167. Yemen called on Iran to desist from its violations of the JCPOA and UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), as such behaviour undermined the nuclear non-proliferation regime. By dragging out the discussions on the Plan, Iran could be giving itself the time to develop its non-peaceful nuclear programme, meaning that any new agreement with Iran would be pointless. Any such agreement must therefore include measures to relieve all concerns regarding Iran's nuclear programme, its ballistic missile programme and its interference in the affairs of other States in the region.

168. Yemen categorically rejected the attacks carried out by the terrorist Houthi militia, with the full support of Iran, in Yemeni territorial waters in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Only Iran benefited from those activities, which posed a serious threat to international maritime navigation, the global economy, and regional and international peace and security. They had also damaged international trade, compounded Yemen's humanitarian crisis and increased the economic burden on Yemen and other countries around the world by pushing up shipping and insurance costs. The international community needed to reconsider how to stop the Houthi threat to international waterways, and to continue supporting Yemen's internationally recognized Government, headed by the Presidential Leadership Council.

169. Yemen endorsed all steps taken by the Agency to strengthen the nuclear security system in order to prevent nuclear material from reaching the hands of terrorists. In May 2024, his country had adopted a comprehensive plan for the protection of radioactive material; it hoped to receive the support of the Agency and its partners in the USA in the implementation of that plan.

170. Having welcomed the results of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held under the presidency of Libya, Yemen looked forward to the fifth session, to be presided over by Mauritania, and encouraged all States to participate and contribute to its success.

171. While all Arab States were parties to the NPT, Israel persistently refused to accede to the Treaty or place all its nuclear facilities under a CSA. It also continued to reject all international initiatives to universalize the NPT in the Middle East, thereby exacerbating instability and insecurity in the region and beyond.

172. Praising the work of the Agency, its Director General and its staff to support the implementation of TC projects in Yemen, he wished the Conference every success in adopting resolutions that would help strengthen the prestige of the Agency and support its noble goals of increased prosperity, security and stability for all the peoples of the world.

173. Mr JONSSON (Iceland) said that his country greatly valued the work of the Agency and welcomed its many contributions in the fields of non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, attaching particular importance to the Agency's safeguards system.

174. Iceland noted with regret that the General Conference was once again meeting against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which continued to pose a risk to Ukraine's nuclear facilities. Given the importance of ensuring the safety and security of those facilities in order to avoid a serious nuclear accident with unforeseen consequences, the Russian Federation must honour the Board of Governor's resolutions on safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine and end its senseless war. As a champion of the Seven Pillars and the Five Principles and of the Agency's important work in Ukraine, Iceland voiced its support for the related draft resolution introduced by a number of Member States at the current session of the General Conference and encouraged others to do the same. It further praised the efforts of the Agency's staff in what were challenging circumstances.

175. Iran's failure to cooperate with the Agency to resolve outstanding safeguards issues was deeply regrettable. Iceland urged Iran to comply with the Agency's standards, return to the path of cooperation in good faith and provide the information needed to verify the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations so that soundly based safeguards conclusions could be drawn.

176. His country called on the DPRK to fulfil its international commitments by dismantling its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes and immediately ceasing all related activities in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and the General Conference.

177. Noting Syria's renewed — and long overdue — engagement with the Agency, Iceland welcomed the process, launched in March 2024, to clarify the outstanding safeguards issues in that regard. It expected Syria to cooperate fully with the Agency until all non-compliance issues had been resolved.

178. Nuclear technologies played a pivotal role in addressing the world's energy, health and agricultural needs, for the benefit of all. Given the clear shared interest in promoting nuclear safety and security, Iceland looked to the Agency to provide standards and guidance in that respect. In responding to the manifold challenges present in the current security environment, greater multilateralism and international cooperation were needed; his country again looked to the Agency to play a key role in that regard.

179. Praising the Agency's efforts to achieve a more gender-balanced workforce both in the Secretariat and in nuclear-related industries, he reiterated his country's thanks to the Agency's Director General and dedicated staff for their tireless work to build a safer and more prosperous world.

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

180. Mr O'NEAL PINDER (Bahamas), expressing his country's praise for the steadfast commitment of the Agency's Director General and staff to addressing the issues of war and conflict, human health, energy, food safety and water resources management, said that, to overcome the challenges of the age, every human being at an individual level and every country at a national level must develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Just as individuals must work not only for their own selves, families or local communities but rather for the benefit of all humanity, each nation as a sovereign State must learn to work not only for its own benefit but rather for the benefit of its region and the wider global community. Humanity's sense of universal responsibility — both individually and as nation States within a global community — was the key to its survival.

181. The Bahamas took its obligations as a responsible partner in the global community very seriously. It was making significant strides in meeting the SDGs and gaining a more in-depth understanding of the importance of implementing the highest Agency standards and participating in the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

182. In August 2024, with the support of the Agency, the OPCW and the USA, the Bahamas had co-hosted a successful high-level national workshop to familiarize Government ministers, parliamentarians, policymakers, diplomats and public and private technical personnel with the work of the Agency and the OPCW and with the NPT and the Chemical Weapons Convention, highlighting the peaceful uses of nuclear science and chemicals in the advancement of human health, environmental protection, food safety and security, and port and maritime security. The time, resources and technical expertise invested by the Agency, the OPCW and the USA in building his country's national capacities and implementing the highest standards of nuclear and chemical safety, security and safeguards were appreciated.

183. The Bahamas continued to benefit from a number of regional and national projects under the Agency's TC programme, focusing on food safety and agriculture, radiation medicine, water resources management, insect sterilization, the strengthening of the legal framework, climate change adaptation, the improvement of laboratory capacities and marine environment protection.

184. As Member States proceeded in their exploration of nuclear science and technology, they must keep in mind the broader objectives and the positive changes to which they aspired for the benefit of all of humankind. Only through collective efforts, unwavering faith and bold courage would the international community turn its vision for a better world into reality.

185. Ms BALI (Togo), reaffirming her country's readiness to strengthen its collaboration with the Agency, said that the Director General's proactive initiatives in areas such as health, agriculture, the environment and climate, often with a special focus on women and young people, continued to benefit people around the world.

186. The current session of the General Conference was taking place in a challenging international context, marked by geopolitical tensions and persistent crises with strong repercussions for the entire international community. Togo, which had a long tradition of peace, welcomed the Agency's efforts to maintain an international equilibrium and urged the relevant parties to prioritize peaceful means, including dialogue, of resolving international conflicts.

187. Through its technical cooperation with the Agency, Togo had worked on projects in key sectors such as agriculture, health and nutrition. Two new projects were being implemented as part of the 2024–2025 TC cycle, on improving the productivity of soybean using nuclear techniques and on the use of isotope techniques for quality control of medicines and foods.

188. Within the framework of AFRA, Togo continued to participate actively in human capacity-building projects in the fields of food security and cancer treatment. It was fully committed to Rays of Hope and was constructing two radiotherapy and nuclear medicine centres, which would significantly improve access to cancer treatment by 2026. Furthermore, three linear accelerators, one brachytherapy machine and two SPECT machines would be installed and commissioned for use in the public medical sector. Togo was working with the Agency under a national and a regional project and though Rays of Hope to ensure sufficient, high-quality human resources to operate that equipment, and her country thanked the Department of Technical Cooperation, in particular its Division for Africa, for the constant support it provided in that regard.

189. Mindful of the need to ensure a solid regulatory framework for nuclear safety and security, Togo was finalizing regulatory texts governing the safety of radioactive sources, aimed at ensuring the safe use of nuclear technology and the protection of the public and the environment. Togo thanked the Agency for its invaluable assistance in that regard. It looked forward to the planned Agency expert mission to assess the management of disused radioactive sources, which it hoped would be an opportunity to further strengthen the country's regulatory framework and discuss its specific needs with Agency experts.

190. Her country intended, in the second quarter of 2025, to conduct a review of its INSSP in order to assess its implementation and adapt it in the light of new INSSP requirements. It also looked forward to hosting a regional workshop on management of the response to a nuclear security event at nuclear facilities in early November 2024 and remained available to host other Agency events.

191. Togo welcomed the theme of the 2024 Scientific Forum 'Atoms4Food — Better Agriculture for Better Life, which was a logical successor to the previous year's climate-based theme, as climate-related challenges needed to be taken into account when considering sustainable agriculture. In that connection, her country supported the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear energy as a potential solution for the global energy transition.

192. In closing, she reaffirmed her country's unwavering commitment to working with the Agency to promote peace and prosperity around the world.

193. Mr TSIANE (Botswana), expressing his country's appreciation for the achievements of the Agency and the visionary leadership of the Director General, said that technical cooperation remained an important catalyst in the delivery of his country's national programmes in the areas of food security and nutrition, health and well-being, human capital development, energy security and water resources management. Through such cooperation, Botswana had achieved success in the control of animal diseases and the improvement of human health and nutrition, which it would continue to pursue through its participation in Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and Atoms4Food.

194. Recurring drought, which had afflicted Botswana for the past three years, remained a major threat to food security, affecting both crop and animal production. There was a critical need for drought tolerant crops and for improved soil, water and nutrition management practices.

195. Agriculture remained an important pillar of his country's economy, as evidenced by the significant Government investment in the sector, with initiatives aimed at improving production and the development of the agricultural value chain. Effective national animal health diagnostic laboratories capable of conducting coordinated monitoring, surveillance, early detection, differentiation and control of emerging and re-emerging zoonotic disease outbreaks were therefore critical. Furthermore, Botswana was also cooperating with the Agency in strengthening its artificial insemination programme with a view to improving the genetics of the national herd and, in turn, increasing livestock productivity.

196. The focus of the 2024 Scientific Forum on Atoms4Food was closely aligned with Botswana's food security agenda. His country also looked forward to the outcomes of the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme.

197. As part of its efforts to strengthen its national radiation safety, nuclear security and safeguards capacity and infrastructure and to respond to evolving safety standards and security threats, Botswana was continuing to work towards finalizing the review of the Radiation Protection Act and ensure that the related legislative and regulatory frameworks were adequate.

198. Committed to international efforts in the area of nuclear security, Botswana commended the Agency for the success of ICONS 2024. The implementation of the country's INSSP continued to enjoy the full support of his Government, which had incorporated enabling programmes — such as the development of detection architecture — in its national development plans.

199. The Agency's valuable capacity-building programmes made a critical contribution to the realization of the Government's agenda for creating a knowledge-based national economy. The knowledge and skills that Botswana would continue to acquire through those programmes would make impactful solutions available to both the public and private sectors, where nuclear technology could provide a competitive edge. Botswana looked forward to developing centres of excellence in that field with the Agency's support.

200. The support that Botswana was receiving through the Agency was helping to lay an essential foundation for the utilization of nuclear technology for national development. Initiatives such as AFRA, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the PhD sandwich fellowship programme would serve as valuable inputs in that regard.

201. Botswana was committed to achieving universal coverage of a high-quality package of essential health services, including radiotherapy and nuclear medicine services. The country's recently established public radiotherapy programme was now fully functional, thereby greatly improving access to cancer treatment. Botswana would continue to enlist the Agency's support to further enhance and sustain such services.

202. Sincerely appreciative of the support provided by the Agency and of its wide range of initiatives that addressed the needs of Member States, Botswana remained committed to supporting the efforts of the Agency for the benefit of humanity.

203. Mr NDAHAYO (Rwanda), praising the leadership of the Director General in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for sustainable socioeconomic development, said that his country was integrating peaceful nuclear technology solutions with a view to realizing its long-term Vision 2050. Rwanda had finalized the draft of a national nuclear science and technology policy and had upgraded the existing radiation protection law into a full-fledged nuclear law — a process in which the Agency had provided valuable support. Both documents had been submitted to the competent national organs for formal approval. The overall objective of the national policy was to provide guidance on the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology while strengthening the coordination and regulation mechanisms for sustainable socioeconomic development.

204. His country's nuclear energy programme comprised two main flagship projects: the establishment of a centre of nuclear science and technology as a one-stop shop for the promotion of non-energy applications in priority areas, notably food and agriculture, human health, water resources management, environment management and industry; and the deployment of small modular reactors to meet the increasing energy demand, ensure energy security and contribute towards net-zero emissions targets.

The preliminary feasibility studies for those projects had been completed, and the Rwanda Atomic Energy Board had been tasked with implementing them.

205. His Government had established an independent nuclear regulatory body, which was continually being strengthened to ensure the safe and secure implementation of the national nuclear energy programme. Rwanda had hosted an Advisory Mission on Regulatory Infrastructure for Radiation Safety and Nuclear Security with a view to evaluating the alignment of the national regulatory infrastructure, including emergency preparedness, with Agency safety standards and best practices.

206. Rwanda was establishing strategic partnerships with interested companies involved in the development of small modular reactor and microreactor technologies with an eye to collaborating closely on the development process — part of which could take place in Rwanda — in line with the country's national strategy to remain a proof-of-concept destination for companies with innovative nuclear technology solutions as a pathway towards accelerating the transfer of knowledge and technology and building a knowledge-based economy. Rwanda was committed to working in close collaboration with the Agency on the implementation of all nuclear projects in order to ensure that nuclear safety, security and safeguards standards were strictly followed.

207. In March 2024, under the framework of AFRA, Rwanda had hosted a five-day Agency expert mission to assess the safety analysis and design features of a planned criticality demonstration experiment for Dual Fluid reactor technology. The mission had produced a package of tools to assist the Rwanda Atomic Energy Board and the national nuclear regulator in re-assessing and improving the safety design features of the planned reactor and its management, with the ultimate goal of protecting people and the environment from any radiological or other risks associated with the project.

208. Rwanda appreciated the support that it had received from the Agency's various Departments and from AFRA. It was also keen to work closely with AFCONE to advance the integration of nuclear civil applications in Africa, and to expand regional collaboration with a view to accelerating the integration of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy to uplift living standards in Africa and beyond.

209. In closing, he reiterated his country's commitment to the Agency's principles and guidelines related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards and expressed its gratitude for the commendable contribution made by the Agency and its Director General to expanding and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology for sustainable socioeconomic development in all countries.

210. Ms DWARKA-CANABADY (Mauritius), conveying her country's appreciation to the Director General for his continued efforts to promote the work of the Agency with full integrity and impartiality, said that Mauritius remained committed to supporting the Agency in carrying out its statutory mandate in the fields of non-proliferation, nuclear safety and security, nuclear and radiation applications and technical cooperation.

211. To build a better and safer world, the international community needed to ensure that a strong global nuclear security framework was in place, safeguards were implemented, safety standards were respected and the peaceful uses of nuclear applications were promoted. The Agency's work to that end, as detailed in the Annual Report for 2023, was commendable.

212. Like many other SIDS, Mauritius did not have permanent representation in Vienna, meaning that it could not participate in day-to-day activities such as meetings of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Standards Committee. Such issues were nonetheless of high importance to her country, which made an effort to remain engaged, even from afar.

213. Mauritius had already submitted its TCF pledge for 2025. It had also made a textual proposal for the current session's draft of the annual General Conference resolution on nuclear and radiation safety, in order to draw attention to the need for continued support and technical assistance for SIDS, and to

recall the significant impact of the Agency's projects and the important role that the Agency could play through the promotion of innovative techniques to help SIDS attain the SDGs. Mauritius thanked all Member States that had supported its proposal and praised the Agency's pursuit of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

214. Her country's growing collaboration with the Agency spanned efforts to enhance cancer care through radiotherapy and nuclear medicine, combat non-communicable and mosquito-borne diseases, detect and control zoonotic diseases in livestock, control and monitor marine pollution, manage groundwater, including through the identification of sources of pollution, and breed climate change resistant crops.

215. Her country's partnership with the Agency through TC projects was helping it to address its inherent vulnerability to the consequences of climate change, which took the form of repeated droughts, flash floods and cyclones, affecting infrastructure and agricultural production. Food security, food safety, health and education were vital elements of the country's national developmental agenda. The Agency provided valuable assistance in making agricultural products more resistant to higher temperatures and to disease and in developing high yield, high quality and climate change tolerant crop varieties. Such efforts could be expanded to become regional and continental projects.

216. In that connection, Atoms4Food was playing a valuable role in harnessing the capacities of the Agency and the FAO to improve the management of natural resources, thereby reducing food loss and ensuring food safety and nutrition. In that connection, she noted that a poster on the use of nuclear techniques for fruit fly control in Mauritius, achieved with the Agency's assistance, was available to view at the AFRA exhibition on display during the current session of the General Conference.

217. As the COVID-19 pandemic had shown, unexpected disease outbreaks could arise at any moment, leaving a damaging impact on economies without warning. Efforts to combat such situations, including through projects on the use of the SIT, were therefore valuable, especially as part of common efforts to prevent outbreaks of dengue and chikungunya.

218. Mauritius was pleased to have joined Rays of Hope. In May 2024, the Agency had attended the inauguration of a new cancer hospital in the country, which had been established with Agency support with a view to advancing nuclear medicine. It was hoped that the hospital would become a centre of excellence which could benefit the entire Indian Ocean region.

219. The value of the Agency's technical cooperation could not be underestimated. Mauritius was grateful to Member States for the financial support that they provided to the TC programme and for the various fellowship and training opportunities made available to its national experts. Her country looked forward to participating in the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science, Technology and Applications and the Technical Cooperation Programme scheduled for November 2024.

220. The Agency had an important contribution to make to the global development agenda and to building a peaceful world. Mauritius would continue to support the Agency's endeavours to that end.

221. Mr ABDEL SHAFI (State of Palestine) said that his country was proud to participate in the General Conference for the first time under the name 'State of Palestine'. Grateful to all States that had supported that change, it looked forward to the day that it could become a full Member State of the Agency.

222. Commending the Director General and the Secretariat for their efforts to strengthen the Agency's role in promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy, he expressed his country's gratitude to the Agency for working tirelessly to develop its national capacities, through cooperation with its national regulator, the Directorate of Nuclear Energy and Radiation Control within the Ministry of Health.

223. The TC programme in the West Bank was an essential tool for improving food security and for building capacities in nuclear medicine, including radiotherapy for cancer treatment, and in the detection of radionuclides in the environment. Through technical cooperation, the State of Palestine had been able to establish training centres for radiation safety and a unit for the treatment of prostate and neuroendocrine tumours within the Nuclear Medicine Department of Al-Ahli Hospital.

224. Nonetheless, public hospitals in the West Bank were experiencing shortages of advanced medical equipment, such as mammography systems, linear accelerators, PET scanners and laboratory equipment. Hospitals faced obstacles to accessing such equipment, ranging from a lack of funding to restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities.

225. More than two million people in the Gaza Strip were being massacred, starved and forcibly displaced — in short, they were being subjected to genocide. A further 2.5 million people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were facing settler colonialist terror on a daily basis. The genocidal war in the Gaza Strip had thus far resulted in the murder of more than 40 000 people, mostly women and children, in addition to the destruction of civil and social infrastructure, including educational institutions and health facilities. In addition, there was good reason to believe that soil and water contamination had occurred as a result of the occupying forces' use of depleted uranium in various forms of ammunition. Moreover, in the Gaza Strip, some 10 000 cancer patients were facing a slow death. The State of Palestine urgently called for the Agency's cooperation to develop a tailored emergency response programme to address those issues.

226. In raising the issue of the genocide in its territories, the State of Palestine did not seek to politicize the work of the Agency. Rather, it sought accountability for an Agency Member State that was committing grave violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, and the UN Charter, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice — the highest judicial body in the world.

227. Pursuant to Article IV of the Agency's Statute, the Board of Governors and the General Conference must determine whether each Member State was able and willing to carry out the obligations of membership in the Agency, giving due consideration to its ability and willingness to act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. By denying the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the colonial State of Israel was in clear breach of the UN Charter, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice. The State of Palestine called on all Member States to consider invoking Article XIX of the Statute on the suspension of privileges in respect of the colonial State of Israel.

228. In closing, he expressed his country's gratitude to all States that had voiced their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

229. Mr GRANSER (Sovereign Order of Malta), congratulating the Director General on his exemplary achievements and his highly professional leadership, said that the Order had maintained a permanent office in Vienna dedicated to the cultivation of diplomatic relations with the Agency since 1994, when the Order had been granted observer status within the United Nations. The current year marked the 30th anniversary of that privilege — a significant milestone in its ongoing commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations. In line with the Order's other diplomatic endeavours, the permanent office in Vienna was devoted to advancing and upholding the humanitarian goals that represented the very foundations of the Order. The Order's neutral, impartial and non-political stance enabled it to intervene in humanitarian crises in a timely and effective manner. Its members played a vital role in ensuring that it could successfully deliver aid and deploy personnel, often in the most challenging and inhospitable environments, and act as a mediator in the global arena.

230. Profoundly appreciative of the Agency's efforts to advance nuclear safety and security and to support the 2030 Agenda, the Order welcomed the Director General's steadfast commitment to

addressing pressing global challenges — notably in the realms of health and the climate crisis — through the application of nuclear technology.

231. Praising the significant achievements of the TC programme, especially in the fields of agriculture, food security and medicine, the Order urged the Agency to continue its vital work in those areas, with a particular emphasis on human health.

232. The Order welcomed the Agency's efforts, through Rays of Hope, to assist nations in enhancing their capabilities to diagnose and treat cancer more effectively. It fully supported that initiative and intended to contribute to its success through financial support, thereby helping those most in need of assistance around the world. Furthermore, the Order was actively collaborating with the Agency and its Member States on a project to provide radiotherapy training in Africa.

233. Through Malteser International and its other entities, the Order carried out charitable missions across the globe. It shared many of the Agency's goals, especially in the fields of human science and health care. Its contributions included the provision of financial support for early cancer diagnosis and the facilitation of medical training in the Western Balkan region. The Order was deeply appreciative of the crucial technical role that the Agency played in fostering global peace, security and the promotion of well-being for all.

234. Mr HALLERGARD (European Atomic Energy Community) said that Euratom acknowledged the Agency's efforts to ensure its continuous and intensive involvement in monitoring the safety and security of nuclear installations in war-torn Ukraine and to keep the international community regularly informed in that regard. Owing to the Russian Federation's unjustified and illegal seizure of Zaporizhzhya NPP and its attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, the nuclear safety and security situation in Ukraine remained of deep concern for Euratom and its partners.

235. Echoing the European Union's condemnation of the Russian Federation's irresponsible and dangerous behaviour, especially at Zaporizhzhya NPP, where it continued to flagrantly violate international law, Euratom noted that both it and the European Union were continuing to provide substantial support to Agency efforts to assist Ukraine and to carry out monitoring at all Ukrainian NPP sites, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP. European financial instruments also continued to provide sizeable support directly to Ukraine to enhance nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

236. For more than half a century, Euratom had operated a unique regional system of safeguards — which remained an essential pillar of global non-proliferation — and had acted as a reliable partner to the Agency in safeguards implementation. The first Euratom safeguards regulation, establishing reporting rules for users of nuclear material in the European Union within the framework of the Euratom safeguards system, had entered into force 65 years previously. In 2024, a revised and updated version of that regulation had been adopted to ensure the continued effectiveness and efficiency of Euratom safeguards.

237. In the European Union, nuclear safeguards application was monitored by the European Commission and the Agency. Central to that constructive collaboration was the performance of joint inspections and the development and use of common instruments and tools. Euratom was committed to continuing its more than four decades of support for Agency safeguards through the implementation of the dedicated European Commission Cooperative Support Programme, which addressed a broad spectrum of Agency needs in relation to research, development and training.

238. The commitment of Euratom to nuclear safety remained firm. Clear benefits could be derived from the sharing of experiences and best practices and the use of international and regional peer review mechanisms. The EU member States had implemented the majority of the post-Fukushima Daichii accident stress test actions; only a very few longer term actions remained to be

finalized. The voluntary involvement of non-Euratom countries in that exercise confirmed the value of the applied methodology for re-evaluating the safety margins of NPPs. Euratom would continue to engage in such stress tests with willing partner countries.

239. Euratom was continuing to develop its excellent cooperation with the Agency in nuclear safety and radioactive waste management. In March 2024, the European Commission and the Agency had signed a three-year Contribution Agreement to support the IRRS and ARTEMIS programmes.

240. The safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel required continuous attention to avoid transferring an undue burden to future generations. The European Commission was closely monitoring the responsible and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste and, in May 2024, had issued the third report on the progress made by EU member States in that regard.

241. In all countries, the availability of financing was a crucial aspect in the selection of disposal solutions for highly radioactive waste; the pooling of resources could help overcome financial and technical challenges. Welcoming the substantial progress made by certain countries in constructing deep geological repositories, he noted that the European Commission was conducting a study on the advantages and viability of multinational approaches to disposal solutions.

242. In the area of EPR, Euratom was seeking to further facilitate decision making in the event of a radiological incident. The recently concluded Practical Arrangements on response to nuclear and radiological incidents and emergencies foresaw greater integration between the emergency systems operated by the European Commission and the Agency.

243. The Euratom Research and Training Programme was central to promoting excellence in nuclear research and innovation. Recently, the European Commission had launched actions linked to the safety of SMRs, the development of nuclear material, the safe management and disposal of radioactive waste and the development of fusion as a promising future energy source. In addition, the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme had received support from the Euratom Research and Training Programme to foster the development of present and future generations of nuclear scientists and engineers.

244. In February 2024, the European Industrial Alliance on Small Modular Reactors had been established with a view to facilitating the safe development and deployment of the first SMR projects in Europe by the early 2030s. The Alliance would collaborate closely with international bodies, such as the Agency, on industrial applications, nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and safeguards aspects, primarily through its participation in ad hoc roundtables and stakeholder forums. The first deliverables — technology road maps and a strategic action plan — were expected by the end of 2024 and in the first quarter of 2025, respectively.

245. As new sources of energy and increased energy independence were sought, substantial changes had been seen in the fusion sector. Noting that the ITER project was undergoing reforms, Euratom underscored the importance of the project's ability to provide proof of concept and scientific results as soon as possible. New private initiatives and start-ups had also emerged, proving that fusion was no longer the domain of large public research projects alone, but required a comprehensive regulatory framework to support the construction and operation of future fusion power plants. In 2024, the European Commission had established the Fusion Expert Group to provide advice and expertise to guide the definition of the EU strategic approach aimed at achieving the fastest possible route to the commercialization of fusion. The Group would offer guidance to ensure a coherent and strategic approach to EU actions in the international context, including in coordination and cooperation with international partners such as the Agency.

246. There was further scope for collaboration between Euratom and the Agency in non-power applications. In 2024, in line with its Strategic Agenda for Medical Ionising Radiation Applications (SAMIRA), the European Commission had published a research road map on the topic and had adopted a recommendation to provide guidance to EU member States on implementing national systems for clinical audits in radiology, radiotherapy and nuclear medicine. In addition, to secure the supply of medical radioisotopes, the European Commission had launched the European Radioisotope Valley Initiative to facilitate access to source materials, improve industrial-scale production and develop innovative production methods.

247. Through the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation — which had a budget of €300 million covering the period 2021–2027 — Euratom provided support for nuclear safety, the safe management of nuclear waste and the efficient application of safeguards to all Agency Member States around the world. For example, the European Commission was supporting Armenia in the implementation of recommendations resulting from the nuclear safety stress test conducted by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group.

248. The collaboration between the Euratom community and the Agency was strong and well established. The Agency remained a key Euratom partner, contributing to the safe and sustainable development of nuclear power in synergy with Euratom policies.

249. Ms COLTHART (International Criminal Police Organization) said that law enforcement agencies around the world were at the forefront of protecting communities from the misuse of nuclear and other radioactive material. As the global representative of the law enforcement community, INTERPOL assisted its 196 member countries in countering the threat of radiological and nuclear terrorism.

250. The global law enforcement community faced an ever-changing array of capable, mobile and resourceful non-State actors intent on attacking vulnerable targets and misusing radioactive material. Law enforcement agencies around the world had observed a variety of methods of operation used by such actors to acquire radioactive material or attack vulnerable targets. In the current threat landscape, many such methods were no longer merely local or regional; through the use of information and communication technology, non-State actors were able to disseminate knowledge to a global audience while evading law enforcement detection. Combating such diverse and often unfamiliar methods of operation required increased awareness, effective countermeasures and extensive communication both among law enforcement agencies and with other government agencies, regulators, academia, international and regional organizations and the private sector.

251. In that context, effective international cooperation and information sharing were crucial to mitigate the risk posed by emerging threats to nuclear security. INTERPOL’s encrypted global communication system, known as I-24/7, facilitated the secure exchange of information among law enforcement agencies worldwide.

252. Furthermore, INTERPOL had established the Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism Unit to implement its law enforcement support programme, aimed at ensuring that the assistance provided to INTERPOL member countries was measurable, driven by criminal intelligence and tailored to the needs of its beneficiaries.

253. To support the prevention and detection of and response to incidents involving nuclear and other radioactive material, situational awareness of the threat posed by non-State actors was required. INTERPOL’s core competencies lay in police data management and analysis. It collected, assessed and analysed information relevant to nuclear risks and informed its member countries accordingly. It also supported member countries with their ongoing investigations of radiological and nuclear threats. INTERPOL’s Geiger database, although currently undergoing modifications, continued to collate law enforcement data on incidents involving nuclear and other radioactive material or facilities, including

cyber incidents and insider threat cases. INTERPOL was currently working with four regions — the Black Sea and the Caucasus, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa, covering 41 countries — to enhance information sharing on radiological and nuclear threats through Geiger working groups.

254. The 2024 Global Geiger Conference, held in Bulgaria, had been attended by nearly 200 participants from 31 countries, as well as representatives of partner organizations such as the Agency, the World Customs Organization and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. Focused on the prevention of radiological and nuclear criminal acts, the Conference had facilitated an unprecedented level of information sharing between law enforcement agencies with regard to incidents involving radioactive material, potential threat actors and preventive measures.

255. INTERPOL assisted member countries by issuing alerts on individuals, their methods of operation and incidents involving radioactive material and by publishing annual analytical reports to inform law enforcement agencies of criminal trends and emerging threats.

256. The completion of a national-level threat assessment specific to radioactive material represented a gap in many countries' approaches to nuclear security. To assist countries in completing such assessments, INTERPOL had developed a three-phase radiological terrorism threat assessment methodology which took into consideration the relevant actors and their motivations, their level of access to nuclear and other radioactive material and facilities and related capabilities, and the conditions leading to a probable attack.

257. A clear understanding of threats helped policymakers and legislators make well-informed decisions and supported the development of proportionate policies and criminal legislation. INTERPOL therefore encouraged all its member countries to make use of its tools and data repository system in the field of nuclear security.

258. Furthermore, an effective response to nuclear security threats required specialized awareness and capabilities that were not part of the traditional law enforcement skill set. INTERPOL assisted member countries in building their expertise in that regard. The Radiological and Nuclear Terrorism Unit had developed unique, up-to-date knowledge of global and regional radiological and nuclear incidents — especially in relation to the investigation of such incidents and the motivations and tactics of the non-State actors involved — which was essential to provide effective assistance to countries. INTERPOL had developed a range of specialized training materials, from first responder training courses and practical exercises to an integrated workshop on crime scene management and nuclear forensics taught jointly with the Agency. Eight countries were currently benefiting from such capacity building, following a thorough assessment of their national capabilities and the development of country-specific action plans.

259. INTERPOL was grateful to the Governments of Canada, the UK and the USA and its other partners for their contributions to and support for its radiological and nuclear terrorism prevention activities. INTERPOL and the Agency had developed a strong working relationship over the years, leading to the joint development of key publications and training programmes and to increased participation in each other's activities. Joint cooperation benefited all countries by helping build bridges between regulators, policymakers and operational front-line officers.

260. Law enforcement agencies played a critical role in understanding and addressing nuclear security threats. They were the first responders to situations involving radioactive material, responsible for intervening in, or securing, contaminated crime scenes and for apprehending terrorists or smugglers of radioactive material. INTERPOL remained dedicated to bringing the needs, perspectives and on-the-ground experiences of law enforcement agents into the discussions of the General Conference, as part of the collective response to transnational crime and the potentially devastating misuse of nuclear and other radioactive material by criminal actors.

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

261. Mr ZHANG (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization) said that, in a world of heightened geopolitical tensions and increased nuclear rhetoric, multilateralism and cooperation had never been more important. Despite their different mandates, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission and the Agency — both of which made a precious contribution to the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime — worked hand in hand in pursuit of the fundamental goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. Both relied on cutting-edge science and technology and placed detection and verification at the core of their work. They also shared the determination to ensure that the benefits of their work were spread among their members. The CTBTO Preparatory Commission would continue to work alongside the Agency in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing the international community.

262. Even in the face of adverse circumstances, the CTBT remained a bright spot. Over the past year, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission had continued to build on its successes. With 187 signatories and 178 ratifications, the CTBT enjoyed near universal support. Papua New Guinea had become the latest State to ratify the Treaty, bringing it one step closer to universality. The CTBT verification regime had also continued to develop. In 2024, major segments of the International Monitoring System had been completed in two States. Over 90% of planned facilities under that system had been installed, totalling 306 certified facilities around the globe. Through capacity-building activities and through initiatives such as National Data Centres for All, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission would continue to make data accessible to all States Signatories and support them in making use of it.

263. For seven years, not a single nuclear test had been conducted. As each year passed without another test, the emerging global norm against testing became more powerful.

264. That norm could not be taken for granted, however, as there was always a risk of backsliding. Continued support for the CTBT was therefore vital. The CTBTO Preparatory Commission strongly urged all States that had not yet done so to sign or ratify the CTBT and encouraged all possessor States to reaffirm their moratoriums on testing and to signal their commitment to the collective goal of a world free of nuclear tests.

265. Throughout 2024, a near-universal chorus of support for the CTBT had continued to be heard on the global stage. In August 2024, the world had commemorated the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which had provided a timely moment to reflect on the destructive legacy of nuclear testing. Furthermore, in his address to the UN General Assembly in September 2024, the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission had reiterated the need to redouble efforts to ensure that nuclear testing remained a practice of the past.

266. In the week following the current session of the General Conference, the 11th CTBT Ministerial Meeting would take place on the margins of the UN General Assembly High-level Week, providing an important opportunity to further strengthen the push towards the universalization and entry into force of the Treaty.

267. The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, held in July and August 2024, had presented another opportunity to recall that the CTBT remained at the very heart of the NPT; the ambition for such a treaty had been clearly set out in the preamble of the NPT and had been part of the package for the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. The ban on nuclear testing remained as much at the core of the NPT as it had been at the time of that Treaty’s inception.

268. There was no doubt that the CTBT could already be considered a success. It had established a powerful norm, was supported by a strong and vocal international community and was underpinned by robust technologies, delivering tangible benefits for security and peace.

269. Nonetheless, the true potential of the CTBT and its full benefits could not be realized until its entry into force, which was dependant on the nine remaining States listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty completing their ratification processes.

270. The work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission was not yet done. Given current challenges, it would continue to fervently pursue the universalization and entry into force of the CTBT with a renewed sense of urgency and with the support of the Treaty's States Signatories.

271. The work carried out in Vienna made the world safer and more secure. The international community must protect, and endeavour to strengthen, the roles of both the Agency and the CTBTO Preparatory Commission within the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, for the benefit of humanity.

272. Mr BARABASCHI (ITER Organization), noting that the Agency had served as a parent organization to the ITER project, said that, in recent years, the relationship between the Agency and the ITER Organization had expanded to include greater cooperation on educational activities, knowledge management and public outreach. With the emergence of fusion start-ups and private sector investment, both organizations had developed programmes for collaboration and engagement to support such important efforts.

273. He congratulated the Director General and his team on the launch of the World Fusion Energy Group, which would host its inaugural ministerial meeting in Rome in November 2024, to be co-chaired together with the Prime Minister of Italy. By bringing leading scientific researchers together with leaders from government and the private sector, the Group promised to drive forward the narrative of fusion energy research and development.

274. The ITER Organization was also developing new channels for technological engagement with private sector fusion initiatives. The global fusion research, development and innovation programme had much to gain from cross-sector collaboration, by building upon the differences in public and private approaches. The ITER Organization had accumulated decades of specialized fusion knowledge and was committed to making that knowledge available in support of global efforts. The private sector, by comparison, had greater flexibility to explore smaller, more experimental and higher risk concepts, which also contributed meaningfully to the body of global knowledge.

275. The ITER tokamak — a first-of-its-kind industrial scale fusion device — was among the most complex research experiments of all time. While the approach taken was complex, with all members of the ITER Organization — China, the European Union, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation and the USA — contributing components to make a single machine, it served as a unique model of physical international cooperation.

276. In recent years, unique challenges, combined with the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, had led to delays and increased costs. After extensive deliberation, in June 2024 the ITER Organization had presented a new cost and schedule baseline to its oversight body, the ITER Council.

277. The new baseline prioritized achieving the start of research operations as rapidly as possible. As well as consolidating tokamak assembly stages, it would also incorporate more components, enhance pre-assembly testing and reduce machine risk, paving the way for the start of a scientifically and technically robust initial phase of operations in 2034. That initial phase would involve hydrogen and deuterium–deuterium plasmas, with the tokamak being operated in long pulses at full magnetic energy and with full plasma current. The achievement of those goals would enable progression to full fusion power in the deuterium–tritium phase, scheduled to begin in 2039.

278. While delays and cost increases were never welcome, they were to be expected with a project of such size and unprecedented complexity. The ITER Organization members had so far been supportive of the new approach. The Organization was confident that such an approach was the right way to proceed and that, by working in conjunction with the global fusion community, steady progress could be made towards overcoming the remaining science and engineering challenges and making nuclear fusion a source of energy for future generations.

279. Above all, the ITER project was a tangible demonstration that multinational collaboration — even among countries that were not always aligned on other matters — was possible at a practical level. ITER Organization members were working hand in hand towards a common goal: to leave a better energy legacy. That practical collaboration — a true manifestation of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' — would become necessary on many fronts as the international community confronted the challenges of climate change.

280. Mr ZABALGOITIA TREJO (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) said that the 33 Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean that were parties to the Tlatelolco Treaty, pursuant to which OPANAL had been created, were proud to represent the first legally established NWFZ in a densely populated region.

281. Over the past five decades, their firm commitment to peace and development, including the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy, had only been further strengthened by the close cooperation between OPANAL and the Agency, both of which played a fundamental role in coordinating the implementation of a control system, as provided for in the Tlatelolco Treaty, to ensure that no activities proscribed by the Treaty were carried out in the territory of its Contracting Parties. That system was essential to ensure the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy in the countries of the region, all of which had active safeguards agreements with the Agency, thereby enhancing transparency and boosting trust in their nuclear programmes.

282. Through that close cooperation, the inalienable right of States to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, as enshrined in Article 1 of the Tlatelolco Treaty, had been protected and promoted. The cooperation agreement between the Agency and OPANAL — signed in 1972 — had allowed for the construction of an effective, harmonized framework for upholding the NWFZ. Alongside the continuous efforts in the region to strengthen verification and safeguards mechanisms, the agreement reflected the shared commitment of OPANAL member States to promoting global peace and security and fully supporting the Agency's work to ensure the effective implementation of safeguards and the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

283. The Agency's initiatives to promote equitable access to nuclear applications and ensure their safe use had been particularly beneficial for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and were directly contributing to the attainment of the SDGs. OPANAL therefore wholeheartedly supported the efforts of the Agency and the Director General to promote confidence and cooperation with regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and oversee nuclear safety and security in all areas, even during such challenging times. OPANAL reiterated its full support for the Agency and its commitment to maintaining a close and constructive relationship.

284. Mr MARZO (Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) said that ABACC applied a comprehensive safeguards system in Argentina and Brazil with the aim of verifying that all nuclear material in all nuclear activities was used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

285. In 2023, the ABACC Annual Verification Plan had been satisfactorily fulfilled. ABACC inspectors had performed 47 physical inventory verifications, 61 interim inspections, including 15 unannounced inspections, and 59 design information verifications, totalling 874 inspector-days. In terms of significant quantities, the total inventory of nuclear material had increased by 3.4% compared

with the previous year, at the end of which the total inventory had been more than 4500 significant quantities.

286. On the basis of the assessment of all verification activities carried out in 2023, the ABACC Secretariat had concluded that both countries had complied with all terms of the Agreement between the Republic of Argentina and the Federative Republic of Brazil for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy.

287. One of ABACC's priorities was to maintain a properly trained body of inspectors. In 2023, it had organized eight training courses and workshops on various topics, including accounting records auditing and containment and surveillance systems.

288. Another permanent priority for ABACC was the continuous modernization of non-destructive gamma and neutron measurement systems, as well as containment and surveillance systems. It made significant investments in the acquisition of equipment, instruments and software in order to maintain a technical capacity in line with the latest international standards, which was essential for drawing credible safeguards conclusions.

289. In October 2024, ABACC would host fellows from the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament for the fourth time. During the four-day programme, fellows would learn about ABACC's activities and would have the opportunity to visit a nuclear facility.

290. The year 2024 marked 30 years since the entry into force of the Quadripartite Agreement, which contained well defined provisions on coordination and cooperation between the Agency and ABACC with a view to minimizing the duplication of activities. While the two organizations continued to draw independent conclusions, their close cooperation had been crucial for the success of the whole undertaking, enabling the development of procedural arrangements to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in safeguards implementation, for example through the joint use of equipment. Such a sharing of responsibilities had led to an increase in the tasks performed by ABACC within its framework of cooperation with the Agency, under which ABACC remained firmly committed to promoting mechanisms and means to enable the Agency to make full use of ABACC's findings and conclusions for safeguards monitoring, as provided for in the Quadripartite Agreement and as referred to at NPT Review Conferences.

291. Since its establishment 33 years previously, ABACC's work had contributed to mutual trust and cooperation between Argentina and Brazil, providing an example of how cooperation, dialogue and mutual respect between countries contributed decisively to regional and international security.

292. Mr HAMDI (Arab Atomic Energy Agency), noting that the AAEA shared the Agency's noble ambitions regarding the use of atomic energy in service of development and progress, said that the AAEA had begun implementing the second phase of the Arab Strategy for the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, covering the period 2021–2030, which had been approved at the 2022 summit of the League of Arab States. The strategy focused on the triad of food, water and energy security through activities in the areas of water and energy resources, food security, human health, the environment, manufacturing and mining.

293. In 2020, in cooperation with the Agency, the AAEA had launched a project to establish the Arab Network for Environmental Radiation Monitoring and Early Warning. Through the project, radiation monitoring stations were being established or developed in Arab countries to create networks to address any nuclear or radiological incident that might result in radioactive contamination hazardous to the environment, workers and the public, thus supporting Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR.

294. In cooperation with the Agency and under the auspices of the League of Arab States, the AAEA had organized a high-level Arab meeting on the establishment of Arab nuclear and radiological EPR infrastructure. Responding to the Director General's call in his supportive video message to the meeting, the AAEA had developed a road map for Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR for the next five years — the first regional road map of its kind — which had been approved by the League of Arab States and launched on the margins of the current session of the General Conference, in the presence of the Director General and high-level representatives of Arab Member States.

295. The AAEA was cooperating with the Agency's Division of Nuclear Power to enhance the nuclear infrastructure of countries that were starting to construct NPPs, and several seminars had been held on the assistance provided by the two organizations to Member States that wished to include nuclear power in their energy diversification strategies. In that connection, the AAEA was currently working with the Agency to build power reactor simulators for training personnel at its headquarters. In addition, the AAEA had submitted a proposal for a regional project on developing an Arab centre for training in the use of nuclear power reactors.

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

297. In closing, the AAEA commended the UAE on successfully operating all four units of its NPP — the first in the Arab region — and connecting them to the electrical grid; Egypt on starting to build its first NPP; and Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan for launching nuclear programmes. The AAEA stood ready to help strengthen the relevant infrastructure in other Arab countries that wished to start building NPPs.

– Organizational matters

298. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee would meet the following morning at 9.15 a.m. and he requested that all members attend. At the meeting of the Plenary due to start at 10 a.m. the following morning, he envisaged that it would take up rights of reply under agenda item 7, followed by item 26; item 8; the interim report of the Chair of the Committee of the Whole; the report by the Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum; and item 18. At the afternoon meeting of the Plenary, he envisaged that it would take up agenda items 19, 20 and 21.

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.