



Sixty-fourth session of the IAEA General Conference

**Opening statement by HE Mr Azzeddine FARHANE,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Morocco to
the United Nations Office and the International Organizations
in Vienna, President of the 64th session of the IAEA General
Conference**

21 September 2020

Excellencies,

Your Excellency Mr Director General,

distinguished delegates,

At the outset, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the members of the African Group for their unanimous support of my candidacy, and my sincere thanks to all the Member States for electing me by acclamation as President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

I am proud and honored to be able to contribute to fulfilling the **mission of this organization and its noble goals** as President of this session, as the world faces **difficult circumstances and a highly delicate and unprecedented international situation** due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced the international community to **revisit its plans, reorganize its priorities and redefine its goals**.

I also wish to express my appreciation to HE the Ambassador of Mexico and the delegation of Mexico for presiding over the sixty-third session with consummate skill and professionalism.

Allow me also to express my appreciation to HE the Director General for the effort he has put into the **logistical and organizational arrangements** for this session and its Scientific Forum, for which he chose the theme **“Nuclear Power and the Clean Energy Transition”**.

I am confident that the support you provide to the presidency of this session, as the world faces these **very difficult circumstances and unusual challenges**, will help us all to make this General Conference a success in an atmosphere of **positive dialogue, constructive cooperation and fruitful partnership**, in keeping with the Vienna spirit of consensus.

Excellencies,

Your Excellency Mr Director General,

distinguished delegates,

This year has already been a **critical juncture** for the Agency. Since HE the Director General assumed his position, the Agency has faced **unprecedented and unparalleled challenges** posed by the lockdown and the changes in traditional ways of working brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these extraordinary difficulties, HE the Director General has used his **alertness of mind, clarity of vision and managerial skills** to carry out the Agency's mandate in line with its mission "Atoms for Peace and Development". To achieve this, the Agency has mobilized new technology platforms such as webinars, videoconferences and virtual events.

On this occasion, we would like to acknowledge that the Agency is providing us with **diverse possibilities and modern and sophisticated tools** for holding virtual side events and regional meetings for the first time ever at the General Conference. It is thanks to these efforts that we are able to hold this session of the General Conference in order to support the Agency and help it to carry out its important mandate in the service of all Member States.

As President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Conference, I wish to give special recognition to HE the Director General for his pro-active leadership in the **Agency's largest-ever practical initiative, under which it has provided support to over 125 countries in the form of technical know-how and nuclear and radiological equipment for detecting COVID-19 and preventing its spread.** In this connection, I would also like to congratulate HE the Director General for launching, in June of this year, the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action initiative (ZODIAC), which is aimed at mitigating the severity of future epidemics through the use nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques. This is a timely initiative, which was welcomed by the Member States during the meetings of the Board of Governors last week.

Your Excellencies,

Your Excellency Mr Director General,

distinguished delegates,

The Kingdom of Morocco, which holds the presidency of the sixty-fourth session of the General Conference with the support of the African Group, wishes to draw your attention to just a few of the Agency's major achievements on the African continent. The Agency is providing support through technical cooperation projects to **45 African countries.** This includes support for the implementation of national and regional projects in areas such as food and agriculture, health and nutrition, energy, nuclear knowledge development, safety, water and the environment, industrial applications and radiation technology.

The African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (AFRA) is one example of successful regional African cooperation with the Agency. It provides a framework for African Member States to consolidate regional cooperation by strengthening the region's sustainability and self-reliance through cooperation with regional institutions and centers of excellence in Africa. During the COVID-19 pandemic, one third of African Member States received valuable IAEA assistance with the use of nuclear-derived technology for the early detection and prevention of COVID-19.

In the area of nuclear medicine in particular, the IAEA supports African Member States in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to provide optimum care for women with cervical cancer, which kills more than 300 000 women every year. Ninety percent of these women live in low and middle income countries. Cervical cancer is the most widespread type of cancer, affecting women in nearly half of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. That is why, in partnership with the IAEA, I personally initiated a high level virtual panel discussion, to be held immediately after the first plenary meeting during this General Conference, on “The Role of Nuclear Technology in the Fight Against Cervical Cancer in Africa: Past Experiences and the Way Forward”. The panel will discuss the importance of promoting awareness of cervical cancer in Africa in order to draw lessons, share best practices and create practical mechanisms to foster synergies, dynamism and integration among all stakeholders to carry on the fight against this disease today and in the future.

Regarding the IAEA's contributions to national capacity building, we support the second phase of the project for the Renovation of the Nuclear Application Laboratories (ReNuAL), in view of the **significant benefits it offers for activities relating to sustainable agriculture, food security, animal health and the environment in general.**

In conclusion, I encourage us to work together wisely, constructively and inclusively to ensure the success of our conference under these exceptional current circumstances, and to base our work on the principle of consensus as a pillar and key to the success of multilateral diplomacy.

Thank you very much.