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President: Mr. ETEMAD (Iran)

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** GC(XXI)/577.

THE RECORD

ELECTION OF OTHER OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

1. The PRESIDENT informed the Conference that the informal consultations regarding the composition of the General Committee had not led to a solution acceptable to all parties; he therefore proposed that Rule 42(a) of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference relating to consideration of the provisional agenda (GC(XXI)/577) should be waived until such time as the General Committee had been formed, and that the Conference should proceed in the meantime with the general debate.

● 2. The General Conference accepted the President's proposal.

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1976 (GC(XXI)/580)

3. Mr. FRI (United States of America) said that his country was proud to have been involved in the creation of what had become a unique and successful international endeavour. Twenty-four years had passed since President Eisenhower had made his historic "Atomic Power for Peace" address before the General Assembly of the United Nations, in which he had proposed the establishment of an international agency to promote the world-wide sharing of the potential benefits of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Although today that vision was reality, everyone should recognize that the reality was, in a sense, a fragile one, for it could survive only as long as countries continued to sustain it. The Agency and its achievements were based on the assistance that the individual Member States chose to render it. It could not be all things to all men, but its achievements were many and its Member States could be proud of the remarkable degree of harmony and co-operation that normally prevailed in the deliberations of the Board of Governors and of the General Conference. And it was essential to continue to keep extraneous political issues out of their deliberations if the Agency was to preserve its reputation for impartiality and objectivity in discharging its responsibilities.

4. On the occasion of the Agency's twentieth anniversary, the General Conference would naturally wish to consider what accomplishments it had already achieved and what could be expected of it in the years ahead. First, as the Director General had observed in his opening statement [1], the Agency had made remarkable progress in organizing and implementing international programmes for scientific and technical co-operation. It had demonstrated, to quote President Carter, that men gained far more by sharing their knowledge and tools than by using them in secrecy and isolation. The Agency had provided the

industrialized countries and their developing neighbours with many opportunities to co-operate and to share their scientific developments for their mutual benefit.

5. Second, it had proved the importance of the safeguards system, which was international in character and internationally administered. That system was unique in the history of nations, and its success so far was a credit both to the Agency and to those Member States which had accepted the application of Agency safeguards within their territories. His country had always been a staunch supporter of that highly important Agency activity, and would continue to support the development of effective and efficient Agency safeguards procedures.

6. The Agency had similarly responded to the needs of Member States by promoting physical security throughout the international community. Although physical security was largely a matter of national responsibility, Member States had also to work co-operatively on an international level to prevent the theft of nuclear materials or the sabotage of a nuclear facility in any of their territories, since the consequences of non-co-operation could have serious implications for all Member States. The problem was an international one, and it was encouraging to note that the Agency was taking the lead in that important area. In connection with the Physical Security Convention that had been proposed, the United States had sponsored a first draft, which the Agency Secretariat had circulated and which contained several articles for consideration.

7. Finally, it was broadly accepted that nuclear power was called upon to play an increasingly important role in the foreseeable future in face of the grim realities of the energy crisis and the need to increase total world energy supplies. In seeking to assist Member States in that endeavour, the Agency had played an active role by giving advice and assistance to those Member States planning, or already implementing, nuclear power programmes to meet their immediate energy needs. The Agency had conducted training courses for that purpose and was now offering increased fellowship training for more specialized on-the-job training for personnel who would be responsible for nuclear power programmes in different countries.

8. A broad range of health and safety regulations had been issued for the guidance of countries in their nuclear programmes. The Agency's regulations for the safe transport of nuclear materials had been widely adopted and were an excellent example of the role it could play. The Agency was to be particularly commended on its programme for the development of standards and codes of practice for the safe operation of nuclear power plants.

9. The Agency had been successful, too, in promoting activities of importance in connection with other practical applications of nuclear energy. Since its establishment, it had given advice and

[1] GC(XXI)/OR.192, paras 48-87.

provided technical assistance to its Member States in such areas as food and agriculture, the life sciences, and the physical sciences. Its contribution in those areas had been especially important to Member States which were just starting out in the nuclear field.

10. No review of the Agency's accomplishments of the past two decades would be complete without mention of the International Nuclear Information System (INIS). Launched on a limited basis in 1970, INIS was an outstanding example of the willingness of the more advanced nuclear States to share with others the results of their nuclear research and development. INIS had become a valuable means of broad distribution of technical information to all Member States, thereby enabling them to keep abreast of the latest advances in nuclear science and technology.

11. Turning to the future, he wished to make a comment on the recent nuclear policy decisions in the United States. In April 1977, President Carter had first raised the issue of United States concern regarding nuclear non-proliferation in a way that had seemed to challenge some of the basic assumptions which had prevailed in the international nuclear community for so long. At first blush, it might have appeared to some that the United States decisions with regard to re-processing, breeder projects and export policy could diminish legitimate world-wide efforts to derive the maximum benefit from the peaceful applications of nuclear energy for all States.

12. The ensuing months, however, had served to clarify those initiatives and to reconfirm his Government's underlying conviction that the nuclear States could work together in harmony towards commonly held objectives. Few would dispute the objectives of those policy initiatives - more secure and reliable non-proliferation controls - but, at the outset at least, many nations had perceived those initiatives as being unrealistic, over-ambitious, and possibly as militating against their interests. There was now emerging, however, a growing realization in the world that the United States did share those fundamental non-proliferation objectives, and that they were within reach through the determined exercise of reason, goodwill and enlightened international co-operation.

13. Tangible signs of such co-operation were becoming increasingly manifest; there had been, for example, a great deal of talk about the International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation (INFCE), since President Carter had first proposed it in April of the present year. The United States had held discussions with more than thirty countries with a major interest in nuclear energy. In October, his country would be hosting an initial organizational conference, among the topics for which were likely to be fuel and enrichment availability, security of supply and fuel assurances, spent fuel storage, reprocessing, breeder reactors, improved efficiency of thermal reactors and advanced converter reactors, and alternative fuel cycles. The Agency was to take

part in that conference and would, it was hoped, play an important role in implementation of the relevant programme.

14. The favourable response that the concept of an international fuel cycle evaluation programme had met with was encouraging. All countries had domestic priorities, which had created differing views as to how different aspects of the fuel cycle should be handled. Recent experience had shown, however, that with mutual goodwill States could resolve their differences if they were prepared to approach those problems at the concrete technical or negotiating level.

15. Most encouraging was the fact that many individuals in the technical community were now prepared to re-examine and review the options in an objective manner so as to be sure that nuclear programmes could continue to move forward aggressively, but under terms affording the greatest possible assurances to the international community. Only a year ago in the United States it had been difficult to find many people either in the Government or the private sector who were willing to accept the possibility of introducing technical modifications to the fuel cycle or developing ways of internationalizing aspects of the fuel cycle with a view to making them safer against the risk of proliferation. But there were now many individuals, both in the United States and in other Member States of the Agency, who were ready to exert considerable effort to achieve that goal. In short, the past year had reaffirmed that the vast majority of States shared a common dedication to non-proliferation, that their efforts in that area had been marked by notable accomplishments, and that many significant and real opportunities still lay ahead.

16. The Agency was thus beginning its third decade at a most propitious time. It had been established two decades earlier as a focal point for international co-operation in promoting the peaceful applications of nuclear energy world wide. Subsequently, as the need for effective international safeguards and non-proliferation controls became increasingly apparent, the Agency had again served as the cutting edge for the co-operative international effort in achieving those goals.

17. Today, at the beginning of its third decade, the Agency was called upon once more to face a new challenge: as an energy-hungry world groped with the dual challenge of energy shortages, on the one hand, and nuclear proliferation, on the other, the importance of meaningful international dialogue and co-operation had never been greater. Member States had to be able to work together, recognizing their individual national needs and differing requirements, while exercising the utmost care and solicitude for the future peace and security of all the nations in the nuclear world. The Agency was the foundation for that effort and a fulcrum for a new era of even greater harmony among nations, just as it had pioneered unprecedented levels of international co-operation

and dialogue over the past two decades. His delegation was confident that, through the IAEA, and with a continued spirit of goodwill among nations, it would be possible to forge a new world that would be both safe and rewarding.

18. Mr. GOLDSCHMIDT (France) said that it was clearer than ever before that the fulfilment of man's energy requirements was a condition for the peace and happiness of a growing world, where a lack of energy would create tension that could lead to a situation no longer under control. Fulfilment of that need meant combating wastage and resorting to all forms of available energy, including the major contribution to be made by nuclear power.

19. A geopolitical approach to the problem showed that it was not possible to reserve nuclear energy for a small number of industrialized countries. Hence the inevitability of expanding international trade in nuclear materials, equipment and technology had to be recognized. His country was planning to contribute to the quest for a satisfactory balance in the world energy market that could not be brought about without a rapid increase in the forms of energy used to replace oil, and was ready to meet the needs of countries whose development required recourse to nuclear energy.

20. Nevertheless, the year 1977 - the twentieth anniversary of the Agency - might well go down in the history of nuclear energy as the year of reconsideration; reconsideration, in certain circles, of the actual part to be played by nuclear energy in meeting world requirements; reconsideration of international agreements at present in force, but which could be subjected to renegotiation; reconsideration of the trust placed in the Agency's safeguards system, even in cases where the safeguarding covered the entire nuclear activity of the country concerned; reconsideration of the political factors and national regulations so far governing international nuclear trade; reconsideration, among certain supplier countries, of the terms under which uranium was exported, which sometimes resulted in stoppage of sales or even production; and reconsideration of technological decisions accepted as being most suitable for the economic development of nuclear energy, more especially the conventional plutonium cycle, together with the urgency advocated in introducing fast neutron breeders.

21. All those reconsiderations created a climate of instability in nuclear industrial programmes and of mutual distrust among supplier and purchaser countries. They were basically associated with the major problem of non-proliferation, which Governments were seeking to solve but refusing to involve themselves in the dilemma of whether or not to develop nuclear energy on a world scale or to deny it to others because of the fact that such development could be used as a point of departure for military applications.

22. No solution to the dilemma should be allowed to hamper access to that indispensable source of

energy by different countries or to make them unduly dependent on one or more States in meeting their nuclear energy needs. That was particularly applicable to uranium, which had to be made available under satisfactory economic and political terms. Although it was desirable that sales of uranium for civil programmes should be subject to the corresponding international safeguards, it was unacceptable that they should be accompanied as well by requirements based on direct intervention in the national strategy of the fuel cycle of the importing country. His Government could not approve of contract clauses on the strength of which suppliers sought to take advantage of their position and to reserve for themselves the right of veto on reprocessing of the uranium after irradiation.

23. It was essential to intensify uranium prospecting, as it would be rash to rely on the present reserves, which were in the long run inadequate or else uncertain. It was therefore a wise move to develop breeder reactors, which made it possible to boost the energy from a given quantity of uranium by a factor of approximately 50. Furthermore, such reactors were the best way of usefully burning the plutonium produced in nuclear power stations.

24. The industrial assimilation of breeder reactors would be a long process; hence, to save time, the industrialized countries should be the first to go ahead with such projects. France had contributed in 1977 by commencing construction of a 1200 MW(e) power plant, the Superphenix, on behalf of Electricité de France, ENEL (Italy) and RWE (Federal Republic of Germany).

25. The present year had seen Franco-German collaboration in the field of fast neutron reactors, which would enable the research organizations and partners in industry of five countries - France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands - to pool their extensive know-how. The collaboration would also cover safety problems, including radioactive waste management, for which there was as yet no better solution than the reprocessing of irradiated fuel, a necessary operation from the ecological point of view and also of advantage in saving uranium.

26. French policy with regard to the export of nuclear equipment was geared to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and, accordingly, to further strengthening of the provisions and safeguards pertaining thereto. It was for that reason that it had been decided not to export reprocessing plants for the time being. At the same time, extreme caution with regard to the risks of proliferation had to be matched with the need to develop nuclear energy, hence his country was still willing to assist with that development by meeting legitimate needs for technology and providing services relating to the fuel cycle.

27. Any limitation on the transfer of equipment or technology involving a major stage of the fuel cycle, particularly enrichment or reprocessing, had to be offset by access to the relevant services,

A guarantee of that kind entailed a choice of supplier in a free and competitive market, in which any uncertainty surrounding the outcome of a nuclear supply contract would have been completely dispelled.

28. At the International Conference on Nuclear Power and its Fuel Cycle (the Salzburg Conference), held in May, the French delegation announced its discovery, in 1968, of a separation process based on chemical exchange that involved only a moderate consumption of energy and seemed suitable for plants satisfying markets of limited size; the process was considered especially favourable from the standpoint of non-proliferation as an equilibrium time of some 30 years was required in order to produce uranium with enrichment rates of potential use for military purposes. Since the discovery of the process, the French Atomic Energy Commission had been in contact with a number of governmental organizations abroad with a view to examining conditions under which the process could be the subject of international co-operation.

29. There might thereby be found an industrially acceptable process, involving a minimum number of limitations associated with non-proliferation, that did not open up the first pathway towards the construction of nuclear weapons, i. e. pure uranium-235. His country was aware of the hazards created by the second pathway - the isolation of plutonium - and supported measures aimed at preventing the spread of that material, for example, limiting the number of processing plants as a function of non-proliferation and economic criteria and making them multinational in character; extracting plutonium at such plants only when justified and storing it either on the spot or at suitable centres under Agency safeguards pursuant to Article XII, A, 5 of the Statute; and, finally, transporting plutonium only in such forms as made it particularly difficult to recover. Such action with regard to the handling of plutonium, together with the industrial development of a "non-proliferating" enrichment process, contributed to the quest for a union between the requirements of non-proliferation and the terms sought after by countries which would hardly tolerate, in the long run, the perpetuation by a limited number of Powers of a monopoly on the key stages in enrichment and reprocessing. Study of those measures was part of the INFCE programme which it had been planned to initiate in Washington in the month of October.

30. His country hoped to take part in that programme, although it had to be understood that no decision likely to affect the nuclear programmes under way could be taken during it. It was essential that industrial enrichment and reprocessing operations meeting energy requirements and fuel cycle strategies already decided on should continue during the study, the outcome of which must not be prejudged.

31. The major factor in proliferation was in effect an increase in nationally-independent programmes, which could be avoided only in the

atmosphere of mutual trust surrounding the Agency and its safeguards system that the international community had gradually managed to build up over the past twenty years. The progress made in that field since the controversy in 1956 over Article XII of the Statute relating to Agency safeguards should not be underestimated.

32. For several years now the French Government had accepted the principle of safeguards on its territory, as applied by Agency inspectors. It was now working out, in conjunction with the Agency, a series of safeguards procedures for the La Hague plant and would shortly be negotiating with the Commission of the European Communities and the Agency on ways of verifying safeguards applied by the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in France. Furthermore his Government was using the Agency's system for the safeguarding of its nuclear exports.

33. The Agency's success in the field of safeguards had been so valuable that no effort should be spared to protect the system against political encroachment; it was the first time in history that an effective international safeguards system had been established. For that reason he regretted to see that in 1977 the deliberations of the Board of Governors had taken on a political colouring. There, too, was an example of reconsideration, namely that of the Article of the Statute defining the composition of the Board, a proposal for an increase in the membership of which was again under discussion. His Government considered that the present composition of the Board represented a suitable balance between countries assisting the development of nuclear energy and those aspiring to its benefits, and that there was no need to enlarge it.

34. Another chronic ill was the Agency's budget and its excessive rate of increase, which was out of proportion to the normal increase in other activities; it was hoped that the Director General would adopt the most stringent measures to remedy that situation.

35. The Secretariat was to be commended on its valuable study of multinational fuel cycle centres. The Agency could and should play a part in the application of a realistic non-proliferation policy, which should not create, through constant change, fresh uncertainties in the international nuclear industry and nuclear trade, for they were already handicapped by the administrative restraints, the growing complexity of protection regulations and the nuclear controversy in general. His delegation was confident that the Secretariat and the Director General, on the basis of their broad experience, would be able to see the Agency through in that major task.

36. Sir John HILL (United Kingdom) said that the Agency, in celebrating its twentieth anniversary, could look back with satisfaction on two decades in which it had played its part in the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear power and had made a substantial contribution to the common objective of avoiding the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

37. Since the Agency's last General Conference in Rio de Janeiro a year ago, the world-wide debate on the benefits and problems of nuclear power had continued and intensified. A major landmark of the current year had been the conference organized by the Agency in Salzburg in May on "Nuclear Power and its Fuel Cycle", which had provided a valuable forum for Member States to exchange their own particular knowledge and experience of nuclear power.

38. At the previous year's General Conference the United Kingdom delegation had said that the most difficult problem in the future development of nuclear power would be that of avoiding proliferation of nuclear weapons [2]. That statement still held true. However, the previous twelve months had seen intensive discussion of the problems of preventing the future spread of nuclear weapons and the international community as a whole was perhaps now more aware than it had ever been of the pressing nature of that problem.

39. The United Kingdom still maintained that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) [3] should continue to be the cornerstone of efforts to control proliferation. It welcomed the fact that Switzerland and Panama had ratified the Treaty since the previous General Conference and hoped that those Member States of the Agency which did not yet adhere to the Treaty would reconsider their position.

40. There was now full awareness of the urgency with which the problems of nuclear proliferation should be tackled and much of the credit for that was due to the forthright statement of United States non-proliferation policy by President Carter on 7 April. That subject had been considered further at the highest political level at the London Economic Summit meeting in May. Heads of State and Government present had said in their final communiqué:

"We agree on the need to increase nuclear energy to help meet the world's energy requirements. We commit ourselves to do this while reducing the risks of nuclear proliferation Our objective is to meet the world's energy needs and to make peaceful use of nuclear energy widely available, while avoiding the danger of the spread of nuclear weapons. We are also agreed that, in order to be effective, non-proliferation policies should as far as possible be acceptable to both industrialized and developing countries alike."

The United Kingdom Government was party to that statement and had made it clear that it shared that commitment.

[2] GC(XX)/OR.185, para. 49.

[3] Reproduced in document INF/CIRC/140.

41. His Government supported President Carter's proposal for an international nuclear fuel cycle evaluation programme. The United Kingdom would play a full part in that programme, and hoped that as many other Member States as possible would feel able to participate and to contribute their own knowledge and experience of nuclear power. It was only by such broad participation that it would be possible to achieve policies which were acceptable to both industrialized and developing countries alike and which recognized the real part nuclear power had to play in meeting the world's growing energy needs.

42. The United Kingdom hoped that the Agency would be able to contribute to the study from the expertise that it had built up over the years. The Agency's participation would be of special benefit in respect of safeguards and the question of international control of sensitive sections of the fuel cycle. The Agency's report on regional nuclear fuel cycle centres, published that year, was a valuable study of that concept. The United Kingdom also welcomed the continuing work of the Agency on international plutonium management, in which it had been glad to assist the Secretariat. It hoped that it would be possible in the near future to turn the work and studies that had been done on international plutonium management into a practical scheme. It believed that such a scheme could be a major step towards the common goal of ensuring that the potentially great contribution of nuclear power to world energy supplies could be realized without any increase in the risk of the spread of nuclear weapons.

43. While the United Kingdom would readily take part in the International Fuel Cycle Evaluation Programme (INFCEP), it recognized - as he felt sure all Member States recognized - that there was no simple technical solution to the problem of non-proliferation. There was no magic fuel cycle that would overcome all difficulties. The strategy would have to be to place the most stringent controls on sensitive technologies and fissile materials which could be used to produce atomic weapons. INFCEP would be valuable in clarifying thinking on the most effective technical approaches.

44. However, one should not forget what had already been achieved. The safeguards system operated by the Agency was of fundamental importance to non-proliferation. The United Kingdom reaffirmed its commitment to that system. It was essential that it should continue to be improved and strengthened; and the United Kingdom would continue to give the Agency every support it could.

45. Further, the blunt truth was that, if the international community was to eliminate proliferation, it had to remove the incentive to acquire nuclear weapons; and that meant the serious pursuit of détente and balanced measures of disarmament. There was a direct link between removing the incentive for acquiring nuclear weapons and the creation of conditions of stability and security in the world. Those directly

concerned with nuclear matters had a major responsibility. But non-proliferation was finally a political problem and the basic solutions would equally have to be political.

46. The availability of energy was one aspect in the economic factors which had a bearing on stability. Thus, having expressed the support of his Government for the safeguards system, it was right for him also to express its continued support for all the activities of the Agency, particularly the technical assistance programme. The United Kingdom would continue to meet in full its assessed contribution to that programme and would continue to provide an additional sum to be used by the Agency to provide fellowships for scientists from Member States party to NPT.

47. In the United Kingdom, as elsewhere, public interest in nuclear matters had increased markedly in recent years. The British Government was concerned to ensure that there should be full public discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power and with that in mind had initiated a wide-ranging public ventilation of the issues involved. Public debate was being conducted in the press, radio and television, in public meetings and elsewhere. Nuclear power did not need to proceed by stealth; it could stand up to responsible public debate and criticism, and from that point of view the nuclear industry welcomed public debate.

48. That process did, of course, result in delays which were frustrating for the industry, but it was felt that, by stripping away the veils of secrecy behind which nuclear fission had originally been developed, it should be possible to proceed with a nuclear programme in a greatly improved climate of public understanding and acceptance. The British Government, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, the nuclear industry and the safety and environmental protection agencies were all taking part and providing information for the public.

49. At the present time a wide-ranging public inquiry was investigating the proposal to expand the reprocessing of oxide fuels at Windscale. The Government had confirmed that there should be procedures for public consultation before major decisions were taken, and had announced that a decision to build a first commercial fast reactor would be subject to a public inquiry which would enable all relevant issues to be considered.

50. In the United Kingdom, nuclear projects had progressed well in the past year. The four advanced gas-cooled reactors at Hinckley Point and Hunterston continued to operate well. Each station was producing over 1000 MW(e). The magnox reactors continued to give excellent service and to produce electricity substantially cheaper than that generated by fossil-fuel stations.

51. The prototype fast reactor at Dounreay had been taken to full power earlier that year, and continued to run smoothly. After nearly twenty years of successful and reliable operation, the

small experimental fast reactor had now been closed down, as planned. A particularly interesting and important set of experiments had been carried out during the final year of operation which had contributed substantially to confidence in the safety and reliability of liquid-metal-cooled fast reactors.

52. The gas-centrifuge uranium enrichment plant at Capenhurst had come into production the previous year and had been officially opened two weeks ago on 15 September. The plant was part of the Urenco enterprise which was jointly owned by the United Kingdom, Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany. The plant at Almelo in the Netherlands was being built to the same time-table and would be officially opened in a month's time.

53. The sales of radiochemicals from the United Kingdom Radiochemical Centre for use in medicine and industry had increased by 40% in the past year.

54. The demands on the Agency were increasing year by year, and Member States were fortunate in having the skill and experience of the Director General and his staff to meet the increasing workload and seek solutions to all the problems arising.

55. He expressed his Government's continued commitment to all the Agency's activities and confidence that, given the full support of all Member States, the Agency could meet the increased tasks facing it with the same effectiveness that it had displayed in the past twenty years.

56. Mr. CLEMENTEL (Italy) said that his delegation wished to extend its heartiest congratulations to the President of the Conference. Italy was particularly grateful to the Agency for all that had been accomplished over the years in the interests of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Nuclear energy had come rapidly to maturity, and the wealth of concrete achievements - not only in technology but in the more specifically political realm of international collaboration and solidarity - had come about in large measure through the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Agency had made possible a fruitful pooling of knowledge and financial resources during the twenty years of its existence, and one must hope that the future would bring similar or even better results. Italy had believed in the value of international collaboration in nuclear energy matters from the beginning, and it was particularly satisfying to note that that confidence had not been misplaced.

57. He would dwell on those of the Agency's objectives which Italy considered particularly important as the organization entered its third decade, though the significance of past accomplishments should certainly not be underestimated. Nuclear power had proved itself to be a valid alternative to conventional energy sources. Despite the opposition of certain - often ill-informed - sectors of public opinion, and despite the grave problems presented by economic

recession, which in many countries had slowed down nuclear programmes, one could legitimately expect a full resurgence of activity in the nuclear field during the coming few years; the results of the Salzburg Conference were an adequate demonstration of the truth of that statement.

58. In view of the large investments required for nuclear programmes, and because it was so important to ensure that national options were based on proven technology, Italy felt that one of the Agency's tasks for the immediate future should be to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of nuclear technology. The transfer of technology must take place, moreover, in such a way as to guarantee complete respect for the sovereignty of recipient States and to avoid the imposition of burdensome and unnecessary conditions which would bear prejudice to the development of nuclear power and cast doubt on the genuineness of the desire for international collaboration.

59. Another of the Agency's fundamental tasks was to see to it that nuclear development did not lead to a proliferation of nuclear weapons. His Government was convinced that the Agency could do much in that sphere provided it had full co-operation from the international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States. Until those States displayed a firm resolve not to supply nuclear materials and technology to countries which did not accept the conditions of NPT, and until they gave evidence of an equally firm resolve to move towards nuclear disarmament within the framework of a programme of general and complete disarmament, the danger of proliferation would remain present. Above all, it was quite wrong to impose increasingly burdensome obligations on countries which had voluntarily renounced the nuclear military option by adhering to NPT. Thus all articles of NPT, not just the first three, must be applied. If a regime which put parties to NPT at a palpable disadvantage were allowed to take over, the new accessions regarded as essential if the Treaty was to become fully effective would be discouraged. While it was true that a hundred countries had acceded to NPT, it was also true that most of the world (if one took population, territory and national income into account) was represented by the nuclear Powers and by countries that had not renounced the possibility of joining them.

60. For all those reasons, Italy could not regard NPT as a goal attained. It was merely one stage on the way towards the goals of general nuclear disarmament and dissemination of nuclear technology among all countries party to NPT. And it was a stage that had lasted seven years without exhibiting adequate results. All the agreements concluded between the nuclear Powers during those years were limited to measures aimed at checking the nuclear arms race; little had been done to achieve genuine nuclear disarmament as foreseen in Article VI of NPT.

61. The situation was even worse where the application of Article IV was concerned, if one

took account of the increasingly severe obstacles placed in the way of the transfer of information and technology.

62. As a party to NPT, Italy was eager that the Treaty's objectives should be attained as soon as possible, and was co-operating closely with the Agency to that end. All its own nuclear installations had been subject to inspection in the period from April to August.

63. The Agency would have to be especially vigilant to ensure the availability of nuclear fuel and discourage any tendency towards centralization, which would do immense harm to the goal of broad utilization of nuclear power. The Agency should also continue to promote the uses of nuclear energy in other sectors of particular importance to developing countries, such as medicine and agriculture. The recent decision of a joint FAO-IAEA-WHO committee to recommend that authorization should be given for the marketing of certain important irradiated foodstuffs was evidence of how international collaboration could help to solve some of the serious problems afflicting humanity.

64. Public information was another area in which the Agency's contribution was vital. The alarming controversy that had developed over nuclear energy was too often nourished by misunderstandings, ill-founded anxieties and a simple lack of accurate information. The Agency, strong by virtue of its experience and the respect it had succeeded in inspiring, could do much to allay those fears.

65. Italy wished to compliment the Agency on the work recently accomplished by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Nuclear Explosions for Peaceful Purposes (PNE). It believed in the possibilities of that technology, at least in certain sectors, and considered it important that a general regime should be available for its application when the time came; that regime must not, however, constitute an obstacle to the conclusion of an agreement banning nuclear weapons completely, to which Italy continued to attribute first priority within a programme of general and complete disarmament. Furthermore, the work of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group needed to be pursued in greater depth; many problems had not been studied adequately, not through any want of goodwill but through lack of time. The work should thus be resumed immediately and appropriately supplemented.

66. Italy also gave full support to the Agency's activities connected with fast reactors and with the preparation of safety codes and guides. The competence with which the latter task had been tackled deserved particular mention.

67. The perfect organization of the Salzburg Conference in May was another achievement that merited special praise. An international conference held at that juncture had made an exceptionally valuable contribution to the further development of nuclear power and had given

renewed courage to all who for years had been struggling on its behalf.

68. The Italian Government lent full support, likewise, to the Agency's activities on behalf of the developing countries. It was seriously considering, in that connection, the possibility of increasing its contribution to the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste, in view of the importance of the Centre's work for developing countries.

69. In the year past Italy had unfortunately, like many other countries, seen a slowing down of its nuclear programme, owing particularly to the opposition of some sectors of public opinion. The recurrent and increasingly numerous debates on the subject in recent times had made it clear, however, that the opposition was based largely on emotional reactions. In fact, with a rising demand for energy and a large balance-of-payments deficit, Italy had no choice but to turn to nuclear energy on a large scale. In the course of the year the Italian Parliament had accordingly conducted a thorough analysis of the whole energy problem, following which it had reconfirmed the absolute necessity of building at least eight nuclear units as soon as possible in addition to the four already ordered, so that by 1985 the country would have an installed nuclear capacity of about 13 000 MW(e). That objective had recently been accepted in the Government programme approved by all political forces, so there could no longer be any doubt about the nuclear programme which Italy intended to carry out.

70. Another problem that had to be faced, along with the construction of facilities, was the fuel cycle - particularly the ultimate phases of the cycle, on which the feasibility of a fast reactor programme would depend. The undeniable potential of available technology, the size of the market and the certainty of having to rely on the nuclear option were valid arguments in favour of a national fuel reprocessing plant.

71. Fast reactors, even though they had not gone beyond the research and development stage, constituted another important chapter in the Italian nuclear programme. Destitute as it was of uranium resources, Italy could not afford to disregard a type of reactor capable of exploiting to the maximum the energy potential of uranium fuel.

72. In conclusion, he wished to express the hope that the Agency would further intensify its vitally important activities on behalf of the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy.

73. Mr. SITZLACK (German Democratic Republic) said that the political background of the twenty-first regular session was characterized by world-wide efforts to achieve détente and the peaceful coexistence of States with different social systems. In that regard, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe [4] had set an important example.

[4] Opened at Helsinki, 3 July 1973, continued at Geneva from 18 September 1973 to 21 July 1975 and was concluded at Helsinki on 1 August 1975.

74. At the same time, however, the enemies of détente were attempting to hamper international relations. The development and introduction of new weapons, including nuclear weapons, ran counter to world-wide peace endeavours. It was, therefore, imperative to bolster political détente with military détente. That most important task stressed the importance of non-proliferation and, in that connection, his Government condemned the policy of nuclear threat pursued by the South African apartheid régime.

75. NPT was a highly significant instrument, and its universality was indispensable for full effectiveness.

76. His Government believed that all non-nuclear-weapon States that had not acceded to NPT should place all their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards, thus demonstrating that their nuclear facilities were used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

77. As a measure for the prevention of a nuclear war, the Political Advisory Committee of the Warsaw Treaty members had proposed, in Budapest, that a treaty should be concluded in which participant States of the All-European Conference would undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. The conclusion of a complete and permanent nuclear test ban treaty, acceded to by all nuclear-weapon States, as proposed by the Soviet Union, would be a valuable contribution to stopping the nuclear arms race, and current negotiations should result in early success.

78. The real issue was to end the nuclear weapons race and ensure the reduction of nuclear weapons stockpiles. President Leonid Brezhnev had also recently stressed that all States should make efforts to prevent the further proliferation of nuclear weapons, should ban their testing and, last but not least, should do away with nuclear weapons altogether. His Government strongly supported those views.

79. The outstanding event since the previous regular session of the General Conference had been the Salzburg Conference. He was sure that many participants would agree that that conference had once more clearly brought out the indispensability of nuclear power as an energy source.

80. At the last meeting of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) top priority had been given to the development of nuclear power engineering, and the Council had recommended that Member States conclude a treaty for multi-lateral international co-operation in the production of nuclear power plant equipment during the period 1981-90.

81. Although nuclear energy had proved to be an extremely safe and clean source of power, continued emphasis had to be placed on safety considerations. Human safety and environmental protection should be the prime consideration in all projects and his Government therefore strongly

supported the Agency's work on problems of safety and protection. In that context he wanted to pinpoint the progress made with the programme for drafting safety standards. His Government was convinced of the need for regional fuel cycle centres so that the report of the IAEA study project, showing the manifold advantages of such centres, was of great interest. He welcomed the new Agency plan to implement a programme for preparing guidelines and criteria for the safe disposal of radioactive wastes in geological formations.

82. His Government had paid particular attention to the Secretariat's efforts to meet the Agency's obligations in the field of nuclear safeguards, and much had been achieved since the previous regular session.

83. He hoped that the structural changes in the Department of Safeguards would ensure the effectiveness of direct control activities and information processing, and the further methodical development of safeguards activities. It was extremely important that the results and effectiveness of safeguards should be continuously analysed both by a control group within the IAEA and by the Standing Advisory Group on Safeguards Implementation (SAGSI), and that periodic reports be made to the Board of Governors. His Government welcomed the Secretariat's endeavours to elaborate precise and uniform safeguards agreements.

84. Without serious support from Member States, the Secretariat's efforts to achieve effective safeguards could not be successful, and the Salzburg Conference had underlined that political tolerance was a precondition for solving the technical problems of safeguards. Responsible management of national safeguards systems, strict observance of safeguards agreements and constructive co-operation with the IAEA were indispensable commitments on the part of States, while the Agency's responsibility was to improve its safeguards system, to implement the principle of independent controls on the basis of uniform criteria and to process the information obtained.

85. In regard to INIS, he believed that the inclusion of abstracts in "Atomindex" had

considerably increased the value of that publication. He also thought that nuclear medicine should be included in the scope of INIS.

86. In the interest of promoting the political and economic independence of developing countries, his Government gave assistance to developing countries under the Agency's programme for technical assistance, particularly in the field of training and education, and he had been authorized to say that the German Democratic Republic would make a voluntary contribution of 240 000 marks in support of the 1978 programme for technical assistance.

87. A matter for concern was the increase in the budget for 1978, especially since a large part of the increase was due to price rises. His delegation was prepared to accept the budget but expected that the programme would be carried out with strict economy.

88. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the International Atomic Energy Agency, he wanted to refer briefly to the Agency's role throughout the world.

89. The problematic nature of nuclear energy had rendered unavoidable the establishment of special bodies to deal with various aspects. However, in the interests of effective utilization and of international security all problems relating to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be centred on the IAEA.

90. The IAEA played a prominent role in science and technology. The large number of extremely well prepared interdisciplinary scientific conferences had proved particularly effective in propagating scientific insight into the use of nuclear energy. The value of those conferences was enhanced by the fact that the Agency was also deeply engaged in safeguards activities. Endeavours to promote the use of nuclear energy could make sense only if the prime obligation of ensuring peace were met, and if the Agency was to fulfil its mission in the interests of all concerned it would need full support.

● The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.