



International Atomic Energy Agency

# GENERAL CONFERENCE

---

GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/OR.72  
28 September 1990

GENERAL Distr.

Original: ENGLISH

## THIRTY-FOURTH (1990) REGULAR SESSION

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

### RECORD OF THE SEVENTY-SECOND MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna,  
on Thursday, 20 September 1990, at 11.20 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. MANNAN (Bangladesh)

### CONTENTS

<u>Item of the agenda*</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
19 Revision of Article VI of the Statute as a whole (resumed)	1 - 7
16 Plan for producing potable water economically	8 - 48

---

[\*] GC(XXXIV)/939.

---

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document  
GC(XXXIV)/287/Rev.2

90-4492  
(7312e/0721e)

REVISION OF ARTICLE VI OF THE STATUTE AS A WHOLE (GC(XXXIII)/RES/523;  
GC(XXXIV)/930 and Add.1; GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/88)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the draft resolution submitted by Ghana, Sudan and Tunisia in document GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/88.
2. Mr. PARK (Republic of Korea) said his delegation supported the draft resolution but would like clarification from the Secretariat on the meaning of the phrase "members most advanced in the technology of atomic energy" used in Article VI.A.1 of the Agency's Statute to describe the Member States to be designated for membership on the Board of Governors.
3. Mr. TALIANI (Italy) said he failed to understand the reason for that request: the phrase cited by the representative of the Republic of Korea did not appear in the draft resolution under consideration, which was entirely procedural in nature, advocating the re-establishment of a working group to facilitate further consideration of the proposals on the revision of Article VI of the Statute. The Committee should have no difficulty in adopting it.
4. Mr. HASHIMI (Pakistan), Mr. PAPANITROPOULOS (Greece) and Mr. JASINSKI (German Democratic Republic) endorsed the comments made by the representative of Italy.
5. Ms. ROCKWOOD (Legal Division), in response to the request by the Republic of Korea, said that as the designation of the States in question was made by the outgoing Board of Governors after consultations to which the Secretariat was not party, the Secretariat was unable to provide a definition of that phrase as implemented or a detailing of the factors taken into account by the outgoing Board members in reaching their conclusions. Such clarification might, therefore, best be sought from Board members and/or former members themselves. She recalled that the issue had been touched upon in the informal open-ended working group on the revision of Article VI as a whole.
6. The CHAIRMAN said that if there were no objections he would assume that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution in document GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/88.
7. It was so decided.

PLAN FOR PRODUCING POTABLE WATER ECONOMICALLY (GC(XXXIII)/RES/515;  
GC(XXXIV)/928 and Add.1; GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/87)

8. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document GC(XXXIV)/928, the Attachment to which contained the synopsis of a report prepared by consultants and experts from a number of Member States. The summary record of the discussion on the topic in the Board of Governors on 12 September 1990 was contained in the Addendum to the document.

9. Mr. SINAI (India), introducing the draft resolution in document GC(XXXIV)/COM.5/87 on behalf of the Group of 77 said that the importance of producing potable water economically, especially for the vast majority of people in the developing world, was self-evident. The subject was not a new one for the Agency, which had commenced relevant studies some time before. The draft resolution sought to follow up on the consideration of the subject by the General Conference at its thirty-third session, keeping in mind the Agency's distinctive competence and role as the premier international organization for furthering the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The resolution's purpose was to focus attention on the role of nuclear energy, and therefore of the Agency, in the important task of obtaining potable water through desalination. On behalf of the Group of 77, he urged all delegations to support the draft resolution.

10. Mr. CLARK (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had substantial reservations concerning the scale and pace of the proposed programme for seawater desalination. Three recommendations in the synopsis of the report - concerning a potable water database, clarification of the technical and economic feasibility of nuclear desalination through detailed studies at specific sites, and comparison of different types of nuclear and other energy sources - were acceptable. Consideration should be given to two important points, however: whether the task was one for the Agency or some other body, and what the financial implications might be. The working programme set forth in paragraph 4 of the recommendations in Section 2.4.2 of the synopsis should not be embarked upon until the steps described in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the recommendations had been completed.

11. The draft resolution under consideration appeared to take account of those concerns. His delegation could therefore agree to recommend it to the General Conference for adoption, subject to the understanding that the third operative paragraph was intended only to empower the Director General to implement the first three recommendations in the synopsis, and that the Secretariat would not go any further without the Board's having given full consideration to the results of the thorough evaluations outlined in the recommendations. The need for potable water was not in dispute: what needed to be clarified was the means by which it might be provided.

12. Mr. ORNSTEIN (Argentina) welcomed the report on seawater desalination techniques. Although his country did not need to use such techniques to meet its own drinking water requirements, it could contribute its technology to help solve a problem which was now being faced by a number of Member States and which would confront still more in future. Argentina was well advanced in the development of a small reactor which could be used in areas "without an established infrastructure or large population concentration", as paragraph 10 of the conclusions of the synopsis (Section 2.4.1) described them. Accordingly, Argentina pledged its fullest co-operation in any studies or programmes on the subject co-ordinated by the Agency, and endorsed the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77.

13. Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America) said that his delegation also welcomed the synopsis of the report on desalination, but thought its recommendations were ambitious - perhaps too ambitious. The document contained little technical and economic analysis and failed to address the interests of potential beneficiaries and technology holders, and its recommendations went far beyond the request made in General Conference resolution GC(XXXIII)/RES/515.

14. The United States therefore could not support those recommendations. It would prefer alternative language requesting the Secretariat to assess the relevance of regular programme and technical assistance activities to solving water problems and to work with other United Nations technical agencies on the issue, bearing in mind the role that nuclear reactors could play. His delegation could agree to take note of the report but must caution that any

follow-up activity by the Secretariat must be carefully considered as part of the normal process of preparing the Agency's programme and budget, and in the light of programme priorities and budgetary constraints.

15. The United States had similar concerns with regard to the draft resolution: it went too far, especially in calling for an assessment in detail of the costs of potable water production with various sizes of nuclear desalination plant at specific promising sites. The United States could, however, agree to further study by the Agency in accordance with the procedures for establishing the regular programme and budget, on matters that were within its competence.

16. Mr. de KLERK (Netherlands) said that the serious water deficiencies in many areas of the world made potable water production an important matter. His delegation welcomed the report on the subject and greatly appreciated the effort that had gone into its production. Because the problem was a complex one, international co-operation in solving it was essential. However, the database on potable water, for example, could perhaps better be established in an organization other than the Agency. Similarly, the Agency alone should not be involved in assessing the costs of potable water production, as the draft resolution recommended. His delegation therefore had certain reservations about supporting the draft resolution.

17. Mr. KURITTU (Finland) said the need for increased availability of potable water was obvious, and the Agency was justified in following developments in that sphere in order to see whether it could make a contribution. The basic problem of potable water production should be dealt with by other organizations, however. Any future studies by the Agency should be carried out in the context of specific national programmes, most suitably under the technical co-operation programme. His delegation was not convinced of the appropriateness of the work recommended in the report and shared the views expressed by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States.

18. Mr. SAVERIJS (Belgium) said that his delegation associated itself with the reservations expressed by the representatives of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States but would join in a consensus on the draft resolution.

19. Mr. SHINOTSUKA (Japan) said that he agreed on the importance of developing potable water production capability, but had some reservations about the draft resolution, especially in view of the difficult financial situation facing the Agency. The resolution went too far and was too detailed. On the other hand, Japan endorsed the proposal in operative paragraph 3 that the Director General include nuclear desalination as one of the activities in future programmes of the Agency.

20. Mr. TALIANI (Italy) said that potable water supply was a difficult problem in some parts of his country. Accordingly, his delegation could support the draft resolution, although it remained sceptical about the economic viability of the use of nuclear energy for desalination. The recommendation in operative paragraph 3 was most apt, but it should of course be carried out under the guidance of the Board. There was no doubt that the Agency was competent to take up the issue: indeed, it should be the focus of research on desalination techniques. His delegation also endorsed the recommendation in operative paragraph 1 that the Agency should contact other United Nations agencies and international and national organizations and institutions concerning research on the subject and action in that area.

21. Mr. HASHIMI (Pakistan) endorsed the remarks made by the representative of India. In the 1960s, the Agency had had a very active programme on nuclear desalination, and as the report revealed, the necessary technology was available. Smaller and safer reactors were being developed and had been successfully used for district heating, and that technology could be applied to single- or dual-purpose desalination plants. Now that oil prices had nearly doubled, the use of nuclear energy for desalination had become more attractive.

22. The Agency's task was to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and it should therefore accept the challenge of investigating and promoting nuclear desalination techniques. In view of the constraints on funding, it could not carry out the work alone, but it could and should act as a catalyst to generate interest and involve other international organizations such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and regional banks. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution and believed that any actions carried out under it should be covered by the normal application of the Agency's budget.

23. Mr. LAVIÑA (Philippines) supported the comments made by the representatives of Italy and Pakistan. The purpose of the draft resolution was peaceful and consistent with the objectives and functions of the Agency as laid down in Articles II and III of its Statute. The issues had become much clearer since the matter had been discussed in the Board and the draft resolution should now be approved by consensus.

24. Mr. PAPADIMITROPOULOS (Greece) endorsed the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 and the view of the representative of Italy. There was an urgent need for potable water throughout the world and all countries would be affected by the draft resolution, which entailed the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in line with the Agency's Statute.

25. Mr. HADDAD (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was essential for the Agency to address the problem of the shortage of drinking water in many regions of the world. The proposal to produce potable water by nuclear means was an excellent example of the use of nuclear power for peaceful purposes, in response to the concerns of a very large number of people. The project therefore deserved high priority.

26. Mr. von PREUSCHEN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that his delegation had much sympathy both with the draft resolution and with the underlying idea; he therefore hoped that it would be possible to redraft operative paragraphs 1 and 2, in particular, to take account of the positions of some delegations. The draft resolution could then be approved by consensus.

27. Mr. RAHMAN (Sudan) felt that the report produced by the group of experts was of paramount importance. The draft resolution before the Committee did not go beyond the mandate of the Agency, as had been emphasized by the representative of Pakistan. The Sudanese delegation fully supported the statement made by India on behalf of the Group of 77 and the draft resolution before the Committee.

28. Mr. KANIEWSKI (Poland) said that the problem of water shortage was becoming a global one which would increase in time and might severely affect many countries. Action was therefore needed to find technically and economically viable ways of dealing with it. In that endeavour, the Agency had a role to play, but the size of the problem was such that the Agency alone would not be able to make any significant impact in the near future. In that connection, he fully supported the views expressed by the representative of Italy. The problem should be considered as an environmental one, and should also be included in discussions on climatic change. It might therefore be appropriate to forward the full report on the use of nuclear reactors for seawater desalination to the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment, which could then make the appropriate recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly.

29. The Polish delegation could accept recommendations 1 and 4 in Section 2.4.2 of the synopsis in document GC(XXXIV)/928. The Director General should be authorized to initiate talks with other international and intergovernmental organizations with a view to joint implementation of those recommendations. The draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 included an appropriate request in operative paragraph 1, but the requests under operative paragraphs 2 and 3 might usefully be discussed within the framework of the medium-term plan discussions in 1991, and their inclusion in the draft resolution seemed premature. Poland, nevertheless, was prepared to join a consensus on the draft resolution.

30. Mr. ALLAM (Egypt) said that the problem of the shortage of potable water was a vital one which could be a source of regional conflict in many parts of the world in the future. Every effort should therefore be made to investigate the possibility of using different technologies and means to overcome it. The Agency had an important role to play in that respect. The project proposed deserved the Agency's support as it came within its functions under Article III of the Statute. The Egyptian delegation therefore supported the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77.

31. Mr. FU (China) commended the Secretariat on its efforts to implement General Conference resolution GC(XXXIII)/RES/515 and endorsed the expert



group's report in principle. The plan was a very important one, although obviously more in-depth research was needed, particularly into the technical and economic feasibility of producing potable water by means of nuclear energy. His delegation trusted that the Agency would contact the UNDP, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and other appropriate bodies to ensure that the work involved was suitably divided and that potable water was eventually produced by making full use of the optimum technology.

32. Operative paragraph 1(b) of the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 referred to the implementation of recommendations contained in the Attachment to document GC(XXXIV)/928. Those recommendations required co-ordination by the IAEA, and on that basis the Chinese delegation was prepared to support the draft resolution.

33. Mr. VILLAROS (France) said that the water supply problem being a very crucial one, particularly in the developing countries, his delegation would support any international effort to find a solution to it. The Agency certainly had a role to play in that effort, because nuclear techniques could be used in certain conditions to provide the necessary energy. However, that possible contribution was not the central issue. Many preliminary studies were still needed, most of which did not fall within the remit of the Agency. The Agency's report in fact went too far and - given the present financial difficulties - could involve unjustifiable expenditure. While therefore supporting the principles of the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77, his delegation could not accept the wording of operative paragraph 1(b), as it referred to a series of Agency recommendations which were too extensive and ambitious to be implemented by the Agency alone.

34. Ms. OGUT (Turkey) feeling that the purpose of the draft resolution was both in accordance with the Agency's Statute and within its competence, supported the views expressed by the representatives of India and Italy, as well as the draft resolution itself.

35. Mr. MGBOKWERE (Nigeria) wholeheartedly agreed with the views expressed by the representatives of India, Italy and Pakistan and welcomed the spirit of co-operation which had prevailed during the discussion so far. As

there were no objections to the idea of a plan for producing potable water economically, which was an example of the application of nuclear energy for peacefully purposes, and as any assistance which the Agency could render in the production of drinking water deserved support, he urged all delegations to endorse the draft resolution.

36. Mr. ILJAS (Indonesia) supported the statements made by the representatives of India, Italy and Pakistan, and fully agreed that the supply of potable water in the near future would constitute a significant problem in many parts of the world. For that reason his delegation supported the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77.

37. The draft resolution covered three main elements: the need for potable water, the technology required, and the costs. Drinking water was in short supply not only in the arid and desert regions of the world but also in many densely populated areas, owing to pollution. The island of Bali was an example. Suitable technology already existed, as the report stated, although further information on the economic aspects was needed. With regard to costs, the draft resolution was proposing an activity which had already been embarked upon some 25 years previously and would thus largely draw on past experience. The resumption of that activity would be timely and appropriate.

38. Mr. SOLTANIEH (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, as a member of the Group of 77, his delegation endorsed the statement made on its behalf by India, as well as the views expressed by the representatives of Italy, Pakistan and Indonesia.

39. Mr. AFSAHI (Morocco) said that the draft resolution was vitally important to some areas of the world, including the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The conclusions and recommendations of the report showed that the project was technically feasible, but that further information was needed, bearing in mind the institutional and financial constraints. Morocco had studied the possibilities of seawater desalination within the framework of a study on technical and economic feasibility and site selection criteria for

its first nuclear power plant and was prepared to co-operate with the Agency in the exchange of information. It supported the draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77.

40. Mr. HOGG (Australia) said that he understood the concerns of many speakers with regard to the need for potable water but at the same time shared the reservations expressed by the representatives of the United States, the Netherlands and others, particularly with regard to the budgetary and resource implications of operative paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution.

41. Mr. BENYOUB (Algeria) considered it essential that everything possible should be done to find a solution to the water problem. The use of nuclear energy for desalination was a peaceful one and was consistent with the Agency's international obligations. For that reason the Algerian delegation supported the draft resolution.

42. Ms. FATIMAH (Malaysia) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of India on behalf of the Group of 77. The Agency was obliged under its Statute to promote the use of nuclear energy to enhance peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, and so the promotion of nuclear techniques to produce potable water fell within its competence and functions. She also endorsed the views expressed by the representatives of Pakistan and Indonesia and was ready to approve the draft resolution.

43. Mr. ALVAREZ GORSIRA (Venezuela) said that the project was fully in line with the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The draft resolution did not go beyond the mandate of the Agency and should therefore be acceptable to all.

44. Mr. AL-MATOOQ (Iraq) supported the draft resolution and hoped that it would be implemented as one of the Agency's regular activities. It was up to Member States to follow the matter through, particularly since water shortages could lead to regional conflicts in the future.

45. Mr. de la CRUZ (Chile) agreed that the production of potable water was a typical example of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and was one of the functions of the Agency as established in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Article III.A of its Statute. He therefore supported the draft resolution.

46. Mr. ABUGHALYA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation did not share the reservations expressed by some countries, particularly in the light of the work done in a very short time by a number of highly-qualified people from different countries. On the other hand, his country endorsed the arguments in favour of the plan put forward by some speakers, including the possibility of regional conflict. With some 25 000 people dying each day from polluted water, the problem was crucial. His country was prepared to support any effort within or outside the Agency to find a solution. The Agency should tackle the problem as one within its competence and co-ordinate with other agencies where necessary. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution and hoped that a realistic solution could be found.

47. The CHAIRMAN suggested that a group of interested delegations might try to redraft the paragraphs which caused difficulty, with a view to reaching a consensus.

48. It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.