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BOARD OF GOVERNORS GENERAL CONFERENCE

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APPLICATION OF IAEA SAFEGUARDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Report by the Director General to the Board of Governors and to the General Conference

1. In resolution GC(40)/RES/22 (1996), the General Conference, inter alia, called upon all parties directly concerned:

“to consider seriously taking the practical and appropriate steps required for the implementation of the proposal to establish a mutually and effectively verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in the region” of the Middle East.

The resolution in this regard, requested the Director General:

“to continue consultations with the States of the Middle East to facilitate the early application of full-scope Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the region as relevant to the preparation of model agreements, as a necessary step towards the establishment of a NWFZ in the region”.

and called upon:

“all States in the region to extend their fullest co-operation to the Director General”, in that regard.

2. The resolution also took note:

“of the importance of the ongoing bilateral Middle East peace negotiations and the activities of the multilateral working group on Arms Control and Regional Security in promoting mutual confidence and security in the Middle East, including establishment of a NWFZ”.

and called upon the Director General, as requested by the participants:

“to render all necessary assistance to the working group in promoting that objective”.

3. The resolution further called upon all States in the region:

“To take measures, including confidence building and verification measures, aimed at establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East”

and requested the Director General:

“to submit to the Board of Governors and to the General Conference at its forty-first regular session a report on the implementation of this resolution...”.

4. In his report to the fortieth regular session of the General Conference (GOV/2861-GC(40)/6), the Director General recalled his report in document GC(XXXVI)/1019 of 16 September 1992 which had described the kinds of material obligations which might be undertaken, in a Middle East NWFZ agreement, by the States located in the region and by the declared nuclear-weapon States. The report of 1992 had identified basic types of obligations which had already been entered into by States of the Middle East, either because of their being party to the Non-proliferation Treaty, or because of, other pertinent considerations. Further, that report had identified possible verification requirements in a Middle East NWFZ including the likely need for far-reaching, comprehensive verification arrangements.

5. The Director General’s 1996 report to the General Conference recalled Secretariat participation, as part of the United Nations delegation, in the work of the multilateral working group on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) in the framework of the Middle East peace process. It described, inter alia, in this context IAEA efforts further to acquaint Middle East participants in the ACRS Working Group process with practical aspects of nuclear verification, including through cooperative arrangements with regional systems.

6. There has been no Plenary meeting of ACRS since December 1994. The Director General therefore has been unable to render any assistance to the ACRS Working Group since that time.

7. In a Presidential Statement at the fortieth regular session of the General Conference on 20 September 1996, adopted in conjunction with GC(40)/RES/22 of 20 September 1996, the Director General was requested:

“to invite experts from the Middle East and other areas to a technical workshop on safeguards, verification technologies, and related experience”.

The Statement further called on the Director General:

“To commence with preparations, in consultations with the parties concerned, with a view to developing an agenda and modalities that would help ensure a successful workshop”.

8. Pursuant to that mandate, the Secretariat prepared a programme for the Workshop, scheduled for May 1997, and consulted parties concerned. As in the case of a 1993 Workshop, about "The Modalities for the Application of Safeguards in a future Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East", deriving from resolution GC(XXXVI)/RES/601 of 1992, the Workshop was open to experts from the Middle East and other areas.

9. The Workshop took place at Agency Headquarters in Vienna from 12 to 15 May 1997 and had, as its objective, to deepen understanding about the IAEA Safeguards system, its verification technologies and related experience. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss the verification aspects of establishing NWFZs in specific regions including the possibilities for the combination in a given area of international and regional safeguards measures. Governments were invited to nominate up to three participants for the workshop to be selected on the basis of experience and professional relevance to the broad fields covered by its agenda. Limited funds were available to cover the costs of participants from the Middle East.

10. The basic workshop format comprised a series of presentations by IAEA and external experts on which discussion was then invited. An overall total of 21 participants, including 15 participants representing 11 Middle East countries attended the Workshop. So too did a Palestinian expert observer and an expert observer from the League of Arab States.

11. The Workshop initially focussed on the process of the verification per se, how it had evolved and how it is implemented. This led to a general overview of the IAEA safeguards system and its key, component parts. Some consideration was then given to the limitations of the system which had come to light in the early 1990s and the thrust of the Agency's efforts, since then, to strengthen the system, including its capacity to detect any undeclared nuclear material or facilities whilst concurrently improving the cost efficiency of safeguards implementation. The workshop paid particular attention to the importance of transparency about states' nuclear programmes and plans and all the ongoing efforts within the IAEA to enhance its information base about such issues. In this context, participants showed particular interest in the relevance of 'state of the art' verification techniques such as environmental sampling and unattended and remote verification.

12. The Workshop also focussed on IAEA experience and the lessons learned from the implementation of safeguards. Judging from the nature of the questions posed, the presentations were seen as highly relevant to the objectives of the workshop.

13. So too were presentations by external experts about their own experience of nuclear verification in regional settings. The Director of the Safeguards Directorate of the European Atomic Energy Community described the genesis, evolution and basic features of nuclear verification in Europe. The Secretary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for the Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials similarly described the more recent evolution and features

of 'nuclear verification in Argentina and Brazil'. The presentations showed, inter alia, how regional approaches to non-proliferation have a particular value in complementing global approaches and arrangements such as those implemented by the IAEA.

14. A third theme of the workshop focussed on new verification technologies and issues. In this regard, one expert from the Middle East region examined the technologies and applications of satellite and airborne verification systems in the framework of arms control agreements. Another expert from the region discussed the balance between transparency and the intrusiveness of verification on the one hand and national security, sovereignty and economic considerations on the other. Following all the presentations given at the workshop, participants paid a half day visit to the Agency laboratory at Seibersdorf.

15. Over and above such efforts as the workshop, the Director General has taken those opportunities which have arisen to continue his consultations with States of the Middle East. In the course of such exchanges, the Director General has continued to underline the significance of effective verification measures, including full scope safeguards, in a future nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East and to explain options available to the States in this regard. The Director General has also underscored that it is only through a process of clarification and discussion that choices of options, and answers to problems can emerge which in many instances will be decisive for the safeguards model agreements foreseen in successive General Conference resolutions.