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President: Mr. NIEWODNICZAŃSKI (Poland)
Later: Mr. P. WALKER (Canada)

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[*] GC(41)/28.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(41)/INF/17/Rev.2.

Abbreviations used in this record

ABACC	Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Regional Co-operative Arrangements for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America
Chemical Weapons Convention	Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
G-8	Group of Eight [= G-7+1]
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
MOX	Mixed oxide
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency (of OECD)
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
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
R&D	Research and development
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
START	Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Vienna Convention	Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (May 1963)
WWER	Water-cooled and -moderated reactor

GENERAL DEBATE AND STATEMENTS MARKING THE 40th ANNIVERSARY OF THE AGENCY (resumed)
(GC(41)/8)

1. Mr. PADOLINA (Philippines), having welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso as new members of the Agency, said that for countries in the Asia and Pacific region, 1997 not only marked the Agency's fortieth anniversary, but also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific, which had established a mature technical co-operation network with the Agency's sustained support and guidance.

2. Having thanked the Director General and his staff for the Annual Report for 1996, he expressed his country's profound appreciation to Mr. Blix for his 16 years of sterling service at the helm of the Agency. Under his leadership, a number of international instruments had been adopted and the Agency had become one of the best-managed organizations within the United Nations system. He also wished to welcome the Director General elect, Mr. ElBaradei, who had a wealth of experience in atomic energy matters.

3. Turning to key developments in the Philippines, he said that ten potential sites had been identified for nuclear power installations and their suitability was being assessed. The nuclear power steering committee had carried out activities to raise public awareness, and its efforts had been boosted significantly by the second Philippine Nuclear Congress, which Mr. Blix had attended as a keynote speaker. A national radiological emergency plan had been developed and he was pleased to report the recent entry into force for his country of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency.

4. With regard to safeguards, the Philippines welcomed the conclusion of Programme 93+2 and the Board's adoption of the Model Additional Protocol. In accordance with its commitment to the NPT, the Philippines would be one of the first countries to sign an additional protocol with the Agency and he urged other countries to do the same. His country expected that any amendment or expansion of Annex II of the Model Protocol to include "dual-use" equipment and materials would be guided by the principle enshrined in the

safeguards agreement between the Agency and individual States that the implementation of safeguards should not hamper the economic and technological development of the State concerned. A verifiable safeguards system, technical co-operation and nuclear-weapon-free zones were the pillars of the NPT. With the entry into force in March of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, he called upon the nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol of that Treaty.

5. Turning to nuclear safety, he said that the Philippines had been honoured to be one of the countries invited in July to participate in the Agency's new initiative to develop an integrated approach in determining the safety status of nuclear installations in selected countries. It welcomed the technical co-operation programme designed to provide operators with essential hands-on experience in predisposal technologies for waste management, and he reiterated his country's offer to host a predisposal waste demonstration centre.

6. The Philippines was in the process of ratifying the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and welcomed the recent adoption of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. However, it was regrettable that the Joint Convention, unlike the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, failed to make explicit provision for prior notification and the consent of transit States with regard to transboundary movements of such waste.

7. The Philippines welcomed the progress made on the new initiatives designed to increase the relevance, cost-effectiveness and impact of the technical co-operation programme. His country had hosted the regional workshop on the future technical co-operation programme and hoped that Model Project standards would be applied to the entire programme. Collective efforts should be made to ensure funding in conjunction with the attempts to improve the programme. For its part, the Philippines had always endeavoured to pay its contributions on time and continued to give extrabudgetary contributions to the RCA and the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation. Furthermore, as an in-kind contribution, it had also hosted nine research co-ordination meetings, working group meetings and training courses.

8. Significant progress had been achieved in the Philippine Model Project on nuclear medicine techniques in preventive nephrology, and on the use of the sterile-insect technique in the Philippines. In the area of radiation technology, the pilot gamma facility at the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute had been utilized fully for sterilizing medical products and irradiating food items and the Philippine industry had now accepted radiation processing using gamma rays as a desirable alternative to the sterilization of medical products. A bill was pending for the establishment of an irradiation centre at the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute to be used for commercial purposes and research and development.

9. With regard to regional co-operation, his country was pleased with the results of project UNDP/IAEA/RCA 92/073, which had been concluded in December 1996, and was encouraged to note that Member States participating in the RCA were looking towards a new vision for the agreement, with a view to harmonizing the actions undertaken under that agreement with those undertaken under other such regional agreements.

10. His country welcomed the Agency's quick response to its request for assistance in using nuclear technology in order to address the problems associated with the "red tide" phenomenon and looked forward to its guidance and assistance in using nuclear techniques to manage the impending water crisis resulting from the effects of the "El Niño" weather phenomenon, which was causing drought in some areas of the country.

11. Finally, his country appreciated the various initiatives to amend Article VI of the Statute with a view to increasing the representation of under-represented regions. While he endorsed the criteria for designated members, he called for careful discussion of the proposals relating to the composition of regional groups and the allocation of seats.

12. Mr. MIKHAILOV (Russian Federation) welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso as new members of the Agency and then read out the following message from Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation, to the General Conference:

> "I extend cordial greetings to the participants in this commemorative forty-first session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.
>
> "For 40 years the IAEA has been working for the benefit of mankind, directing its efforts towards encouraging co-operation among States in the use of atomic energy to

solve a wide range of problems, primarily in the areas of power, health care and agriculture. The Agency has also distinguished itself as an effective and reliable instrument for multilateral co-operation between States to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

"I trust that in the coming twenty-first century, the IAEA will make a fundamental contribution to the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and that it will actively promote the development and introduction of nuclear technologies which are environmentally safe, cost-effective, and can meet the growing energy demands of mankind. As in the past, nuclear safety and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons will take priority in these activities, as confirmed at the Moscow Nuclear Safety and Security Summit held in April 1996. In the future we anticipate continuing to rely on the IAEA's great competence to ensure the consistent achievement of these objectives on a global scale.

"Having a high regard for the IAEA's role, I confirm Russia's unfailing readiness to provide wide-ranging support for its activities. Committed as Russia is to the accords on strengthening nuclear safety and security reached at the Moscow Summit, I can announce Russia's decision to carry out the gradual withdrawal from nuclear defence programmes of up to 500 tonnes of highly enriched uranium and up to 50 tonnes of plutonium released in the nuclear disarmament process. Naturally, the pace and timing of this process will depend not only on the progress made in dismantling nuclear weapons under the existing nuclear disarmament agreements, but also on the construction of the required storage facilities for the material being removed from military use. I believe that this decision will contribute directly to the irreversibility of the nuclear disarmament process and to strengthening confidence and global stability.

"I wish all the participants a successful and productive Conference."

13. Over the past 40 years, the Agency had enjoyed a well-earned reputation as a competent international organization in the nuclear sphere and had done its utmost to assist its Member States in the development of nuclear power. In that time, nuclear science and technology had made great strides forward and had become a key factor in human progress.

14. He welcomed the Agency's increasing role in radioactive waste management, particularly with regard to the investigation of the long-term prospects for the construction of regional radioactive waste repositories and processing facilities. Here the Agency had a role to play not only as a disseminator of technical information, but also as a centre for technology transfer and the development of the criteria for those processes.

15. Russia attached the highest priority to nuclear safety. A sense of optimism and confidence in nuclear power's future as an advanced technology lay behind the agreements reached by the leaders of the G-8 at the 1996 Moscow Nuclear Safety and Security Summit, and confirmed in 1997 in Denver. In spite of its difficult financial situation, Russia was spending up to US $150 million a year on improving the safety of its nuclear power plants, particularly those with first generation reactors. There were 9 operating nuclear power plants with 29 reactors in the Russian Federation, generating 22 GW of electricity. International collaboration, including collaboration with the European Union, was providing some additional $30 million for those purposes. Nuclear safety centres, established in Moscow and Washington under an agreement between Russia and the United States of America, had already started operations. He urged all those interested to take part in that extremely important and essential work to improve the safety of nuclear power plants worldwide. The Agency had made a welcome and substantial contribution to nuclear safety, notably through the elaboration of international legislative mechanisms for the regulation of nuclear activities. In addition, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management had been developed under the Agency's auspices.

16. The establishment of an international legal basis for nuclear activities was central to the successful development of nuclear power and technology. The Russian Federation was taking an active part in the preparation and improvement of new and existing international legal instruments. Ratification of the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage by the State Duma was likely by the end of the year. Work was also continuing on developing Russia's national nuclear legislative system.

17. Recently, the world community had made substantial progress towards global stability. Russia was firmly committed to nuclear disarmament and, together with the United States, was systematically reducing strategic offensive arms under the START I Treaty. A Protocol to the START II Treaty, improving its likelihood of ratification by the Duma and subsequent implementation, had just been signed in New York and the Presidents of Russia and the United States of America had already reached an understanding on the main parameters of the START III Treaty, under which it was hoped to achieve complete

transparency and control with regard to the strategic nuclear weapons left in the United States and Russia. Russia was prepared to go even further and envisaged incorporation of the nuclear armaments of all the five nuclear Powers into the systematic reduction measures. However, further progress in nuclear disarmament could only be achieved if appropriate assurances could be given that the arms race was a thing of the past and would not be taken up again in other parts of the world.

18. One option being considered by Russia for the development of nuclear power was to use the vast scientific and technological potential of the former military programmes. Under the motto of turning megatonnes of nuclear explosives into megawatts of electricity, the fissile nuclear material which had accumulated under the defence programmes should be used as fuel for the good of mankind. The Agency could promote international co-operation with a view to finding an economically sound and environmentally safe use for weapons-grade material in the civilian nuclear fuel cycle, and verify the irreversibility of the processes whereby fissile materials were withdrawn from the military sector. He was convinced that the world community would find the resources to fund the Agency's new and delicate verification task under the so-called Trilateral Initiative.[1]

19. With regard to the safe storage of those materials, Russia, the United States and the Agency were developing important new approaches within the framework of the Trilateral Initiative involving the construction and submission to international verification of storage facilities for plutonium originating from nuclear weapons. There were plans to construct a storage facility for plutonium-239, the first of its kind in the world, the estimated cost of which was some $300 million. Japan had declared itself ready to collaborate and he invited all those interested in nuclear disarmament and the utilization of the resulting nuclear materials as nuclear reactor fuel to take part.

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[1] The Trilateral Initiative was launched by the Minister of the Russian Federation for Atomic Energy, the Secretary of Energy of the United States and the Agency's Director General on 17 September 1996 to consider practical measures for the application of IAEA verification to fissile material originating from nuclear weapons.

20. Russia was a staunch supporter of the Agency's activities aimed at enhancing and strengthening safeguards, and establishing reliable mechanisms to detect clandestine nuclear activities.

21. Another cause for public concern was illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. Russia was participating in Agency activities under the programme to combat such illicit trafficking which had been agreed upon at the 1996 Moscow Summit, in areas such as accountancy and control, physical protection of nuclear materials, personnel training and arrangements for international co-operation to procure the relevant special equipment. It had also already submitted for inclusion in the Agency's illicit trafficking database information on thefts of nuclear material from 1992 to 1997.

22. The Russian Federation attached particular importance to the Agency's technical assistance and co-operation programme. Since the Agency's inception, it had been actively involved in that programme providing equipment, instruments and materials, and had also hosted interregional and regional training courses.

23. In conclusion, having approved the Agency's Annual Report for 1996 and commended the Secretariat on its excellent work, he expressed heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing Director General, Hans Blix, for his 16 years of outstanding service to the Agency.

24. Mr. JIANG Xinxiong (China) read out a message of congratulations from the Prime Minister, Mr. Li Peng, to the General Conference:

> "On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the International Atomic Energy Agency, I would like to extend to the General Conference our congratulations on behalf of the Chinese Government.
>
> "In the past 40 years, the Agency has done a tremendous amount of work in the fields of promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, for which it has received widespread praise from all Member States. It is my conviction that under the guidance of the principles and objectives enshrined in its Statute, the Agency will be able to play a more active role in promoting the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy in the years to come.
>
> "The Chinese Government will, as always, participate actively in the activities of the Agency and strengthen its friendly co-operation with the Agency and its Member

States, so as to make greater contributions to the maintenance of world peace and the promotion of economic development and social progress.

"I wish the Conference a complete success."

25. Having paid tribute to Mr. Blix and congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his designation as the next Director General of the Agency, he noted that, over the past 40 years, membership of the Agency had increased to 127 and the Agency had become the most authoritative international organization in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Promoting the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity worldwide was one of the two objectives set forth in the Agency's Statute. Fruitful work had been done and notable results achieved through the Agency's technical co-operation activities. In the past ten years or so, the Agency had paid special attention to issues of universal concern such as the environment and sustainable development, providing technical assistance each year to over 80 developing Member States in the form of expert services, training of personnel and supply of equipment. The Agency, together with other international organizations, had synthesized the valuable experience of different countries to produce various standards and guidelines in the areas of nuclear safety, radiation protection, and radioactive waste management. The basic international nuclear legal system governing nuclear safety and radioactive waste management comprised a number of international conventions concluded under the Agency's auspices.

26. Another objective set out in the Agency's Statute was to verify the non-proliferation of nuclear material and the Agency had established a safeguards system to achieve that objective. In recent years it had made efforts to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of that system, efforts which had received widespread support from most countries culminating in the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol. For the past 20 years, since the NPT's entry into force, the number of nuclear-weapon States had not increased - a fact that was undoubtedly attributable in part to the effective role of the Agency's safeguards system.

27. Although the Agency had made much progress in its forty-year history, the question of how to keep a balance between the two objectives enshrined in the Statute had still not yet

been properly resolved. For a long time there had been a tendency for certain Member States to emphasize only one function - preventing nuclear proliferation - while overlooking the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Chinese Government had always maintained that while preventing nuclear proliferation, one should not ignore the legitimate demands of Member States, especially the developing countries, for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, let alone restrict - on the grounds of preventing proliferation - their peaceful use of nuclear science and technology and the development of their nuclear energy industry. The Agency should adhere to the objectives and principles established in its Statute and maintain a proper balance between safeguards and promotional activities in the future.

28. China had joined the Agency in 1984 and always enjoyed a good relationship and fruitful co-operation with it. China had consistently supported the Agency's technical co-operation activities and the various programmes to promote the development and application of nuclear technology. It had also actively advocated the strengthening of technical assistance to the developing countries and had made its own contributions in that regard. In addition to paying its assessed contributions to the Regular Budget on time and in full, China had always pledged and paid its full share of the target to the TCF in a timely manner. In addition, China had provided the Agency with $1.2 million extrabudgetary resources in 1995 for the establishment of a radiotherapy nuclear medical centre in Ghana and for the tsetse fly eradication project in Zanzibar. During the past 14 years, China had provided scientific and technical personnel training for about 720 persons from the developing countries and regions and Chinese experts had been invited to provide technical services and lectures in connection with technical co-operation projects and training courses. In addition to the Agency's overall technical co-operation programme, China had also supported regional co-operation programmes, such as the RCA for Asia and the Pacific, the region where China was located. As a developing country, China had also benefited from the Agency's technical co-operation in strengthening its nuclear industry infrastructure, training a number of scientific, technical and managerial personnel, enhancing R&D capabilities, and in particular, promoting the development of the Chinese nuclear power industry.

29. China had always supported the Agency's safeguards activities. It had signed a voluntary-offer safeguards agreement soon after joining the Agency, and had subsequently acceded to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and the NPT. His country had also joined the universal reporting scheme and undertook to report to the Agency on its import and export of nuclear materials, as well as the export of nuclear equipment and specified non-nuclear materials. At the Board meetings in May, China had declared its acceptance of some of the measures identified in Programme 93+2 and had undertaken to negotiate a legally binding document with the Agency in due course for the implementation of those measures.

30. Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and maintaining world peace were important aspects of China's foreign policy. China provided no assistance to unsafeguarded nuclear facilities of other countries and exercised strict control and approval over specific items of nuclear export in keeping with generally accepted principles that they should be used only for peaceful purposes, that they should be placed under Agency safeguards and that there should be no transfer to any third country without China's prior consent. Over the years, China's relatively comprehensive nuclear export control system had proved to be strict and effective. In order to further enhance the transparency and effectiveness of that regime, China had decided to join the Zangger Committee.

31. The Chinese Government attached great importance to the development of nuclear power, which played an important role in the country's energy structure as a safe, reliable and clean source of energy. At present, there were three nuclear power reactors in operation in China and four nuclear power plants with a total of eight units were currently under construction or at the planning stage. Operation of the Qinshan nuclear power plant had demonstrated the reliable design and construction quality of major equipment, such as the domestically fabricated nuclear fuel elements, reactor and turbine-generators. During the Agency's OSART missions to the Guangdong and Qinshan nuclear power plants in October 1996 and January 1997 respectively, the Agency's experts had expressed their satisfaction with the safety of those plants, while also making some valuable recommendations and suggestions.

32. With the rapid development of China's economy, the demand for energy was rising. As a result, nuclear energy was expected to be much further developed as an alternative energy source. The total installed capacity of nuclear power in operation was expected to reach 20 000 MW by the year 2010, and exceed 40 000 MW by 2020. China would represent a vast market for nuclear power and was willing to develop technical co-operation and commercial transactions with advanced countries in that area under the principle of equality and mutual benefit.

33. The recently adopted Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage would have a positive effect on the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, the amount of compensation for nuclear damage was too high to attract a very large number of signatories. Although China could not, for the time being, accede to those two instruments, it nevertheless attached great importance to nuclear liability.

34. Turning to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, he said that it would help to raise the safety level of spent fuel and radioactive waste management. However, the Chinese Government had decided not to sign the Joint Convention, owing to the Convention's failure to regulate transboundary movements between a contracting party and a non-State entity.

35. In the past year, the Agency had made considerable progress in establishing and implementing various new measures to strengthen technical co-operation. In recent years, notable results had been achieved through the implementation of Model Projects in fields such as nuclear medicine, agriculture, isotope hydrology, nuclear and radiation safety. With the demand for technical co-operation and assistance from vast numbers of developing countries constantly increasing, there was a pressing need to accelerate the industrialization of nuclear technology applications so that nuclear technology could play a greater role in national economic development. The Agency's Secretariat and Member States could make a joint effort to go further than the existing reform measures and achieve even better results. The Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation should listen more

to the developing Member States, learn more about their needs and make suggestions for strengthening technical co-operation.

36. In conclusion, he stressed the need to adhere to the purposes and principles laid down in the Statute and to maintain a balance between promotional and safeguards activities in order, through the joint efforts of all Member States, to ensure a better and brighter future.

Mr. P. Walker (Canada) took the Chair.

37. Mr. ABAZA (Egypt), having welcomed Burkina Faso and Malta as new members of the Agency, commended the many significant achievements of Mr. Hans Blix in his 16 years of outstanding service as Director General of the Agency and said that he was proud that an Egyptian had been selected to succeed him. He was sure that Mr. ElBaradei would be a worthy successor to lead the Agency into the twenty-first century.

38. The Agency was facing three major challenges requiring the concerted efforts of its Member States. Firstly, the Agency had to define and enhance the role of nuclear energy within the framework of sustainable development. To that end, efforts needed to be intensified in the fields of nuclear safety, radioactive waste management, nuclear power production, health, agriculture and water resources - the transfer of technology for peaceful development purposes, through technical co-operation and other activities, being one of the Agency's main statutory functions. Secondly, the Agency had to enhance its positive contributions to international security through its verification activities and to promote the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. He commended the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol and noted that the efforts to strengthen the Agency's safeguards system should involve all countries, regardless of the type of safeguards agreement they had concluded with the Agency. Thirdly, the Agency, while preserving its original lofty aims, should adapt itself to the new post-Cold War global realities and develop its ability to respond to the aspirations of Member States in spite of limited financial resources. In that regard, it was important to amend Article VI of the Agency's Statute and agree on a new formula for the financing of the Agency's technical co-operation activities.

39. Egypt firmly supported global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The threat of proliferation in the Middle East region was a matter of urgency affecting the stability and security of the region, and beyond. Egypt had been advocating, since 1974, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and had launched, in 1990, an initiative to make the region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. However, present-day realities in the region were a long way from those lofty objectives since there was still an unsafeguarded nuclear programme on Egypt's eastern border creating a very dangerous situation in the region. The Egyptian initiative of 1977, aimed at achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region, had taken on new dimensions in Madrid in 1991 and Oslo in 1993. However, the peace process in the Middle East was currently facing many difficulties associated with well-known unresolved problems, one of which was the question of nuclear weapons. Some countries in the region continued to refuse to apply Agency, or any other international or regional, safeguards to their nuclear programmes. Nevertheless, Egypt still believed that peace could be achieved through negotiation and dialogue, and the application of comprehensive safeguards.

40. In 1996, the General Conference had responded positively to Egypt's request that the Agency organize a workshop on safeguards in the Middle East and the workshop had been held in May 1997 at the Agency's Headquarters in Vienna. Although the workshop had concentrated on general and technical aspects, rather than aspects specific to the Middle East, the workshop had nevertheless constituted a further step in the Agency's efforts to implement safeguards in the Middle East and a follow-up to the previous workshop on the subject in 1993. Egypt urged the Agency to organize another workshop on the same subject in 1998.

41. Egypt was pursuing its efforts to expand the scope of the peaceful applications of atomic energy for the benefit of its people and attached special importance to the enhancement of the nuclear safety culture and adoption of standards in the field of nuclear technology. Egypt also supported regional co-operation and had played an active part in AFRA activities.

42. The second multipurpose research reactor in Egypt, developed in co-operation with Argentina, would become critical before the end of the year. Commissioning of the reactor

would push Egypt into a new era of R&D in the testing of nuclear fuel and reactor materials, radioisotope production and silicon chip processing for electronic applications. The reactor had capabilities for nuclear medical applications, reactor engineering and reactor physics research, as well as for power generation research. Egypt was making a careful study of the use of nuclear energy for electricity generation and the production of drinking water. With that in mind, it was following closely new worldwide developments in the design of power reactors. In preparation for the contribution that nuclear power plants would make in meeting Egypt's needs, sites were being provided with the necessary facilities and training equipment. Egypt was also pursuing the prospecting for, extraction of, and processing of nuclear raw materials.

43. In conclusion, he expressed renewed confidence in the Agency's important role in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and opening up new vistas for economic development for the benefit of mankind. He also called for support for the effective application of its safeguards system. At the threshold of a new century of technological and scientific research, the Agency's role was set to expand.

44. Mr. FAZAKAS (Hungary), having endorsed the statement made by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, including Hungary, said that since its establishment 40 years previously, the Agency had carried out remarkable work to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world and its name had become synonymous with the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Mr. Blix deserved special thanks for his dedicated work and strenuous efforts over the previous 16 years. Under his leadership, the Agency had become an organization held in high esteem all over the world and Hungary would miss his committed activity, diplomatic skill and experience that had been of assistance to it on so many occasions. Nevertheless, he was confident that, under Mr. ElBaradei's able leadership, the Agency would meet the challenges of the next millennium.

45. Hungary greatly appreciated the Agency's work to strengthen the safeguards system and regarded the Model Additional Protocol as a useful tool which would improve the Agency's capability to detect undeclared nuclear activities and enhance the effectiveness of

the safeguards system as a whole. The Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority had begun a review of its legislation in order to harmonize it with the recently approved provisions of the Model Additional Protocol. When that work had been completed, his Government intended to sign an additional protocol.

46. Hungary had already signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, and the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention, and attached great importance to their early entry into force.

47. In recent years, much had been done to create a legal framework for the peaceful uses of atomic energy in Hungary and a new atomic energy act had been adopted by the Hungarian Parliament in December 1996. Its provisions were completely in line with those of the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention and also reflected the high priority attached to the issue of radioactive waste. A central nuclear financial fund would be set up to cover the costs of radioactive waste management, including decommissioning. Furthermore, the regulatory requirements for nuclear facilities had been elaborated on the basis of Agency safety standards and new nuclear safety regulations had also been issued.

48. Nuclear energy continued to play an important role in Hungary and in 1996 the Paks nuclear power plant had again achieved and maintained a high standard of safe and reliable operation. Significant safety upgrading measures had been carried out and the Agency had been invited to conduct a review mission in November 1996 to assess the safety upgrading process at the plant. The summary report of that review had stated that all the issues had been properly addressed and that a significant number of the problems had already been solved.

49. The Agency's technical co-operation programme had enabled Hungary to build up a significant nuclear infrastructure and a group of highly qualified experts. As a result, it had been possible for Hungary to provide training for more than 600 Agency fellows. Hungary had been one of the first countries to acknowledge the importance of the Agency's new initiatives in the area of technical co-operation, particularly the Model Project concept. The Model Project to establish a training programme for nuclear power plant personnel in order to enhance operational safety at the Paks nuclear power plant had been successful, with the inauguration of the plant's maintenance training centre in April 1997. In that connection, he

expressed his gratitude to the Agency, and Japan, Spain, the United States of America and the European Union, which had provided extrabudgetary contributions. For its part, his Government had decided to pledge a voluntary contribution to the Agency's TCF for 1998 in an amount corresponding to its share of the target, thereby demonstrating its commitment to the Agency's technical co-operation activities.

50. In conclusion, he expressed his confidence in the Agency's ability to meet the political and technical challenges that lay ahead.

51. Mr. KÜHNL (Czech Republic) welcomed the Republic of Malta and Burkino Faso as new members of the Agency and expressed his delegation's support for the statement made on behalf of the European Union and associated countries.

52. Looking back over the forty years of the Agency's existence, he noted that during that time, atomic energy had never been used against mankind. Although at the time of the Agency's establishment the world had feared the global proliferation of nuclear technology for military purposes, the number of nuclear-weapon States had practically remained unchanged. On the other hand, peaceful nuclear technology, which had then been the privilege of just a few of the leading industrialized countries, was now available to almost any country wishing to use it. While 40 years earlier nuclear energy had represented the nightmare of Hiroshima, it was today part of everyday life - electricity generation, medical science, food sterilization and the production of potable water could scarcely be imagined without it.

53. The nuclear sector of the former Czechoslovakia had begun to develop during the second half of the 1970s in line with the Agency's recommendations and safety standards. Throughout its existence, the Agency had time and again demonstrated its ability to reflect the needs of its Member States. Having gradually redirected its emphasis from general support for all forms of peaceful uses of atomic energy and ionizing radiation to the elaboration of basic principles of nuclear safety and radiation protection, it had more recently focused on the problem of radioactive waste and the nuclear fuel cycle.

54. The Agency's mission to ensure global security in relation to the NPT remained the top priority. The Agency's safeguards system was central to international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the Czech Republic had welcomed the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol, which strengthened confidence that signatory States would refrain from acts which were contrary to their commitments under the NPT. The Czech Republic had initiated steps to conclude an additional protocol and in so doing sought to demonstrate that the new stage in the safeguards system was viable, effective and practicable. In addition, the new agreement between the Czech Republic and the Agency for the application of safeguards pursuant to the NPT had recently been adopted by the Czech Parliament and signed by the President of the Republic. The new agreement had been drawn up for the Czech Republic as an independent State and recognized its decision to withdraw the reservations of the former Czechoslovakia regarding the settlement of disputes before the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

55. The Czech Republic was one of the countries which used nuclear energy for electricity generation. With regard to the Temelin nuclear power plant, major changes, such as the replacement of the entire instrumentation and control system and the use of an entirely new type of fuel, had caused far greater problems than had initially been expected. The Government nevertheless remained determined to improve the safety of the WWER-1000 reactor units by upgrading the plant's design and demonstrating the feasibility of that alternative. The Dukovany nuclear power plant was a stable part of the country's energy system. All four units had been put into operation ten years previously and had all undergone a thorough safety review during the past year. Part of that process had been the elaboration and assessment of new safety reports which had been prepared for each unit. In deciding to allow the power plant to continue operating, the regulatory body had set a number of conditions, including preparation for safety improvements to bring it in line with the commitments arising out of international conventions and treaties.

56. There had been fundamental changes in the country's nuclear legislation in 1997. In January, the Czech Parliament had passed the new Atomic Act regulating the use of nuclear energy and ionizing radiation. The Act laid down the basic conditions for ensuring nuclear

safety, radiation protection, emergency preparedness and physical security and defined the system of State administration and control, establishing the State Office for Nuclear Safety as the relevant authority. It also regulated certain problems relating to the use of nuclear energy and ionizing radiation which had not previously been codified, including the safety of the radioactive waste disposal system, liability for nuclear damage and emergency preparedness in the event of a radiation accident. The State Office for Nuclear Safety had already drawn up a set of regulations specifying ways of complying with obligations under the Act.

57. The Czech Republic highly appreciated the Agency's efforts in developing the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the related Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage. The Czech Republic was prepared to incorporate them into its legal system upon their adoption and entry into force.

58. The development and use of nuclear energy and ionizing radiation sources in the Czech Republic were closely linked to international co-operation and technical assistance programmes. The Agency's technical co-operation programme, implemented at both the regional and national levels, traditionally ranked among the most important. The Czech Republic highly appreciated the Agency's work over the past four decades and commended the Agency and its staff on their excellent results.

59. Lastly, he thanked the outgoing Director General, Mr. Blix, for his devoted work to the organization in a period that might well be described as difficult and wished the Agency and its new Director General, Mr. ElBaradei, every success in their future work.

Mr. Niewodniczański (Poland) resumed the Chair.

60. Mr. CODORNIÚ PUJALS (Cuba), joined other speakers in welcoming Malta and Burkina Faso as new members of the Agency. Like other developing countries, Cuba attached great importance to the Agency's technical co-operation activities and had recently been a far more active participant in those activities than in previous years, providing experts and services and offering its facilities to train specialists. In carrying out its functions, he

hoped that the Agency would continue to abide by Article III.C of the Statute, which stipulated that it should not make assistance to members subject to any political, economic, military, or other conditions incompatible with the provisions of the Statute.

61. Regrettably, there were forces in the international community which attempted to use international organizations as a vehicle for their own political interests. In that connection, he drew attention to document INFCIRC/537, which contained a circular letter from the Permanent Mission of Cuba describing the attempts of a neighbouring State to boycott the Cuban nuclear programme. The United States Congress was seeking to approve a series of amendments to the Helms-Burton Act designed to strengthen the actions provided for in that Act and hinder Cuba's participation in the Agency and in its technical assistance programme. Such action was a blatant violation of the Agency's Statute and should be condemned by the entire international community.

62. Despite the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade which had been imposed on Cuba and despite the Helms-Burton Act and the amendments thereto, Cuba was continuing to pursue its peaceful nuclear programme and was making new strides in medical, stockbreeding and industrial applications every year. Cuba still planned to commission its first nuclear power plant when the economic conditions were right and it was working on the establishment of the requisite infrastructure, paying particular attention to nuclear safety and radiation protection.

63. Turning to technical co-operation in Latin America and the Caribbean, he said that the first meeting of the Highest Nuclear Authorities of the countries participating in the ARCAL programme had been held in Havana in March. A number of important agreements and recommendations had been adopted at that meeting and he hoped that an intergovernmental agreement for ARCAL, which would undoubtedly give impetus to regional co-operation activities in Latin America and the Caribbean, would be adopted in the near future. Cuba strongly supported the ARCAL programme and was keen to work towards the strengthening of ARCAL.

64. Cuba appreciated the Agency's work in important fields such as nuclear safety and radiation protection. A number of legal instruments had been concluded and the Agency's

numerous efforts, including those to develop standards, regulations and guidelines had done much to increase the global safety culture.

65. Turning to the Board's recent adoption of the Model Additional Protocol, he said that Cuba continued to believe that there was no legal basis for extending its scope of application to countries with INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreements. The highly discriminatory nature of the nuclear non-proliferation regime made universality an impossible goal at the present juncture. Care should be taken to ensure that the Agency's safeguards activities did not pose an unacceptable financial burden on countries, such as Cuba, facing crucial problems associated with their development. Cuba's right to nuclear technology was being violated constantly and it was clear in Cuba's case that the transfer of technology did not depend on Cuba's signing of bilateral or multilateral instruments, but on recognition by all countries once and for all that Cuba was a free and sovereign country.

66. Cuba remained committed to peace and universal disarmament. In April, it had ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and had recently deposited its instrument of accession to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Non-proliferation measures would remain palliative as long as countries continued to possess nuclear arsenals capable of destroying the whole of mankind in a matter of minutes - the only solution lay in the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

67. Despite the Agency's many achievements over the previous 40 years there were still areas, in addition to nuclear disarmament, where more progress was needed. For example, there was a need to improve public opinion with respect to nuclear energy, which continued to be rather negative, otherwise there was a danger that nuclear techniques might no longer be used in the future because of a lack of public confidence.

68. As a part of the United Nations system, the Agency needed to become more democratic and develop to reflect the changes that had taken place in the international community. Although many countries were advocating change with respect to Article VI of the Statute, there appeared to be little political will on the part of the most developed countries to look for constructive solutions. The current situation was not conducive to

creating the climate of co-operation necessary for the Agency to continue working efficiently and the issue should therefore be resolved once and for all.

69. He concluded by congratulating all those who had contributed to the Agency's success over the previous 40 years and expressed particular gratitude to Mr. Blix, who had led the Agency so ably for so long. Finally, he also congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his appointment and assured him of Cuba's full support in accomplishing the objectives enshrined in the Agency's Statute.

70. Mr. CHAFE (Nigeria) welcomed Burkina Faso and Malta as new members of the Agency. Noting that there had never been any doubt about the Agency's efficiency under Mr. Blix's leadership, he wished him the very best in his well-deserved retirement and congratulated him on his new status as Director General Emeritus. He also congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his appointment as the Agency's new Director General and assured him of Nigeria's full support and co-operation. His election was not only an acknowledgement of his managerial capability and his remarkable contributions to the Agency over the years, but also a recognition of Egypt's contribution to the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

71. Since its establishment 40 years ago, the Agency had grown into one of the most efficient specialized agencies in the United Nations system. The Agency's many achievements over the years had included playing a major role not only in stemming the nuclear arms race, but also in making an immense contribution to human development through the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. However, much more could still be done to support sustainable development, particularly in the developing countries.

72. As a member of the Agency for over 30 years, Nigeria had taken gradual steps to utilize nuclear technology to improve the lives of its people. His delegation appreciated the Agency's assistance and looked forward to more active co-operation. One of the Agency's current projects in Nigeria was the installation of a research reactor, which would be commissioned before the middle of 1998 and would stimulate new developmental efforts among countries in the West African subregion. The Agency had also assisted Nigeria in hosting the regional training course on the application of nuclear analytical techniques in

mineral exploration and in organizing the national workshop on project formulation, design and implementation.

73. Celebrations of the Agency's fortieth anniversary in Nigeria were taking the form of lecture series and an exhibition describing the Agency's contribution to the well-being of Nigerians and the benefits of membership of the Agency.

74. The Annual Report for 1996 showed that progress had been made in implementing the initiatives to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency's technical co-operation programme. He commended the Secretariat and, in particular, the Department of Technical Co-operation for the high implementation rate achieved. In order to maintain a high level of efficiency, the new strategies should be kept constantly under review. He welcomed the Model Project concept, which was being pursued through a broad geographic distribution of projects, particularly the Model Project on water resources management, in which Nigeria was actively participating, and looked forward to greater participation in such projects by countries in the African region.

75. Technical co-operation was a crucial mechanism for the promotion of the peaceful applications of nuclear technology. It was therefore disturbing that the financing of technical co-operation was neither assured nor predictable. The Informal Working Group on the Financing of Technical Assistance should continue to seek a solution and, in the meantime, efforts should be pursued to secure extrabudgetary funding from the United Nations and other relevant international and private sector bodies. All Member States should pledge and strive to pay their contributions to the TCF in a timely manner. For its part, as a mark of Nigeria's unwavering support for the technical co-operation programme, his Government was pledging $100 000 to the TCF, an amount that was some 22% more than his country's share of the target for 1998.

76. The African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology, of which Nigeria had been Chairman since the previous session of the General Conference, had proved an important framework for the exchange of information and experience among African scientists and technicians in the

field of nuclear science and technology and for the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

77. One important area of focus of AFRA activities was the issue of sustainable development in the region. Reorientation of AFRA programmes had been initiated in 1994 and finalized in 1996 at the seventh technical working group meeting held in Zaria, Nigeria. In January 1997, AFRA had commenced thematic programming, focusing on specific problems confronting the region as identified by African nuclear scientists, in areas such as health, agriculture and hydrology. He was grateful to the Governments of France, Spain and the United States of America, and the OPEC Fund for International Development for the assistance they had provided to AFRA; to the Secretariat for its commitment to AFRA's activities in the past year; and to all AFRA Member States for their co-operation during that period.

78. His delegation welcomed the increased prospects for the application of the sterile insect technique to combat, and possibly eliminate, the tsetse fly and noted with satisfaction the extension of that technique to other countries in the African region. He also welcomed the proposal to develop a single document on a coherent safety philosophy, embracing nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and radiation protection. Following the signing into law of the decree on nuclear safety and radiation protection by the Government of Nigeria, preparations were under way for the establishment of a regulatory authority to control and regulate the use of radioactive substances, material and equipment emitting and generating ionizing radiation in Nigeria.

79. The recent adoption of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage would undoubtedly help to improve public confidence in the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

80. His delegation was also pleased that the efforts to improve the safeguards system had borne fruit with the adoption in June of the Model Additional Protocol. Nigeria would be signing an additional protocol as soon as the necessary preparatory work had been concluded.

81. Turning to the amendment of Article VI, an issue which had been on the agenda of both the Board of Governors and the General Conference for over two decades, he said that it was not very encouraging that no agreement was in sight. Nevertheless, he hoped that a spirit of compromise would prevail so that a consensus could be reached on a solution which would correct the present under-representation of Africa and MESA.

82. Finally, he expressed his appreciation for the measures taken by the Director General, in response to resolution GC(40)/RES/18, to increase, particularly at the policy-making level, the number of staff from developing countries, and from other Member States that were not represented or were under-represented in the Secretariat. He was confident that those efforts would continue.

83. Ms. WÜLFING (Germany) said that for the past forty years the Agency had been a successful promoter of the peaceful application of nuclear energy and technologies, and had contributed to the improvement of safety and to ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Credit for the fact that it had fulfilled its functions so effectively was due to its Director General for the last 16 years, Mr. Blix, under whose able leadership it had enhanced its worldwide reputation. Germany was convinced that under Mr. ElBaradei's leadership the Agency's tradition of efficiency would continue.

84. The Agency had been instrumental in creating a nuclear safety and security culture, through its role in the preparation of international conventions in areas such as the safety of nuclear facilities and the safety of nuclear waste and spent fuel management, transport regulations, physical protection standards, export control mechanisms, and measures to prevent and combat illicit trafficking in nuclear material and through its significantly improved safeguards system. The agreement on the indefinite extension of the NPT reflected the international community's continuing commitment in that area. Her Government, which attached great importance to the universal acceptance of the NPT, welcomed the accession to that Treaty of three more States since the fortieth session of the General Conference, as well as Brazil's declaration that it would soon be joining. She called on the remaining States, especially those operating unsafeguarded facilities, to remain no longer outside what was an almost universal system of non-proliferation. A major achievement in the field of nuclear

disarmament and non-proliferation had been the adoption in October 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Five States had already ratified the CTBT, which 146 had signed, and she urged all States that had not yet done so to add their signatures. She hoped that those that had already signed would ratify the CTBT as soon as possible in order to bring about its formal entry into force.

85. For some time, her Government had been advocating the immediate start and rapid conclusion of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. The verification system for such a fissile material cut-off treaty should be as efficient and effective as the current Agency safeguards system, and it would be appropriate to entrust the Agency with that task. Another step towards promoting the objectives of non-proliferation was the recent agreement on international guidelines for the management of non-military plutonium; the international plutonium regime was a useful example of how transparency could be improved and safeguards applied even in nuclear-weapon States. Her Government welcomed the progress made in talks between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the Agency regarding the safe and effective management of fissile material that was no longer required for defence purposes; placing such sensitive material in safe storage under Agency safeguards could make a significant contribution to the confidence and transparency needed to prevent further proliferation.

86. Technical options had been identified for the safe and secure management of weapons plutonium, in particular, consumption as MOX fuel in reactors and immobilization. France, Germany and the Russian Federation were co-operating in the construction of a pilot plant to produce mixed oxide fuel elements with material made available as a result of nuclear disarmament. The elements were to be used in civilian Russian reactors, and appropriate international verification of the peaceful use of that material was one of the central elements of the trilateral co-operation project.

87. One of the main events in the past year had been the approval of new strengthened measures to verify the commitments by States not to produce nuclear weapons. Those

measures would enhance the Agency's ability to detect possible clandestine nuclear activities and it was now important that the Model Additional Protocol should enter into force as soon as possible. Integration of those measures into the traditional safeguards system would ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency.

88. Her Government welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and had been very satisfied with the progress achieved at the preparatory meeting of the Contracting Parties in April 1997. It encouraged all States which were not yet party to the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible and urged all States engaging in nuclear activities to participate in the first review meeting to be held in April 1999. It was also to be hoped that a large number of States handling spent fuel elements and radioactive waste would soon sign and implement the recently adopted Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Her Government welcomed the fact that the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage had both been adopted; although some concerns remained for her Government, it considered that both agreements were a good starting point for facilitating international co-operation and providing increased compensation for victims in the event of a nuclear accident.

89. Turning to nuclear energy developments in her own country in the past twelve months, she said that Germany's 19 operational nuclear power plants had achieved their best operating results ever, with nuclear energy continuing to be the largest single source of electricity. There had been no incidents at German nuclear plants in 1996 that had constituted any danger to the public or the environment. Indeed, had the annual nuclear output been generated by coal-fired stations, an additional 160 million tonnes of CO_2 would have been released into the atmosphere. While nuclear energy was accepted by the majority of the German population, there was also a latent concern about possible accidents, and disposal of radioactive waste was not yet considered to be satisfactory. Although no new nuclear power plants were currently being built or planned, her Government considered the further advancement of nuclear energy to be justified in view of the high safety standards achieved and it intended to maintain the option of constructing new power plants with advanced safety

technologies. The German Government also intended to remain actively involved internationally in determining enhanced safety standards and improving the safety of nuclear plants worldwide. It expressly advocated the development of reactors such as the Franco-German joint project for a European pressurized water reactor, which was designed to meet the increased safety standards introduced in Germany in 1994 to limit the effects of accidents to the reactor itself, even in the case of a core meltdown.

90. Germany's preferred waste management policy was to dispose of all radioactive waste in deep geological formations on its territory. One disposal site was in operation and two were in the planning stage. The slow progress in exploring waste disposal sites reflected the controversy regarding nuclear energy policy in Germany. Two interim storage facilities had been constructed at the Gorleben and Ahaus sites, but the three transports of spent fuel and vitrified waste from reprocessing to Gorleben in 1995, 1996 and 1997 had all led to militant protests in the area, despite the fact that all types of nuclear material and waste had been transported safely in Germany for more than 30 years. It was a very difficult situation for the German Government.

91. Noting that increasing attention in discussions on future power generation was being paid to the concept of sustainable development, she said that, since the energy contribution of renewable energies remained very limited, only countries with a significant proportion of nuclear power production were in a position to achieve the agreed reductions in greenhouse gases. If the reduction of energy-related carbon dioxide emissions continued to be a priority, nuclear energy would have to be pursued and indeed expanded. Furthermore, in Germany's case, a non-nuclear strategy would burden the economy with excessive costs and result in a loss of jobs and a loss of international competitiveness.

92. Mr. PESCI BOUREL (Argentina), having expressed his Government's deep appreciation for the achievements of the outgoing Director General, Mr. Blix, and wished the Director General elect, Mr. ElBaradei, every success in his future work, he extended a warm welcome to Malta and Burkina Faso.

93. If one looked back over the forty years of the Agency's existence, there was no denying the immense progress that had been achieved in promoting international co-operation

in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in implementing the safeguards system to guard against nuclear proliferation.

94. Argentina actively supported the international community's efforts to improve global security. For its part, Argentina had signed an agreement with Brazil for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy; a quadripartite safeguards agreement with the Agency, Brazil and ABACC; the Tlatelolco Treaty; and the NPT. In addition, it supported international controls on the export of nuclear and dual-use materials, as demonstrated by its membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee.

95. Argentina had long used nuclear energy for peaceful purposes to generate electricity, and in the fields of medicine, agriculture, veterinary science, food and industry, as well as in research and development. Its nuclear sector comprised the National Atomic Energy Commission, the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, and the Empresa Nucleoelectrica Argentina. The promulgation of the new National Law on Nuclear Activity in 1997 provided a legal framework for nuclear activity in Argentina, making the State responsible for research and development, regulation and supervision, and leaving the production side largely to the private sector. The adoption of the new Law had also resulted in the internal restructuring of the National Atomic Energy Commission to prepare it for its future tasks and responsibilities and of the Empresa Nucleoelectrica Argentina in preparation for its entry into the private sector.

96. Between January and June 1997, nuclear power had accounted for 10.62% of national electricity produced in Argentina, with an availability factor of 85.65%, a result attributable to the quality of the nationally manufactured supplies and national technical assistance services. A milestone in the development of a national low-power reactor had been the starting up at the end of June 1997 of the RA-8 critical facility, which would be used to adjust the design parameters for the construction of the reactor. As to research reactors, construction work on the third research reactor to be exported by Argentina was nearing completion.

97. The Nuclear Regulatory Authority had been formally established as a fully independent organization by the National Law on Nuclear Activity, which had also confirmed its powers in the areas of radiation protection, nuclear safety, safeguards and physical

protection, all of which had continued to develop effectively in the course of the past year. The Nuclear Regulatory Authority had continued its tradition of international co-operation by participating in the establishment of the Forum of Latin American Regulatory Bodies, which had held its first meeting in Mexico and which Argentina believed would serve as a valuable instrument for the exchange of experience in regulatory matters with the countries of Latin America, Spain and Portugal.

98. The additional protocols to safeguards agreements were an important contribution to the international non-proliferation regime and opened the way to a new stage in the Agency's international control and verification activities. In considering the application of the Model Additional Protocol, the Secretariat should take due account of the specific nature of individual safeguards agreements, which in Argentina's case included Brazil and ABACC.

99. The international instruments adopted at the two recent diplomatic conferences constituted important contributions to the development of international regulations and would undoubtedly provide a solid foundation for the future development of nuclear energy and improve public acceptance. Consultations were currently under way in the appropriate government departments in Argentina in connection with its accession to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, and to the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage. However, other aspects of the international regulation of radioactive waste, such as transport, which was a matter of great concern to many countries, still needed to be addressed in appropriate international forums.

100. Another area which the Agency should address was the development of an integrated programme to study the environmental impact of uranium, and its emissions into the air, water and the working environment, as well as the decommissioning and rehabilitation of uranium sites within the framework of the existing Joint IAEA/NEA Uranium Group.

101. Human resource training in radiation and nuclear safety should also continue to be a priority for the international community. In that connection, he pointed out that the

postgraduate course in radiation protection and nuclear safety held by Argentina under the auspices of the Agency was making an important contribution.

102. Argentina attached particular importance to the co-operation agreement between the Agency and ABACC reproduced in document GC(41)/26, which would permit even greater interaction and synergy between the Agency and ABACC, which had successfully carried out its task of establishing a verification system pursuant to the Quadripartite Agreement. He therefore urged Member States to endorse the agreement.

103. Turning to technical co-operation within Latin America, he expressed Argentina's strong support for the ARCAL programme and noted that States participating in that programme had recently been considering a draft governmental agreement which, if adopted, would provide a framework for co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the region.

104. In conclusion, he noted that Argentina had maintained a fruitful relationship with the Agency over the past year and had participated actively in the technical co-operation programme, which it fully supported by hosting courses and workshops, training scientists and fellows and by making available to the Agency a large number of experts. Furthermore, it intended to make a voluntary contribution to the TCF for 1998.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.