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President: Mr. NIEWODNICZAŃSKI (Poland)

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[*] GC(41)/1.

For reasons of economy, this document has been printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their own copies of documents to meetings.

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

AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
Agreed Framework	Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone
ICRP	International Commission on Radiological Protection
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INIS	International Nuclear Information System
IRRT	International Regulatory Review Team
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
MOX	Mixed oxide
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OPCW	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
R&D	Research and development
RBMK	High-power channel-type reactor (Soviet Union)
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
SAGTAC	Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation
START	Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
TC	Technical co-operation
TCDC	Technical co-operation among developing countries
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
WANO	World Association of Nuclear Operators
WWER	Water-cooled and -moderated reactor

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE

(a) ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS FOR INITIAL DISCUSSION (GC(41)/1)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee recommended that the agenda for the session should consist of all the items on the provisional agenda set forth in document GC(41)/1, as well as the two supplementary items contained in documents GC(41)/1/Add.1 and GC(41)/1/Add.2.

2. It was so decided.

3. As regarded the allocation of items for initial discussion, the Committee recommended that all the items listed in document GC(41)/1 be taken up for discussion as indicated in that document. It further recommended that the supplementary items entitled "Co-operation agreements with intergovernmental organizations" and "International Initiative for Chernobyl Sarcophagus" be taken up for discussion by the Committee of the Whole.

4. It was so decided.

5. With regard to the order of items, the Committee recommended that the order proposed in document GC(41)/1 be maintained, except that the two supplementary items entitled "Co-operation agreements with intergovernmental organizations" and "International Initiative for Chernobyl Sarcophagus" should be taken up immediately after item 20 of the provisional agenda entitled "Article VI of the Statute", thus becoming items 21 and 22 respectively, with the subsequent items being renumbered accordingly. It was understood that that order could be modified, in the light of progress, as long as due notice was given.

6. It was so decided.

7. All of the General Committee's recommendations regarding the agenda for the current session were adopted. The agenda was adopted.

(b) CLOSING DATE OF THE SESSION AND OPENING DATE OF THE NEXT SESSION

8. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee recommended that the General Conference set Friday, 3 October as the closing date of the forty-first regular session; it further recommended that the forty-second regular session should open on Monday, 21 September 1998, in Vienna.

9. The Committee's recommendations were adopted.

REQUESTS FOR THE RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS

10. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had had before it requests from Iraq, Belarus, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay that the last sentence in Article XIX.A of the Statute be invoked in order that they might be permitted to vote during the current session of the General Conference.

11. The Committee had recommended that the General Conference reject the request from Iraq and grant those of Belarus, United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay in accordance with the terms of Article XIX.A of the Statute.

12. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia), noting that consultations on the requests for the restoration of voting rights by Belarus, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay were under way, requested that any decision on the matter be deferred to the following day.

13. Mr. AL-GHAIS (Kuwait) asked the General Conference to give a ruling on the first request, as the three others were entirely different cases.

14. Mr. YAKOVENKO (Russian Federation) expressed the view that, if discussions on the matter were under way, it would be better to wait for their conclusions and defer consideration of all four cases to the following day without distinction.

15. The PRESIDENT announced that Liberia had also just submitted a request for the restoration of voting rights which would have to be referred to the General Committee. He therefore proposed that the General Conference give a ruling on all five requests after the next meeting of the General Committee.

16. Ms. TOLLE (Kenya), announcing that her country had also submitted a request for the restoration of voting rights, asked that it be considered with the others.

17. Mr. AL-GHAIS (Kuwait), noting that the Committee had reached a consensus with regard to the first request, said he failed to understand why the General Conference could not give a ruling at least on that case with a view to speeding up its work.

18. The PRESIDENT, concluding from the discussion that it would be preferable to deal with all the requests for the restoration of voting rights together, proposed that consideration of the matter be deferred to the following day.

19. The President's proposal was accepted.

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

20. Mr. FRANK (Israel), having welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso as new members, said that the Agency, whose fortieth anniversary coincided with the present session, had always been a prominent member of the United Nations system. For Israel, which was

one of its founder members, the Agency had distinguished itself as a professional organization, committed to fulfilling its mission and contributing to all aspects of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

21. Over the previous 40 years, the world had witnessed considerable changes particularly with regard to the use of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. When the Agency had been established, it had been hoped that those technologies, particularly nuclear energy, would provide a solution to many problems in the world. The first 20 years of the Agency had seen the development of nuclear technologies, not only in the energy field but also in several other fields. Throughout that period, the Agency's technical co-operation programmes had contributed, as they were still doing, to the transfer of technologies primarily concerned with food production and conservation, the use of fresh water resources and the promotion of human health. In carrying out those vital activities, the Agency had certainly fulfilled one of the principal tasks contained in its Statute, namely, to assist the developing countries in acquiring and using nuclear technologies.

22. The following period was overshadowed by doubt. Two serious reactor accidents, fatal accidents caused by the misuse of radiation sources, as well as the perceived problem of large-scale waste disposal clouded the optimistic outlook. Once again, the Agency had risen to the occasion by co-ordinating international assistance and helping to find solutions to the numerous problems that had emerged. That was why the promotion of nuclear safety had become one of the most important Agency activities.

23. The Agency's intensive programmes on improving nuclear safety standards, the operation of research reactors, radiation protection and waste disposal had yielded impressive results, which in turn had served as a beacon for all concerned with nuclear safety to the point where it was difficult to envisage progressing in that complex area without the groundwork performed by the Agency. However the challenges ahead were still formidable. Risk management and the related question of public acceptance of nuclear power were generally considered crucial to the future development of industrial nuclear applications. In view of its exceptional contribution to nuclear safety, the Agency was also in the best position to seek ways of improving communication with the general public on nuclear risk issues.

24. In view of the Agency's mandate and recent history, its work in the area of safeguards had assumed particular importance and undergone rapid evolution and development. In recent years, verification activities, hitherto based primarily on nuclear material accountancy, had been redirected, with an increasing amount of data now being actually collected and monitored in the field. The need to deal effectively with recent international developments coupled with the availability of excellent new analytical methods had significantly improved the Agency's technical verification capabilities.

25. At a more conceptual level, the Agency had further improved the effectiveness of its verification by adopting a systematic approach, taking into consideration the national infrastructure as a whole, and also seeking to detect illicit activities not necessarily confined to the diversion of nuclear material. Thus, the technical verification capabilities had been greatly enhanced.

26. However, there were still major deficiencies to be overcome. One of the main difficulties had been the need to switch to an approach focusing more on undeclared facilities and activities. That fundamental change in approach had been the basis for the Agency's Programme 93+2; however, in Israel's opinion, the technical implications had not yet been satisfactorily resolved. Further development was necessary, particularly with regard to the capability for wide-area detection of undeclared facilities.

27. In the fields of nuclear safety and safeguards, the Agency had spearheaded important and fascinating developments involving science, technology and diplomacy. Recent effort on Programme 93+2 had led to the Model Protocol for strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system. The activities undertaken and the support provided by the Agency in the area of nuclear safety had resulted in three new safety conventions, two of which had been finalized in recent months.

28. Turning to the future, he said that any realistic assessment of world energy resources pointed to the important role that nuclear power would have to play in the long term. The finite nature of fossil fuel reserves and the environmental damage caused by using those fuels were arguments in favour of employing different energy sources. Since renewable energy sources were only available in very limited quantities, nuclear energy was the only major viable energy source. Problems such as safety and waste disposal were technical problems which could be overcome. The Agency had to play a leading role, as it had done in the past, and help pave the way for a revival of nuclear energy.

29. The Agency was to be congratulated on its fortieth anniversary for all that it had accomplished in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Israel hoped that the Agency would continue to fulfil its important function of facilitating the safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and had decided to mark the anniversary in a plenary session of the Israeli nuclear societies due to take place shortly. Noting that Mr. Blix would shortly be leaving office to be succeeded by Mr. ElBaradei, he congratulated him and thanked him for his outstanding achievements at the helm of the Agency which were now widely recognized. The Agency had had to face formidable challenges in recent years. Under Mr. Blix's guidance, effective measures and solutions had been devised and implemented enabling the Agency not only to continue to perform its vital tasks but also to improve its performance despite all the constraints. On behalf of his Government, he wished to congratulate Mr. ElBaradei, the Director General elect, whose distinguished service in international organizations, particularly the Agency, had demonstrated his exceptional qualities and prepared him well for the high office of Director General.

30. He invited the General Conference to consider two resolutions on its agenda relating to Israel and the Middle East. The first was entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East". Since 1991, that resolution had been adopted by consensus. The consensus had been difficult to achieve at the beginning, but since 1994 it had been maintained without change. In the past, Israel had reluctantly joined the consensus in spite of the resolution's inherent deficiencies, because it recognized that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone would help to further the peace process, security and arms control in the region. At the

same time, Israel had made no secret of its fundamental reservations over the language and relevance of that resolution and had formally distanced itself from its modalities.

31. From a more general point of view, Israel was hoping for a regional arrangement for the Middle East combining bilateral as well as multilateral elements. In the light of the experience of other regions, particularly Latin America, Asia and Europe, Israel was more hopeful than ever that proliferation problems would be settled through a combination of internal democratization and economic development, bilateral settlements and regional arrangements such as those that had become commonplace in other regions.

32. The nuclear issue could not realistically be dissociated from such a global framework of peace and security in any region. The imperativeness of such an overall setting for achieving disarmament and non-proliferation had to be recognized. Taken out of that context, formal NPT commitments for either self-restraint or nuclear export controls, even when coupled with Agency safeguards, could not by themselves provide adequate guarantees of compliance. The pertinence of those two caveats was nowhere more apparent than in the present day Middle East. Thus, it could only be counterproductive to modify the agreed text of the resolution on the application of safeguards in the Middle East, not least because it might inspire false hopes that the peace process could be circumvented by manipulating resolutions in international bodies. The current text of the resolution should remain unchanged, if the consensus was to be preserved.

33. Another important question for the Agency and for Israel, which called for the attention of the General Conference, was the Chairman's package of proposals regarding amendment of Article VI of the Statute. The Director General had stated in paragraph 7 of his report the previous year (document GOV/2864): "It is evident that Article VI is premised upon the assumption that every Member State of the Agency is within one of those areas. If this were not the case, a Member State that was not within an area would be ineligible to serve as a member of the Board. Such ineligibility would be contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of all of its Member States, upon which the Agency is based and which is enshrined in Article VI.C of the Statute". Certain Member States of the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) area were still trying to deprive Israel of its basic rights and the General Conference should intervene to rectify that situation. Once again, the very character and culture of the Agency was at stake: was the Agency a technically oriented international organization as envisaged in its Statute or was it an international organization where political coercion prevailed in defiance of its Statute?

34. In 1996, the General Conference had endorsed an agreed statement presented by the President reaffirming the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States of the Agency and requesting the Chairman of the Board of Governors to consult with Member States and to submit for consideration at its 1997 session specific proposals to include each Member State within the appropriate area. After tireless efforts, the Chairman of the Board of Governors had proposed a package which dealt simultaneously with three important issues, namely the expansion of the Board of Governors, the criteria for the designation of members of the Board and the composition of the eight areas, including the placing of Israel in the

MESA area. Israel urged all Member States to support the Chairman's package. Any derogation from the rights enshrined in the Statute was bound in the long run to undermine the very basis of Member States' participation in the Agency's activities. There was nothing more important, urgent and just than restoring the principle of sovereign equality in the Policy-making Organs of the Agency. Israel called upon all Member States to oppose any proposal to amend Article VI involving expansion of the Board without guaranteeing each Member State full enjoyment of its sovereign rights under the Statute, including Israel's place in the MESA area. In the light of the two aforementioned issues concerning the Middle East, he wondered how it was possible to ignore obvious political and geographical realities in the Middle East and at the same time support resolutions such as that entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East", which pertained to the region as a whole. The General Conference should not become a political arena or a venue for political discrimination, as that would be quite inconsistent with the responsibilities of the Agency laid down in its Statute.

35. Israel commended the Secretariat on its support for the conventions in the field of nuclear safety which had been developed and negotiated since the previous General Conference. It supported the objectives of all conventions concerning nuclear safety and had participated fully in the negotiations of those instruments. Israel had always attached great importance to nuclear safety and had spared no effort to ensure compliance with the latest international safety standards.

36. His Government congratulated the Department of Technical Co-operation on its excellent work. The Agency's activities in that area had culminated in the adoption of new criteria for project evaluation; whereby projects had to meet real needs, have a socio-economic impact for the end-user and demonstrate that the nuclear techniques were cost-effective. His delegation welcomed the Agency's support for regional and interregional technical co-operation projects. The medfly eradication project in the Middle East was a good example of co-operation which responded to actual needs and should contribute to confidence-building in the region.

37. In principle, Israel supported the strengthening of safeguards, and the Model Protocol to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the safeguards system was a step in the right direction. However, no verification activity could guarantee compliance with agreements and his Government therefore believed that the political context and culture were just as important as safeguards, if not more so, in that respect. The Model Protocol was a valiant effort but it could not offer lasting guarantees in the absence of the political will and an internal system of checks and balances. The experience of UNSCOM and the Action Team should serve as a warning in that regard. Under certain circumstances the Model Protocol could improve the safeguards regime, but there should be no complacency.

38. Illicit trafficking in nuclear material and other radioactive sources had been a matter of great concern in recent years. Israel supported the Agency's activities in that area covering prevention, response, training and information, and appealed to the General Conference to step up those and other activities so that the Agency could spearhead the campaign against that threat in all areas.

39. The Agency was celebrating its fortieth anniversary at a time of global and regional changes in various fields. It was therefore necessary to empower the Agency to perform its statutory tasks, meet the challenges ahead and fulfil its extensive responsibilities.

40. In conclusion, wishing the Director General elect, Mr. ElBaradei, and the Secretariat every success, he expressed confidence that under the able leadership of Mr. ElBaradei, the Agency would be shielded from political pressures and constraints and thus free to pursue its technical contribution to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Israel looked forward to working with the Agency in all areas and hoped that the resolutions adopted by the present session of the General Conference would reinforce the Agency in the pursuit of its goal.

41. Mr. ČESNEK (Slovakia), having endorsed the statement made by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union, welcomed Burkina Faso and Malta as members of the Agency. He congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his appointment as Director General of the Agency and expressed confidence that under his leadership the Agency would continue to fulfil and extend its role, a goal to which Slovakia was ready to contribute. He particularly wished to commend the contribution made by Mr. Blix to the general development and strengthening of the Agency's activities. During his 16 years at the head of the organization, the Agency had become a recognized institution in the field of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

42. The forty-first session of the General Conference was also an opportunity to assess the work carried out by the Agency during the previous 40 years. The Slovak Republic, one of the successor States of the former Czechoslovakia, had been present at the birth of the organization. Slovak diplomats in the Czechoslovakian delegation had participated actively in the six-country negotiations on the establishment of the Agency in Geneva in 1955, and in 1956 in the negotiations involving 12 countries to prepare the Agency's Statute. After the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, Slovak experts had been actively involved in all the activities related to the organization. As a country with an active nuclear programme, Slovakia was aware of the need for and importance of an international organization which, on the one hand, promoted the general development and utilization of nuclear energy and, on the other hand, controlled its exclusively peaceful application for the benefit of mankind. Even though for the last ten years there had been a decline in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, it had become an integral part of power production in many countries. Slovakia regarded the safe use of nuclear energy as one of the fundamental conditions of environmental protection.

43. During recent years, the Agency had served as the centre for the development of significant international legal documents covering the utilization of nuclear energy. Those documents, which assigned an important role to the Agency and which would have an impact for decades in the relevant areas, included the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the Model Protocol additional to safeguards agreements, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage and the Joint

Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

44. An information campaign had been conducted in the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the Agency's fortieth anniversary describing its mission and activities: a press conference had been organized, the Slovak Nuclear Society had visited the Agency's Headquarters, a specialized publication on the Agency had been published, and during the General Conference the main post offices in Slovakia would use a commemorative stamp. The Slovak Association for the United Nations, which had just been established in Bratislava, was in the process of organizing a new information campaign on the Agency.

45. Turning to the political aspects of the Agency's activities, he said that two years had elapsed since the indefinite extension of the NPT, one of the pillars of global stability, confidence and nuclear disarmament. The next review conference of the Parties to the Treaty in the year 2000 would enable the progress achieved since 1995 in the Treaty's implementation to be evaluated. The adoption of the Cairo Declaration in 1996 and the signing of new safeguards agreements also represented significant progress. Slovakia had followed with great interest the steps taken by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear military potential. It supported all measures to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and called on all countries which had not yet signed a safeguards agreement with the Agency under Article III of the NPT to honour the commitments they had undertaken in acceding to the Treaty.

46. The safeguards system was a tool for verifying compliance with the NPT and its importance grew with the increasing number of nuclear facilities and the quantity of nuclear materials subject to control. Slovakia noted with satisfaction the conclusions of the Safeguards Implementation Report for 1996, which stated that nuclear material and other items which had been declared and placed under safeguards remained in peaceful use.

47. On the other hand, the application of safeguards in the DPRK and, in particular, the verification of that country's initial declaration continued to pose problems. Slovakia appealed to the DPRK to co-operate with the IAEA so that verification of its initial declaration could be finalized as soon as possible.

48. The Slovak Republic had supported the steps taken by the Agency to strengthen safeguards, in particular Programme 93+2. Slovak experts had participated actively in the negotiations in the Committee on Strengthening the Effectiveness and Improving the Efficiency of the Safeguards System. In that context, he paid tribute to the work done by Mr. ElBaradei, as well as by Mr. van Ebbenhorst Tengbergen and Mr. Walker. The Model Protocol would undoubtedly be a reliable tool for the control of the peaceful use of nuclear energy throughout the world. Slovakia therefore also welcomed the fact that the United States of America, the Russian Federation, China, France and the United Kingdom had stated that they were ready to examine the Model Protocol and to make proposals regarding its scope of application. Slovakia also appealed to States which had not concluded comprehensive safeguards agreements to find a way of implementing the Model Protocol.

49. In view of the importance and complexity of the document, the Slovak authorities had set up a working group of legal and technical experts under the direction and co-ordination of the Nuclear Regulatory Authority of the Slovak Republic with the task of developing swiftly a procedure for domestic approval of the Model Protocol. At the same time, Slovakia would welcome any advice from the Secretariat in that connection.

50. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was a new instrument in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and a further step on the road to nuclear disarmament. Slovakia, both in its national policy and as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, supported the endeavours of the signatory States interested in effective co-operation between the two organizations in the field of verification and in administrative and technical matters. It welcomed the positive attitude of the Agency's Secretariat to that issue and was convinced that such co-operation would be of benefit to both organizations.

51. Another important mission of the Agency under its Statute was the general development of international co-operation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Slovakia noted with satisfaction that the Agency's technical co-operation programme was co-ordinated with the United Nations Development Programme. Slovakia fully endorsed the Technical Co-operation Report for 1996. Technical co-operation was of particular significance for Slovakia. In 1996, Slovak organizations had taken part in 7 national projects and 18 regional projects. Slovakia was actively involved in research projects, and technical co-operation projects had become an integral part of its technical development. One of the most important projects to date, a project aimed at strengthening the national nuclear regulatory body, had been successfully completed. Fruitful co-operation was being established with regulatory authorities of other countries in the region, in particular with Armenia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. In 1997, co-operation with the regional co-ordinator for upgrading radiation protection infrastructure, based in Bratislava, had been very active and fruitful. Furthermore, since the previous session of the General Conference, Slovakia had hosted six events organized by the Agency with more than 200 participants from all over the world, and was ready to host similar events in the future.

52. In order that the scope and efficiency of the technical co-operation programme might be still further increased, Slovakia urged all countries to fulfil their financial obligations in accordance with the scale of assessment. Slovakia had paid its contribution to the Regular Budget, its share of the TCF for 1997 and its assessed programme costs in full. It had also resolved to fulfil its financial obligations in 1998.

53. With regard to the current and future use of nuclear energy in Slovakia, the Government had asked the relevant ministries to draw up a national energy plan covering the period up to the year 2005. Under the proposed plan, nuclear energy had and would continue to have an irreplaceable role to play, not only because it was the main source of electricity and heat but also for environmental reasons. As a result of the economic recovery under way since 1994, electricity consumption was increasing rapidly in Slovakia (about 8% per year) despite an extensive energy saving programme. In 1996, Slovak nuclear power plants had produced nearly 50% of the total electricity consumed. Thanks to substantial investments,

the safety of operating plants had been considerably improved. Significant safety measures had also been implemented at the Mochovce plant, which was under construction and where commissioning of the first unit was expected to take place in June 1998. Slovakia hoped that the efforts it was making to improve safety would lead to increased confidence among its partners, as well as understanding of the importance of nuclear energy for the Slovak economy.

54. Nuclear safety was strictly controlled in Slovakia by an independent national nuclear regulatory body, whose decisions were based on purely technical considerations employing the latest scientific and technical knowledge and backed up by broad international co-operation, mainly through the Agency. As Slovakia was keen to promote international acceptance of its nuclear power programme, it looked forward to the first review meeting under the Convention on Nuclear Safety to be held in April 1999.

55. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Agency's Statute, which had been discussed at different levels for many years, Slovakia recalled that that Article had been amended in 1963, 1973 and 1989. Any such amendment had significant and long-term effects on the Agency's work and therefore had to be considered very carefully. Slovakia was in favour of a comprehensive long-term solution. It drew the attention of Member States to the fact that the East European Group was under-represented on the Board of Governors owing to geopolitical changes which had taken place since 1989. However, it was the region which had the highest number of countries with dynamic nuclear power programmes. The Slovak Republic would therefore support a proposal acceptable to all regional groups that would ensure their equitable geographical representation in the Board of Governors and reflect the level of nuclear energy use in the various regions.

56. Mr. PUSCA (Romania), having welcomed the admission of Malta and Burkina Faso to the Agency, said that the Agency's fortieth anniversary was a good opportunity to stress the important role which the Agency played in the nuclear field. He paid tribute to Mr. Blix for all his efforts during his tenure as Director General, welcomed the election of Mr. ElBaradei as new Director General and associated himself with the statement made by the delegate of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

57. Since November 1996, the political and economic structure of Romania had undergone important changes. The Government (and more particularly the Ministry of Research and Technology) was engaged in reorganizing research and development activities, including those in the nuclear field, and to that end had published decree No. 8/1997. It intended henceforth to pursue a policy of structural reform.

58. The principal objectives of the National Atomic Energy Agency were as follows: to determine the nuclear facilities of national importance with a view to obtaining financial support from the State, to identify the nuclear sectors which could be privatized, to elaborate a methodology for privatization conforming to the standards of the European Union and to elaborate the national research and development programme. The aims of that programme would be to decentralize nuclear R&D activities, to make better use of the results of those activities, to enhance the technical level of the equipment used by nuclear

R&D establishments, to afford all research workers in the country equality of access to budgetary resources, to involve the private sector in nuclear R&D financing, to reduce to a minimum the cost of administrative activities, to make better use of resources and to increase management efficiency.

59. He announced that unit 1 of Cernavoda nuclear power plant had been commissioned on 2 December 1996. That unit was designed to produce 4.5 TWh per year which represented around 8 to 10% of the energy production of the country and a saving of 1.2 million tonnes of oil equivalent to US \$100 million. On 30 June 1997, the Canadian and Italian teams had transferred full responsibility for operation to the Romanian team. The Regulatory Authority had given its authorization for provisional operation on 1 August 1997. Studies on the low-cost development of the Romanian energy sector had indicated that it would be possible to complete construction and commission unit 2 of Cernavoda nuclear power plant by 2001. The latter would benefit from all the experience acquired on unit 1, as well as from the presence of qualified personnel and the infrastructure and facilities already in place.

60. International co-operation was essential for developing programmes on heavy water reactors. Romania had experience in that field but still needed the know-how and experience of other Member States. That was why it wished to participate in the work of the International Working Group on Advanced Technologies for Heavy Water Reactors.

61. Thanks to the Agency's support, the level of safety in Romania was in compliance with international standards. On the basis of the recommendations of an IRRT mission carried out in 1992, the National Nuclear Supervisory Commission had taken measures to increase the efficiency of regulatory activities. Romania hoped that the IRRT follow-up mission due to take place in 1998 would produce good results.

62. In recent years Romania had been participating in the Agency's technical assistance activities not only as a recipient but also as a provider of assistance. For example, its experts had participated in international missions organized by the Agency in Turkey and Argentina and it had received fellows from Nigeria, Iran, Viet Nam and Pakistan. Romania's contribution to the Agency's technical co-operation programme could none the less be even greater in such fields as vocational training and expert services. Moreover, in view of the human resources possessed by the country, the Agency should consider the possibility of appointing Romanian specialists to posts in the Secretariat.

63. Romania was in favour of strengthening co-operation with European countries, in particular Eastern Europe. It could contribute to the regional programme by providing training courses in several of its nuclear facilities, such as the TRIGA nuclear research reactor at Pitesti, the experimental laboratory for post-irradiation examination at Pitesti, the nuclear fuel testing facilities at Pitesti, the multi-function simulator at Cernavoda and the Research and Design Institute for the Energy Sector.

64. He stressed the importance of the Agency's technical co-operation programme for Romania. The Agency's technical assistance was an efficient tool for technology transfer and development of the nuclear sector. The Romanian Government hoped that the Agency would

maintain its financial assistance in 1998 at the same level as in 1996. In particular, thanks to the assistance which it provided to Member States through expert missions, training courses, fellowships and national and regional projects, the Agency was making a major contribution to the operating safety of nuclear power plants.

65. The Romanian delegation reiterated its support for the Agency's activities in the fields of development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and non-proliferation. All international agreements concerned with the transfer of nuclear material should, like safeguards agreements, be applied in all Member States as an integral part of the non-proliferation regime. Romania fully supported the Agency's safeguards programme, which played a major role in preventing nuclear material, equipment and technology being diverted for non-peaceful purposes. It also supported the efforts made by the Agency to establish a multilateral legal framework comprising specific instruments such as the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage.

66. The PRESIDENT, with the Conference's permission, gave the floor to the representative of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

67. Mr. BUSTANI (Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) congratulated Mr. Blix on being awarded the Uranium Institute's gold medal for his outstanding contribution to the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and paid tribute to the determination, vision and dedication he had displayed during his period at the head of the Agency. He also congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his election as new Director General and looked forward to establishing with him a mutually beneficial co-operative relationship.

68. The implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention would contribute to strengthening the international regime being set up to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The implementation of the Convention posed unprecedented challenges to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) which would thus be glad to draw on available experience in that field of activity.

69. He thanked the IAEA Secretariat for the useful advice and assistance it had provided to the OPCW during the preparatory phase in all areas relevant to the successful operation of an international verification agency, including logistical aspects of inspections, travel documents for inspectors, security aspects, the dissemination of information, routine administrative matters and the organization of annual conferences. He was sure that both organizations would profit from mutual co-operation and he looked forward to further strengthening the links between them. The OPCW had much to learn from the IAEA but he hoped that it would in turn have something to offer the Agency in future.

70. The OPCW and the IAEA shared an important goal: to ensure the non-proliferation of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. In its 40 years of existence, one of the most important contributions the Agency had made to verification had been the development of on-site inspections and an accounting system to verify that activities were not being pursued that could lead to nuclear weapons proliferation. It was because the Chemical Weapons

Convention relied on a like system that it held so much promise compared with previous efforts to eliminate chemical weapons or halt their proliferation. The Convention provided not only for routine on-site inspections to verify the accuracy of declarations provided by its States Parties, but also for investigations into the alleged use of chemical weapons and for short-notice challenge inspections to clarify and resolve any questions concerning possible non-compliance. He was confident that those powerful tools would be used with discernment and would prove successful both from the political and practical points of view.

71. During the preparatory phase, it had been assumed for budgetary and planning purposes that only three States, the Russian Federation, the United States and one other unnamed State would declare possession of chemical weapons. In fact, eight States had already declared that they possessed or had possessed chemical weapons, not including the Russian Federation which had still to ratify the Convention. Thus, a clearer picture was already emerging about the quantity and locations of chemical weapons in the world, which was the first essential step towards their elimination. Participation by the Russian Federation in that process was particularly important, not only because it was the largest declared possessor of chemical weapons - 40 000 tonnes - but also because of its role in global security, its permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council, its important chemical industry and its high level of technical development. Without the active participation of the Russian Federation, it was difficult, if not impossible, to envisage achievement of the objectives of the Convention regarding the elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles and related production facilities within a set timetable and ensuring that the civil chemical industry was not involved in illegitimate activities. He had visited Moscow recently, however, and had good reason to believe that the Russian Federation would soon accede to the Convention and submit the world's largest stockpiles of chemical weapons to the verification regime.

72. The initial declarations already received by the OPCW provided information not only on former and existing chemical weapons but also on the facilities and activities relating to chemicals identified in the Convention as posing a special risk. Intended transfers of highly toxic chemicals produced in small quantities for various peaceful purposes - "Schedule 1 chemicals"- were now also being declared to the OPCW, allowing their movements to be tracked. The immediate non-proliferation aims of the Convention were thus being met along with its longer term disarmament goals.

73. The first OPCW inspection had been conducted on 4 June 1997, a month after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It had taken place at a facility in the United States which had been in the process of destroying its stockpiles of chemical weapons at the time the Convention had entered into force. To date, over 80 initial inspections and visits had been conducted on the territory of 18 States. That included visits to military facilities as well as to facilities producing Schedule 1 chemicals which had to be completed within six months of entry into force of the Convention. In addition, permanent monitoring of chemical weapons destruction operations was under way at three facilities in the United States. All initial inspections of declared chemical weapons or related facilities had now been undertaken and it was estimated that more than 100 inspections would be completed before the end of the year.

74. Work had also progressed satisfactorily on the establishment of the administrative structure required to back up that verification system. The Conference of the States Parties, which was the principal organ of the OPCW comprising all of the States Parties to the Convention, had held its first session on 6 May 1997, seven days after entry into force of the Convention. The session had lasted for three weeks, during which time the OPCW had successfully launched its activities. The Conference had in particular approved a whole series of recommendations put forward by the Preparatory Commission with regard to administrative matters and the procedures for verification and the conduct of inspections. The Conference had adopted a budget of around \$44 million for 1997, which was modest by comparison with the budget of the IAEA, and had approved the top management structure for the Technical Secretariat. During the same period, the Executive Council, a 41 member body charged with overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Organisation, had been elected and met for the first time. Since May, the Executive Council - the equivalent of the Agency's Board of Governors - had met roughly once per month to monitor the implementation of the Convention. That high work intensity had been necessary with the Convention having just entered into force, but the rhythm should become more normal in 1998. The second session of the Conference of the States Parties was scheduled for December.

75. Over the years, the IAEA had acquired a reputation as a well-managed and efficient organization. The OPCW had had the good fortune to inherit competent and experienced staff from the Preparatory Commission. The transition from preparation to implementation evidently required additional staff, and every effort was being made to recruit qualified personnel in the Secretariat with as broad a geographical distribution as possible. He intended to lead a dynamic Secretariat avoiding excessive bureaucratic expansion. The new headquarters building, where operations would be centralized, would be ready for occupation in the coming months.

76. As with the IAEA, it was essential for the OPCW verification system to have highly qualified inspectors. 111 inspectors and assistants had been appointed following a rigorous selection process and intensive training. The credibility of the OPCW verification system would depend on the technical competence, the professional background and the deportment of the inspectors. A second training course for a further 90 inspectors was planned for 1998. The exact number of inspectors needed by the OPCW would depend on the number of States Parties and on the content of their declarations.

77. Another common goal of the Agency and the OPCW was the promotion of technical co-operation and assistance. There could be no doubt that the achievement of the objective of non-proliferation called for a careful balance between disarmament and non-proliferation commitments on the one hand and free trade and co-operation for peaceful purposes on the other. In that connection, it was essential to preserve confidentiality in the field of legitimate industrial activities whilst being as transparent as possible about military activities.

78. In conclusion, he hoped that there could be a fruitful exchange of experience between the Agency and OPCW, especially in the areas of verification and technical assistance and co-operation. He wished the Agency every success with its forty-first General Conference.

79. Mr. CHIDAMBARAM (India), after welcoming Malta and Burkina Faso to membership of the Agency, read out the following message to the General Conference from the Indian Prime Minister:

“This auspicious year marks the fortieth anniversary of the IAEA as well as the fiftieth year of India’s independence. I am very happy to convey greetings and felicitations on behalf of the people of India and on my own behalf to the IAEA, with which we have been associated from its very inception as a founder member”.

80. The Agency had been established to promote research, development and the practical applications of atomic energy for peaceful purposes worldwide. Electrical energy was essential for economic and social growth and there was a strong correlation in all developing countries between growth and per caput power consumption. Nuclear energy opened up vast prospects for prosperity and represented a panacea for the future by boosting power generation capacity, improving human health, increasing and enhancing agricultural production, contributing to more effective pest control, facilitating better management of water resources and providing potable water through desalination. That was the vision all should continue to work for. There had to be a truly global partnership in the area of nuclear energy and sustainable development in order to foster a climate of genuine co-operation. The Agency had a unique role to play in facilitating that development process and translating that vision into reality.

81. India had used the occasion of the Agency’s fortieth anniversary to organize an international seminar with the Agency in New Delhi on the role of nuclear energy in sustainable development. The Director General, Mr. Blix, and the Deputy Director General for Research and Isotopes, Mr. Machi, had participated in that seminar, from which it had become clear that fission energy was going to be the inevitable option for countries in Asia and for developing countries and would be indispensable for the long-term energy security of the world. That had also been the message of the international symposium organized by the Agency in June 1997 on nuclear fuel cycle and reactor strategies. He wished to thank Mr. Blix for his service to the Agency over the past 16 years. He had himself had the opportunity of working closely with Mr. Blix in 1994 and 1995, when he had been Chairman of the Board of Governors, and had happy memories of that association.

82. Accelerated development of India’s industry, agriculture and infrastructure designed to bring the standard of living of its population close to that of developed countries called for the per caput electricity consumption to be increased by eight to ten times. It was also expected that nuclear power would account for an increasingly large share of national electricity production in the next century. The Indian Government had therefore established a sound infrastructure to meet that demand. At present, four nuclear reactors of Indian design were under construction. Of the ten reactors in operation, the two oldest were boiling water reactors and the others were pressurized heavy water reactors. Construction of two 500 MW(e) pressurized heavy water reactors of Indian design was expected to start shortly. Negotiations with Russia on co-operation in the construction of two 1000 MW(e) WWER reactors in Tamil Nadu were at an advanced stage.

83. The performance of Indian nuclear power plants had improved considerably and the plants of the new generation were attaining load factors comparable with the highest international standards, the average load factor in August 1997 being 90%. During the last few years, remote handling techniques and tools had been developed to carry out intricate tasks in high radiation fields, e.g. for in-service inspection of reactor core internals and maintenance. The difficult job of replacing the highly radioactive coolant channels of one of the two pressurized heavy water reactors in Rajasthan had been performed using technology and equipment developed in India; a zirconium-niobium alloy with very low impurity levels and higher sag resistance had been developed for the new coolant channels to replace the old ones. The Indian database on post-irradiation examination of irradiated coolant channels had been considerably expanded, permitting sound validation of models that had been developed in India for assessing the ageing of coolant channels. He noted with satisfaction that the Agency's International Working Group on Advanced Technologies for Heavy Water Reactors had begun its work and he looked forward to very fruitful co-operation in that area. India would be happy to share its R&D results through the mechanism of co-ordinated research programmes under the auspices of that International Working Group. It was a member of the World Association of Nuclear Operators, which it had recently invited to carry out a peer review of its nuclear power plant at Kakrapar.

84. The existing once-through fuel cycle strategies used a mere 1% of the energy potential of uranium. In the context of sustainable development, attention should be focused on breeder reactors, which would permit far more efficient use of uranium. The fast-breeder test reactor at Kalpakkam had been operating satisfactorily for a decade at power levels of up to 12 MW(th). The new fuel, of Indian design, which consisted of 70% PuC and 30% UC, had made it possible to achieve a burnup of 36 000 MWd/t without any pin failure, and the results of post-irradiation examination of the fuel and the performance of the sodium systems of the steam generators were very encouraging. An important milestone had been reached in July 1997 with the connection of the fast-breeder test reactor to the regional electricity grid. A decade of operation of that reactor had provided valuable knowledge which had paved the way for the design and development of a sodium-cooled prototype fast-breeder reactor, construction of which was expected to start by the turn of the century. The 30 kW Kamini experimental reactor, which used ^{233}U fuel fabricated in India, had gone critical in October 1996 and had reached full power very recently. It would be used for neutron radiography, particularly of fast reactor fuel and for neutron activation analysis. The technology had been developed for the reprocessing of thorium irradiated in Indian reactors, for the extraction of ^{233}U and for the fabrication of fuel elements using that fissile material, marking a further milestone in India's efforts to exploit its vast thorium reserves to meet its long-term energy needs. The design of an advanced heavy water reactor using plutonium and ^{233}U was nearing completion and preparations were being made to establish an experimental critical facility for studying the physics of that reactor and of 500 MW(e) pressurized heavy water reactors. The programme of progressive introduction of MOX fuel in the reactors at Tarapur was proceeding satisfactorily. On the basis of its own technology along with imported light-water reactors, India hoped to have 20 000 MW(e) installed nuclear capacity by 2020.

85. The Indian nuclear industry aimed to achieve total safety, which presupposed a constant quest for excellence. India was one of the few countries which had implemented the recommendations contained in ICRP publication 60 on the dose limits for radiation workers. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board had done so by progressively applying lower dose limits from 1991. The Board enforced radiation safety measures not only in nuclear power plants but also in installations of the Department of Atomic Energy and other facilities that used radiation and radioactive materials for medical, industrial and research purposes. The Board was also pursuing a unique project aimed at bringing 30 000 medical X-ray units under formal regulatory control.

86. India had always been keen on the development of a convention on the safety of radioactive waste management and had participated actively in the relevant negotiations. Although in 1994 the General Conference had requested that the future convention cover waste safety, spent fuel had now also been included. India, which had a closed fuel cycle, had consistently been opposed to the inclusion in the Convention of spent fuel, which it considered to be a valuable resource.

87. A dynamic nuclear power programme also provided the impetus for the accelerated development of other nuclear applications in medicine, agriculture and industry and had many beneficial spin-offs. India was producing over a hundred types of radioisotope. Using a radiation-induced mutant variety and the latest agricultural techniques, a farmer from the State of Maharashtra had achieved a record harvest of 9.4 tonnes of groundnuts per hectare. The Ministry of Health had approved irradiation processing of several food products, and an irradiation plant with a capacity to process up to 12 000 tonnes a year was under construction at Navi Mumbai.

88. The Indian Centre for Advanced Technology was developing two synchrotron radiation sources of 450 MeV and 2 GeV, and it had also developed powerful lasers for industrial applications. More than a dozen surgical CO₂ lasers were currently used in Indian hospitals. The Centre had also developed a laser fluorimeter which could detect extremely low concentrations of uranium in water. Two of those fluorimeters had been donated to the Agency's laboratories in Seibersdorf. Another unit of the Department of Atomic Energy - the Electronics Corporation of India - was involved in the design, development and manufacture of complex control and instrumentation equipment for Indian nuclear power plants. Indian research workers had successfully developed neutron instrumentation, radiation monitoring and radiation data acquisition systems, as well as a computerized operator information system which provided data on some 10 000 plant parameters. Spin-off techniques had been developed by other units of the Department of Atomic Energy and by other organizations in a number of fields such as cancer research, molecular biology, astronomy and management of municipal waste.

89. India had established a very efficient export control regime. There were three lists of monitored items - one for items whose export was banned, another for substances and equipment whose export could only be conducted through specific organizations, and a third for special materials, equipment and technology whose export was authorized by the

competent ministries in conjunction with the Ministry of Commerce. By applying such a regime with self-imposed controls on the export of sensitive material and technology, India could pride itself on never having transferred nuclear technology or material to a country which had then misused it. Like any other responsible member of the nuclear community, it was in favour of export controls to prevent diversion of sensitive items.

90. The Agency's fortieth anniversary was a good time to take stock of technical co-operation activities. India had repeatedly stressed the need for a balance between the Agency's promotional and regulatory activities. Having always supported the Agency's technical co-operation activities, India wished to reiterate the need for TC to have assured and predictable funding. In the coming year, the indicative planning figures for 1999 and beyond would be discussed and it would be necessary to ensure that those figures were adequate. As in the past, India would be pledging the full amount of its share of the TCF for 1998 and would honour its commitments as it had always done.

91. India welcomed the satisfactory implementation of Model Projects. Indian experts had participated in water desalination projects initiated by the Agency. A nuclear desalination plant was being set up at Kalpakkam and wider applications of that technology were being considered. India was also interested in the sterile insect technique, which could perhaps one day be used to control the anopheles mosquito, which was a carrier of malaria, and was pleased that the Agency was showing interest in starting a project in that area.

92. RCA had now been in existence for 25 years. Having started as a joint project between India, Philippines and the Agency, it had then been extended to 17 countries and had served as a model for similar initiatives in Africa and Latin America. The RCA was thus a focus for technical co-operation among developing countries; it should be even more proactive in tackling development questions, both through its own projects and by combining its efforts with those of other organizations such as the UNDP. India hoped that the Agency would act as a catalyst in promoting the RCA's activities, and it would continue to make substantial in-kind contributions to that programme.

93. The Agency's fortieth anniversary was also an occasion for examining whether the Agency's original objectives were still being pursued. The Agency's mission was to promote the development of nuclear power in developing countries, where it would be an indispensable option to meet future energy needs. The time had come to ask whether the Agency had not faltered in that task and whether it was indeed still performing the role of scientific and technological pioneer. Its lack of dynamism in promoting nuclear energy to eliminate poverty and to protect the global environment had had the result that in a recent United Nations document, nuclear energy was referred to only in the context of safety and non-proliferation. In the coming years, the Agency should aim to promote nuclear technology and its applications in developing countries more vigorously. In that respect, he welcomed the appointment of Mr. ElBaradei as the next Director General of the Agency. The rosy future for nuclear energy painted in the late 1950s had only been partially realized, mainly in developed countries. A change in orientation would perhaps help to make those hopes materialize more

in the developing countries where, in addition to providing electricity and numerous other benefits, nuclear programmes served as a catalyst for all high technology development.

94. Mr. SADIQUE (Bangladesh) paid tribute to the Agency which was celebrating 40 years of activities in the interests of non-proliferation and the promotion of the use of nuclear techniques in many areas. Bangladesh was deeply grateful to the IAEA and Mr. Blix for the services they had rendered, and congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his appointment as Director General. It also welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso as members of the Agency.

95. Human knowledge, often acquired at great pains, should be applied to help improve the quality of life and enhance economic prosperity. Bangladesh was resolved to use nuclear energy solely for the good of humanity and, as the only country in its region which had signed the NPT and CTBT, it was heartened to see some signs of peace. However, as it entered the third millennium, humanity was confronted with various problems and barriers to development which threatened to get worse, and the supply of energy was of vital importance if they were to be overcome. The developing countries currently accounted for the vast majority of the world population yet their per caput energy consumption was very low. Even a modest increase in that level of consumption would exert unprecedented pressure on the dwindling global reserves of fossil fuel, which would certainly have an impact on availability and price.

96. In the event of an energy crisis, the developed countries would be less severely affected since they had the financial and physical resources, expertise and infrastructure to allow them to adapt to a new situation more easily. In most of those countries, nuclear energy could mitigate the effect of an energy crisis; however, the rest of the world was not so fortunate. In many countries, greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels constituted a potential danger to the environment which could hold back the development of the energy sector. In that connection, "clean" nuclear power could prove invaluable since its particularly advanced technology considerably diminished the threat to the environment. Nuclear energy would therefore seem to provide the answer to energy security problems. Uncertainties over safety and waste management were often perceived as the main obstacle to the adoption of nuclear technology, but realistic technical solutions to those difficulties were now available.

97. Bangladesh attached high priority to increasing energy production. In view of the country's power shortage, its very limited resources, and its vulnerability to the environmental risks of the swiftly decreasing forest cover, the Prime Minister had emphasized time and again the need to introduce nuclear power.

98. There was still some concern that nuclear technology could be diverted for military purposes. However, international inspection and surveillance capabilities were so highly developed as to make such fears groundless. It was inconceivable that any diversion should occur in the face of current and planned safeguards measures.

99. Concerted and objective efforts would be required from the Agency to convince the international community of the viability of and the increasing need for nuclear power, in particular in the developing countries. It would have to persuade international financial

institutions and credit guarantee agencies to increase their contributions in order to respond to those needs; those institutions had to be shown that nuclear power was safe, economical, reliable and workable in developing countries. The Agency should include in its agenda, as a priority item, the introduction of nuclear power in developing countries in the hope that, when it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, that objective would have been achieved.

100. Bangladesh was continuing its efforts to exploit the results of various R&D projects, including such concerned with applications of non-destructive testing techniques in industry, health care services, elemental analysis, maintenance of electronic equipment, environmental monitoring, radiation protection, food preservation and sterilization of medical supplies. Since the enactment of the nuclear safety and radiation control law in 1993, activities in those areas had intensified and nuclear safety and radiation control regulations had just been published. The public authorities were currently strengthening the infrastructure and developing the human resources required to apply the law. In that context, Agency technical assistance to Bangladesh was of crucial importance. Apart from the various technical assistance projects under way, additional projects had been launched under the Agency's research contract programme. Bangladesh appreciated the Agency's unfailing support for its various R&D programmes on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and hoped that that co-operation would continue and expand in the future.

101. Bangladesh was actively involved in various projects under the RCA. The exchange of experience between countries in the region facilitated by the RCA had many positive effects and those activities should be expanded. In particular, projects on the application of nuclear techniques in industry, medicine and agriculture would help the region confront the challenges of the next century. The scope of the project on energy, electricity and nuclear power planning should also be extended.

102. Mr. KENIK (Belarus), speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister and Government of Belarus, congratulated the Agency on its fortieth anniversary and recalled that Belarus was one of the founder members of that august body whose mission was to promote multilateral co-operation in the area of nuclear and radiation safety. Belarus considered the Agency to be one of the most efficient organizations in the United Nations system and hoped that the constructive relations between it and the Agency would be further developed in the interests of the Belarus people who had suffered more than any other from the Chernobyl disaster - the most serious radiological accident of the twentieth century - and would also contribute to nuclear safety at the regional and global levels. His country was convinced that the Director General elect, Mr. ElBaradei, would give new impetus to intergovernmental co-operation within the Agency and would be able to capitalize on the invaluable legacy left by his predecessor, Mr. Blix.

103. In achieving independence, Belarus, like other newly independent States had been faced with a host of problems in the area of nuclear safety and radiation protection. Nuclear safety was a matter of particular importance to the people of Belarus who had suffered terribly from the Chernobyl disaster. Belarus was especially concerned about the safety of nuclear facilities located around its borders. Recognizing the role and importance of the Convention

on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, which it had signed in May 1997, Belarus had taken steps at the political and industrial level to strengthen international co-operation in the nuclear field. Furthermore, specialists from Belarus were currently carrying out an in-depth analysis of another important document aimed at strengthening safety - the Convention on Nuclear Safety - with a view to Belarus' possible accession.

104. Belarus attached great significance to the strengthening of the international safeguards system. Technical issues relating to nuclear material accounting and control were to a large extent dealt with at the facilities of the "Sosny" scientific and technical complex of the National Academy of Sciences, where almost all the country's nuclear material was located. The relevant departments of the Academy of Sciences were overseeing Belarus' compliance with the NPT and its safeguards agreement with the Agency.

105. The United States, Japan and Sweden had provided Belarus with considerable technical assistance to help it establish a national system for accounting and control of nuclear materials. A physical protection system for nuclear materials had been established, a new storage centre had been commissioned and the accounting and control system was currently being computerized. The measuring systems that had been set up provided a means not only of accounting for nuclear material, but also of monitoring the movement of such material within the country. That greatly facilitated the preparation of reports during national and international inspections, and the Government of Belarus therefore wished to thank the donor countries once again for their assistance.

106. The "Sosny" complex had a good infrastructure for the control of nuclear material and its safeguards experts had very high standard qualifications. Belarus would therefore be happy to establish a regional training centre there with Agency assistance for the control and physical protection of nuclear materials.

107. In July 1997, one of the most powerful neutron generators in the world had been put into operation at the complex. It would enable scientific studies to be carried out on nuclear and neutron physics, neutron therapy for cancer, radiation chemistry and other aspects of modern science. As far as practical applications were concerned, it would be widely used in medicine and in agriculture. Theoretical research by Belarus specialists also gave grounds for hoping that work on the transmutation of radioactive waste could be undertaken in the very near future.

108. Belarus, like many other States, was implementing the Part 1 measures of Programme 93+2 by providing the Agency with more detailed information on its nuclear activities and allowing inspectors greater access to its facilities.

109. In May 1997, the Committee on Strengthening the Effectiveness and Improving the Efficiency of the Safeguards System had completed its work to develop a draft Additional Protocol. The Committee was to be congratulated on elaborating the Protocol, aimed at strengthening the non-proliferation regime and building a climate of confidence essential for complete disarmament, the more especially as it had been called upon to resolve difficult issues affecting the sovereignty of States, such as complementary access and the provision of

confidential information. Belarus experts were studying the Protocol, which had been approved by the Board of Governors, very carefully and were conducting additional consultations with countries producing nuclear materials with a view to reconciling the provisions of the Protocol with the terms of the bilateral agreements concluded with those countries.

110. Belarus was taking various steps to strengthen all aspects of radiation protection. Parliament was currently considering two bills, one on the use of nuclear energy and radiation safety and the other on the radiation protection of the population. With regard to the latter, the Government of Belarus had made it a priority to tackle the safety problems associated with the waste arising in the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident. It had therefore completed the work on the establishment and certification of stores for decontamination waste containing radionuclides. Belarus believed that the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management that had recently been adopted would help to harmonize action taken and consolidate the efforts of various countries aimed at strengthening international co-operation in that area.

111. Belarus was pleased to note that its links with the Agency in the area of technical co-operation had increased considerably over the previous three years. The improvement in the modalities of provision of Agency technical assistance, such as consideration of national interests, qualitative selection of project proposals and tailoring the projects to the end-users was contributing greatly to increased project efficiency.

112. Belarus had welcomed the Model Project entitled "Upgrading Radiation Protection Infrastructure" and was satisfied with the initial results achieved. Involving other States of the region in tackling problems associated with the radiation protection of the population gave the project a regional character and could in the long term give new impetus to intergovernmental relations in that sphere.

113. The implementation in Belarus of projects such as the one on biolubricants from rapeseed grown on contaminated land was a good illustration of the close and efficient co-operation that his country had developed with the Agency. The reincorporation into the economic cycle of land contaminated after the Chernobyl accident, the improvement in the sociological and psychological climate in the region and the commercial impact of the products obtained illustrated that the humanitarian and economic interests of Belarus and the Agency coincided.

114. In addition to the aforementioned priorities, Belarus wished to strengthen its co-operation with the Agency in the short term in the following areas: improvement of nuclear medicine services, efficient use of land contaminated by the Chernobyl disaster and creation of a reliable emergency response system in the event of a nuclear accident, all of which was consistent with Belarus' programme of sustainable development for the third millennium.

115. In conclusion, having welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso to the Agency, he recommended approval of the Annual Report for 1996 and the budget for 1998.

116. Mr. VALENTUKEVIČIUS (Lithuania) congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on his election and assured him of Lithuania's support. He also welcomed Malta and Burkina Faso to the Agency and expressed the hope that they would make an important contribution to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Lithuanian delegation commended the role played by Mr. Blix in the development and implementation of international legal documents regulating the obligations of States in the nuclear energy sphere.

117. For five years now Lithuania had been a major producer of nuclear-generated electricity. The previous year, Ignalina nuclear power plant had produced 84% of the country's electricity. Lithuania therefore reiterated its thanks to Mr. Blix for helping to promote nuclear energy, which had become an intrinsic part of sustainable development.

118. His delegation was pleased that the Agency's fortieth anniversary had been marked by the signature of several documents which would have a significant bearing on the development of nuclear energy in the twenty-first century. The implementation of their provisions would, however, pose a number of difficulties, particularly with respect to financing. Lithuania, for example, had the problem of insuring the Ignalina plant, which could only be done through the large international insurance companies.

119. Lithuania supported Programme 93+2 aimed at improving the safeguards system and endorsed the statements made by the European Union in that regard. It had acceded to the NPT in 1991 and had signed the corresponding safeguards agreement in 1992. In order to apply the NPT and to be able to control nuclear material in Lithuania, the State Nuclear Power Safety Inspectorate - VATESI - was in the process of creating a State control and accounting system and had already drawn up the necessary regulations. The bulk of the material concerned was spent fuel from Ignalina but some also came from other industrial and medical applications.

120. In view of the specific nature of the nuclear material in Lithuania, the Agency was arranging quarterly inspections to verify that all the material reported by other States as having been exported to the country had reached its destination and to ensure that the changes in the volume of nuclear material corresponded to the amount of electricity produced. Lithuania had accepted the Agency's proposals regarding the simplified procedure for the designation of inspectors and had made the necessary arrangements to facilitate their entry into the country.

121. Physical protection of nuclear material was another important aspect of the NPT. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, to which Lithuania had acceded in 1994, the national authorities had elaborated procedures adapted to local conditions but also meeting international standards. In addition, the Ministry of Economy, in close co-operation with VATESI, was supervising export procedures, analysing requests for import, export and transit of material and issuing licences. Lithuania looked forward to further strengthening the safeguards system and was preparing to sign that very day the Additional Protocol to the agreement between the Government of Lithuania and the IAEA for the application of safeguards.

122. Lithuania was making great efforts to improve the safety of the Ignalina nuclear power plant. It was grateful to its Western partners and the international organizations which had provided assistance in that area. Recalling the national policy of transparency with regard to nuclear power, he said that the safety analysis report which had been completed the previous year was the first exhaustive document of that type for RBMK reactors. With the support of the Lithuanian Government, the Ignalina nuclear power plant had developed a new safety improvement programme up to the year 1999. One outstanding strategic issue which would be difficult to resolve in the near future was that of the final repository for spent nuclear fuel. A co-ordinated effort on the part of many countries would be required to deal with it. In welcoming the Agency's activities with respect to the management of radioactive waste from medical, industrial and agricultural applications, Lithuania looked forward to similar programmes being developed to tackle the problems associated with spent fuel.

123. Lithuanian experts were receiving considerable assistance in various fields through the Agency's technical co-operation programme. At present, four national projects were being implemented and Lithuania was involved in several regional projects. Lithuanian experts thus had the opportunity to expand their knowledge through participation in international workshops, conferences and symposia. That co-operation had enabled them to gain a better understanding of local problems and share their experience with foreign experts.

124. Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) congratulated the new Director General on his election and paid tribute to his predecessor. Welcoming Malta and Burkina Faso as members of the Agency, he noted that the increase in the number of Member States was clear evidence of the Agency's success in its mission. The Agency could indeed be proud of its achievements over the past 40 years, particularly the access of the developing countries to nuclear technology, which had been greatly facilitated by the Agency's training programmes. The nine-week training course to be held in Damascus in Arabic was particularly welcome and it was to be hoped that others would follow. The Agency should increase its technical support to the developing countries to enable them to exploit the peaceful applications of nuclear energy and close the technological gap.

125. The policy of the Syrian Arab Republic was based on the principle of enhancing international peace and security in accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations, as demonstrated by its accession in 1969 to the NPT, its commitment in 1992 to accept comprehensive safeguards and its active participation in the Committee on the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. However, whereas Syria was working towards strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system, Israel still maintained the threat of its nuclear arsenal and sought to impose its status quo policy on the region.

126. The fact that Israel was the only country in the region with a military nuclear programme, which was not subject to any kind of international control, endangered the already explosive situation in the Middle East. Its persistent postponement of its accession to the NPT to a later stage of the peace process could not but raise doubts as to its real intentions and thus further hamper that process.

127. The peace process had been deadlocked since the present Israeli Prime Minister had taken office. His Government had reneged on all the agreements concluded by the previous Government and continued to violate international law by making extensive plans to build new settlements in the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Jerusalem as part of a large-scale occupation process, in defiance of the United Nations General Assembly resolution of 17 July 1997. One wondered how long the international community was prepared to allow the Israeli Prime Minister to destroy all chance of peace and exacerbate tension in the Middle East.

128. Israel continued to create obstacles to a just and global peace and to block all international initiatives to bring the peace negotiations back into line with the Madrid Conference resolutions and the "land for peace" principle, and sought only to occupy Arab lands by force whilst threatening to use nuclear weapons. Syria aspired to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that would bring security to all peoples of the region and not only Israel. Security was the product of peace, not of force. Syria therefore demanded that the Israeli Government resume negotiations from the point reached under the previous Government, which had agreed to complete withdrawal from Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967. That demand was in line with the most elementary international standards.

129. In view of the conclusions of the Group of Experts appointed in 1981 by the United Nations Secretary-General to make a study of Israel's nuclear armaments, and the resolution on the Middle East passed by the NPT Review and Extension Conference, it was regrettable that the report of the Director General on the implementation of resolution GC(40)/RES/22 had not revealed the results of his negotiations with the countries of the region aimed at having all nuclear activities in the region placed under comprehensive safeguards. The report should at least have indicated the States with which consultations had been held and their positions on the relevant resolutions.

130. The Syrian Arab Republic now called upon the General Conference to implement the relevant international resolutions, especially resolution 487(1981) which required Israel to place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards. As Israel was the only country in the region that possessed nuclear weapons, the General Conference should also expressly call on Israel to apply Agency safeguards. His delegation urged the Director General to take the necessary measures to implement the relevant resolutions, and to put pressure on Israel to submit its nuclear facilities to Agency safeguards, bearing in mind that the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa would not have been possible, had South Africa not abandoned the nuclear option in response to international pressure.

131. Any waiving of the rules to accept Israel's non-accession to the NPT, any attempt to avoid mentioning the fact in the General Conference resolution on the application of safeguards in the Middle East or failure to exert pressure on Israel to comply with international law would point to the use of double standards, and encourage the arms race.

132. The purpose of amending Article VI of the Statute was to increase the representation of the areas of Africa and Middle East and South Asia on the Board of Governors so as to achieve equitable representation of the eight area groups referred to in that Article. Linking

the question of the composition of regional groups to that of expansion of the Board of Governors would only delay resolution of the latter, which was by far the most pressing issue. In that connection, it should be recalled that the Director General's report to the 40th session of the General Conference (GC(40)/11) had stated that "According to information provided by the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, the composition of the various groups is entirely in the hands of the groups themselves." Syria did not deny any country the right of belonging to a regional group but it refused to admit Israel to the Middle East and South Asia area group while some countries of that group were subject to Israeli aggression. Israel was occupying Arab lands and building new settlements there, threatening to use nuclear weapons, driving out Arab people and subjecting them to extreme violence, while at the same time claiming that it was the object of discrimination. One might well ask what the General Conference hoped to achieve by imposing a member on an area group that did not want it, thereby risking disrupting or even paralysing the activities of that group within the Agency. The principle of geographical proximity was obsolete. Paragraph 8 of the Director General's report, (GC(40)/11) stated that "Article VI.A.1 of the Statute does not speak of 'geographical groups' but rather refers to areas, not all of which are necessarily geographical Further, even with respect to 'areas' that appear to be purely geographical (e.g. 'Middle East and South Asia' ...) the Statute gives no guidance as to the boundaries of, or the Member States that are within, these ... areas. Nor has the Board or the General Conference developed any criteria or other guidance to determine whether a Member State is within one of the areas specified in Article VI of the Statute." The same report also stated in paragraph 14 that "... the attribution of a State to a particular area is one in which factors other than geographical considerations play a role."

133. The matter of amendment of Article VI had already cost too much time, energy and money, and linking it to two other quite unrelated issues, would never lead to consensus.

134. The role played by INIS as a source of information on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was extremely valuable. Syria wished to pay tribute to its staff and called on the Agency to provide it with all the necessary resources.

135. The Agency was also to be commended on its efforts in support of technical co-operation projects aimed at solving the economic and social problems of Member States, for example the regional project on isotope hydrology techniques in water resource management. The economic feasibility studies on the use of miniature reactors to produce potable water and electricity in areas affected by or likely to be affected by water shortages were also important. Syria also commended the Agency on the information it provided to Member States on illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources in view of the real and potential danger it posed to people and the environment.

136. In conclusion he emphasized the importance of co-operation between the Arab Atomic Energy Agency and the IAEA in the context of regional technical co-operation projects.

137. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia), having congratulated Burkina Faso and Malta on joining the Agency, welcomed the appointment of Mr. ElBaradei as new Director General and paid tribute to Mr. Blix for his model professionalism. After tracing the events leading to the

Agency's establishment 40 years previously, he noted that Australia was one of the founder members of the organization and had been closely involved in drafting the Statute. The Agency's original atoms for peace vocation had rapidly diversified and negotiations had begun with a view to establishing a safeguards system designed to prevent the diversion of nuclear material for military purposes and limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Thus, from the outset, the Agency had had a dual mission: to promote the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity and to ensure, through the application of safeguards, that nuclear material and facilities were used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

138. With the entry into force of the NPT in 1970, the Agency had been given the responsibility of verifying, through on-site inspections, that States were complying with their obligations under the Treaty, which involved an unprecedented surrender of national sovereignty. During the subsequent two decades, the safeguards system had never been seriously tested. Each year, the Agency had informed the Board of Governors that no safeguarded material had been diverted for military or other unknown purposes. Confidence in the system had grown and an increasing number of non-nuclear-weapon States had acceded to the NPT. Furthermore, the safeguards system had become a model for other areas of arms control. The START I and II Treaties, the negotiations for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe all provided for inspection systems reflecting the safeguards system developed by the Agency in the 1950s.

139. The system's integrity and reliability had suddenly been called into question with the discovery in 1991 of Iraq's clandestine nuclear-weapons programme and then by the DPRK's false declaration regarding its plutonium inventory. The consequent effort to strengthen the safeguards system had resulted in the Additional Protocol approved in May. Although that new instrument was by no means infallible, the obligation to supply far more detailed information and to provide inspectors with greater freedom of access, together with the authority for the Agency to use new technologies, would make for more thorough verification. The new Protocol therefore adapted the safeguards systems to present-day realities and should make it more efficient.

140. Australia, which had always supported the strengthening of safeguards, had taken part in all the negotiations. The previous week, it had been the first Member State to conclude and sign a bilateral protocol with the Agency incorporating the new provisions. The Protocol now had to be made a living reality and States had to be encouraged to adopt it as soon as possible as the new standard for safeguards agreements with the Agency. While it was important to focus on States with significant nuclear activities, assistance should also be provided to other States in clarifying the extent of their obligations and demonstrating that for many of them compliance would not be onerous. Only through universal accession could the common objective of a strengthened safeguards system be achieved.

141. The strengthening of safeguards, the Agency's role and the NPT were inextricably linked. The NPT in particular had proved extremely successful. To date, it had 186 parties, with Brazil also due to accede shortly. The large membership showed that the international

community was confident that the Treaty could prevent the spread of nuclear military technology and that it also recognized the Agency's efficiency in verification matters.

142. Two years after the indefinite extension of the NPT preparations were now beginning for the sixth Review Conference to be held in the year 2000. The decisions that had accompanied the indefinite extension and the activities to be undertaken as part of the review process presented the international community with an exacting task in which the Agency would again be called upon to play a key role.

143. In addition to safeguards, the Agency had two other important functions, namely to promote the adoption of the best international standards for nuclear safety and radiation protection and to promote the peaceful development of nuclear energy, including in developing countries. The Agency's dual role was part of the political compact between States that underpinned the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. Australia was therefore a keen supporter of the Agency's co-operation programmes and would again be contributing an amount approximately equivalent to \$ 1 million to the TCF the following year. It would also continue to participate in the work of the Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation (SAGTAC).

144. Australia also attached great significance to the RCA which was celebrating its 25th anniversary in 1997. That programme had proved to be an effective tool for regional co-operation in the nuclear area with the emphasis on regional management arrangements in line with the objectives of TCDC. It was important to broaden the funding base for the RCA and, in that regard, the increasing number of participating States making direct financial contributions to the programme was particularly welcome.

145. Australia was considering providing extrabudgetary funding of approximately 1.5 million Australian dollars over the following three years in order to finance a RCA/IAEA project on the application of radioisotope technology to sustainable infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific. The areas covered, such as civil engineering, radiation protection and regional education in nuclear medicine, were of a high enough priority to attract significant matching funding from UNDP.

146. Another direct contribution by Australia to regional technology was its own research capability. His Government had announced that it was intending to replace the HIFAR research reactor, which dated back to the 1950s, with a state-of-the-art research reactor that would cater for the scientific and technical needs not only of Australia but also of the Asia and Pacific region as a whole.

147. In accordance with its Statute, the Agency had contributed significantly to nuclear safety by developing the various conventions that had entered into force in the 1980s and, more recently, the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Each of those instruments required that the Parties observe certain basic standards and be subject to peer reviews. Furthermore, over the years, it had developed nuclear safety standards which took the form of recommendations, as well as organizing training activities and peer reviews and providing advisory services via panels of safety experts. Finally, there were now three new instruments dealing with spent fuel

management, radioactive waste management and liability in the event of a nuclear accident which together formed a vital part of the international legal infrastructure in the nuclear field. It was now important that States, particularly those with nuclear programmes or those which were considering such programmes, sign and ratify the new conventions, not least to reassure neighbouring States.

148. Australia had been one of the first signatories of the Convention on Nuclear Safety which it had proceeded to ratify. It was also intending to sign the new Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management when domestic consultations were completed; furthermore, it would also be signing the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage during the present session of the General Conference. That Convention offered particular protection to countries that did not have nuclear power facilities but were exposed to the same risks as those with such facilities because of their proximity or other factors. Australia attached special importance to the provision of that Convention which accorded jurisdiction to the coastal State in the event of an accident within the exclusive economic zone.

149. In general, greater importance was being attached to nuclear safety issues everywhere, including the Asia and Pacific region. For that reason, Australia had welcomed the Conference on Nuclear Safety in Asia which had been held the previous year on Japan's initiative, and it was looking forward to the next conference to be held in Seoul. For its part, Australia would continue to contribute in different areas. It had hosted a workshop on nuclear safety culture at the beginning of the year, and another workshop on the application of safety culture to research reactors was planned for the following year. The Government had recently announced the setting up of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) with the task of developing a regulatory framework and an integrated licensing and auditing system covering the country's radiation and nuclear activities.

150. The transboundary movement of radioactive waste was a matter of particular concern in the region. The intended shipment of waste from Taiwan to the DPRK had caused great anxiety, as had the shipment of high-level radioactive waste from Europe to Japan at the beginning of the year. At the time of that shipment, Australia had been pleased to receive assurances that the waste was being shipped under conditions which met or exceeded relevant IAEA and IMO safety standards. While it had welcomed the efforts made to inform the South Pacific countries of the shipment, there was still room for greater transparency, particularly with regard to the route and the liability coverage. Such information should be made public when that was consistent with the safety and security requirements of the shipments. Wide adherence to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage would obviously help to promote public acceptance of future shipments of high-level radioactive waste or spent fuel through the South Pacific.

151. One of the Agency's most difficult tasks was monitoring the freeze on the reactors in Nyongbyon in the DPRK. Although the monitoring process itself was progressing satisfactorily, it evidently did not extend to allowing some important measurements of the plutonium content of the spent fuel rods. Furthermore, little progress had been made on the

issue of the preservation of certain information relevant to the history of the DPRK's nuclear programme, making it difficult for the Agency to verify whether the DPRK was in compliance with its safeguards agreement. The situation had become a stalemate. Rightly or wrongly, the question of the DPRK's acceptance of its obligations had become a regular item on the agenda of the General Conference and remained a grave regional and global security concern. It was therefore essential that the DPRK be induced to accept its obligations, including accounting for its past reprocessing activities.

152. On the other hand, the Agreed Framework between the United States and the DPRK was yielding better results. Australia welcomed the progress achieved through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which had begun preparing the site for the light-water reactors and had also delivered appreciable quantities of heavy fuel oil to the DPRK. Australia was providing substantial financial assistance to KEDO which it considered as an investment - not only for the energy requirements of the DPRK, but also for the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and for North East Asia as a whole.

153. Iraq was another issue of concern. The efforts by UNSCOM and the Agency's Action Team had succeeded in gaining an accurate picture of Iraq's past nuclear programme in the face of Iraqi prevarication and misinformation. Although it was important to know the extent of that programme, it was even more important to ensure that it was not revived. The onus for that lay not just on the Agency but also on prospective suppliers of nuclear material and technology, who should be ultra-cautious.

154. Australia remained a strong supporter of nuclear export controls which were an essential component of the NPT regime and a useful complement to the safeguards system. The controls should not be interpreted negatively since they underpinned the NPT, served the objectives of the several nuclear-weapon-free zones and facilitated transfers consistent with the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The decision to convene an international seminar on the role of export controls at the end of the General Conference was a very welcome initiative.

155. Australia was very interested in the study undertaken under the Agency's auspices on the radiological situation of the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls in the South Pacific. That study had been in progress for almost two years and would lead to recommendations on the form, scale and duration of any remedial action or monitoring required. According to the progress report before the General Conference, the study was quite advanced and some preliminary findings had already been formulated. Australia was looking forward to receiving the final text of the report in February 1998. Its scientists had participated in the sampling programme conducted at the atolls, in the analysis of samples at Australian laboratories and in co-ordinating the study to assess the long-term impact of the nuclear tests carried out at the atolls. Having thanked the Secretariat for keeping the South Pacific Forum informed of developments and taking steps to involve it in follow-up activities after publication of the report, he commended the French Government on the quality of the data provided to the Agency and on its spirit of co-operation.

156. The Agency deserved the excellent reputation that it had earned over the previous 40 years. Over the next 40 years, it would continue to shoulder a heavy responsibility in a climate of budgetary stringency, and difficult decisions on priorities would need to be taken. Safeguards, the further development and updating of safety standards, and technical co-operation would remain key activities. The management of fissile material from dismantled nuclear weapons and illicit trafficking in nuclear material and technology were also important issues. The Agency might be called upon to play an important new verification role if the negotiations on a cut-off treaty were successful. It would also be charged with other verification responsibilities resulting from the implementation of various treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. The agenda was burdensome and the Agency had therefore to have sufficient human and financial resources. An increase in costs would be inevitable as more material and facilities were brought under the Agency's various monitoring systems, and as the Agency discharged its task of promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy; however, the cost was negligible when set against the crucial role the Agency had to play.

157. Stressing once again the vital importance of safeguards, he said that the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear activity was the key to the attainment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Safeguards needed to be gradually extended to nuclear activity in the nuclear-weapon States, the undeclared nuclear-weapon States and threshold States, with the ultimate objective of full-scope safeguards being applied in all States.

158. Mr. GHABRIAL (Organization of African Unity) read the following message from the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim:

"I wish to congratulate you (Mr. President) and the members of the General Committee on your unanimous election to direct the proceedings of the forty-first General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"The Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its Member States have great expectations of the role of the Agency in helping to achieve peace and development in the world in general and in Africa in particular. As you know, African leaders last year signed the Pelindaba Treaty in Cairo, demonstrating their will and commitment to make Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Moreover, we believe that the peaceful utilization of nuclear technology is of great benefit to our communities. Africa is intent on integrated sustainable socio-economic development which depends totally on peace, security and stability. It is therefore Africa's hope that the Agency will continue its efforts in this respect, extending the scope of its activities in the region and stepping up its technical assistance to OAU Member States. I should also like to confirm that the OAU will continue to support the AFRA agreement under which important projects are under way or have already been implemented. I should also like to commend the IAEA on all its accomplishments in Africa which, I am sure, will be followed by many more. It is most gratifying for Africa to see one of its sons elected as head of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I am confident that, as Director General,

Mr. ElBaradei will spare no effort to achieve the noble objectives of the Agency laid down in its Statute.

“I should also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the outgoing Director General, Mr. Hans Blix, for the valuable service he rendered to the world at large and to the Agency in particular during his years of service with the Agency.”

The meeting rose at 6.5 p.m.