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President: Ms. LAJOUS VARGAS (Mexico)

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Abbreviations used in this record

ABACC	Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
Agreed Framework	Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ARCAL	Regional Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency (of OECD)
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
Quadripartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
TC	Technical co-operation
TCDC	Technical co-operation among developing countries
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1997 (resumed)
(GC(42)/5)

1. Mr. SHEVCHUK (Ukraine) observed that the period since the previous session of the General Conference had been a very eventful one both for Ukraine and for the Agency and the international community as a whole. The most significant event had been the start of the implementation of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the submission by States of national reports on the status of nuclear safety. Furthermore, the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management had been opened for signature, as had the important Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage. Mention should also be made of the action taken to strengthen the non-proliferation regime through the finalization of the Model Additional Protocol designed to enhance the effectiveness of the safeguards system and improve the Agency's ability to detect the existence of undeclared material.
2. There was therefore an extensive international legal basis for ensuring the safe use of nuclear energy. Of course, there was still room for improvement but, in striving for perfection, there should be strict respect for the sovereignty of States and the underlying principles of the United Nations system. In that connection, in analysing the legal basis governing international transports, including the transport of fissile material, the Agency should exercise the greatest prudence. Ukraine believed that the Agency should appoint an eminent group of international experts to handle that task and should report on the conclusions at the following session of the General Conference.
3. On 27 March 1998, the first multi-party elections to the Ukrainian Parliament had taken place, but the way to liberty and democracy was a hard one under the present socio-economic conditions. Ukraine, which had been steadily moving towards nuclear-free status in line with its commitments under the NPT, had now had all the nuclear weapons inherited from the former Soviet Union removed from its territory. It was firmly convinced that the non-proliferation regime needed to be strengthened still further in order to ensure world security. The Ukrainian Government therefore strongly deplored the recent nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, which ran counter to the aspirations of all countries that wished to see a reduction in the deployment of nuclear weapons. In that respect, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and South Asia would reduce the threat of military confrontation in that area.
4. An important step towards the strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime would be the early signature by all countries of the CTBT in accordance with the wishes of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The international community was seeking to expand that regime and in that context he welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency.
5. It would be hard to overemphasize the Agency's role in the implementation of the non-proliferation regime, of which its safeguards system was the main instrument. Ukraine, which was convinced of the need to strengthen that system, had ratified its safeguards agreement with the Agency pursuant to the NPT on 17 December 1997 and that agreement,

which covered all nuclear material and activities in the country, was being implemented successfully. Ukraine supported the new initiatives taken by the Agency in the area of NPT safeguards and was making preparations to sign an additional protocol to its safeguards agreement during the coming year.

6. An essential step to strengthen the non-proliferation regime would be to set up an effective mechanism to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. In spring 1997, the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers had promulgated a decree on that subject and a national programme had been drawn up and introduced. In view of the difficult economic situation facing his country, he hoped that that programme would receive international support.

7. Ukraine, like the whole international community, attached high priority to nuclear and radiation safety, and he noted with satisfaction that those issues were occupying an increasingly important place in the Agency's activities. The Secretariat was playing an essential role in the evaluation of the safety of power plants in Central and Eastern Europe. An international consensus was gradually emerging with respect to the safety of Soviet-designed power plants, and co-operation between East and West was developing in that area, as witness the existence of a whole series of projects undertaken under the auspices of the Agency and the European Commission.

8. Of course, the safety problems associated with those power plants could not be solved overnight. Painstaking work was necessary and radical changes would have to be made in the legislative, economic, administrative and regulatory fields. In other words, a genuine safety culture had to be established at national level and that would involve a great deal of perseverance. The Ukrainian Parliament had recently adopted a series of laws relating to the protection of the population against ionizing radiation and to the ratification of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Other draft laws were in the pipeline concerning the licensing of the use of nuclear energy, the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities, and nuclear and radiation safety regulatory bodies. Furthermore a national atomic energy organization had just been set up and was taking measures to improve the safety of operating Ukrainian power plants.

9. The safety of Chernobyl nuclear power plant, which was a source of constant concern to Ukraine and to the international community, had been the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 20 December 1995 in Ottawa by the members of the Group of Seven, the Commission of the European Communities and Ukraine. Despite Ukraine's energy shortages, the difficult decision to shut down unit 1 of Chernobyl power plant had been taken and implemented in 1996. Preparations were currently being made to unload the nuclear fuel from its reactor. In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, complete shutdown of the Chernobyl plant would only be possible if an equivalent capacity were created at Khmel'nitski and Rovno nuclear power plants, where the units currently under construction were the subject of an upgrading programme to bring them into line with Western European safety standards. The Ukrainian authorities attached particular importance to the project concerning the sarcophagus covering the fourth unit of the Chernobyl plant that had been destroyed in the 1986 accident. The international community was following very closely the

work being carried out by the Ukrainian specialists, but the Government, which was respecting the commitments it had undertaken under the aforementioned Memorandum of Understanding, was concerned to note that the quest for resources had not yet been completed and that decisions regarding the funding of a number of projects had still not been taken. In July 1998, the Government had made its position clear in a statement relating to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding.

10. The Ukrainian Government supported the measures taken by the Agency to establish a global civil liability regime for nuclear damage and fully supported the underlying principles. In July 1996, the Ukrainian Parliament had ratified the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and in 1997 measures had been taken for its implementation in Ukraine: in December 1997 the Parliament had adopted a law modifying the prevailing legislation and a group of insurance companies had been set up.

11. The Agency's technical co-operation with Ukraine covered the main fields of utilization of nuclear energy. Technical assistance projects in Ukraine were proceeding smoothly and Ukrainian specialists were participating actively in regional technical co-operation projects. Taking into account the importance of nuclear power for Ukraine and with a view to establishing a realistic and effective programme for the development of nuclear energy, he wished to request that the Agency make certain adjustments to Ukraine's technical assistance programme for 1999-2000, with the additional costs involved to be financed in local currency.

12. Ukraine approved the proposed budget for 1999, even if the economic difficulties that it was facing meant that it would not be able to pay in full its arrears in contributions. It was making every effort to comply with its financial obligations to the Agency, and the Ukrainian Government had decided to make a contribution to the TCF. He joined previous speakers in approving the Annual Report for 1997 and thanked the Director General and the Secretariat for their tireless efforts to develop international co-operation in the field of the peaceful use of atomic energy and to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Ukraine would fully support the Agency's activities.

13. Mr. SERRI (Italy) paid tribute to the qualities which the Director General had demonstrated during his first year as head of the Agency and to the way in which he had tackled the difficult task of revising the Agency's programmes in order to enable the Agency to keep pace with technical and scientific progress and to strengthen its ability to act. He also fully endorsed the statement made by the delegate of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

14. The strong support given by the Italian Government to the Agency in fulfilling its institutional functions showed the importance which it attached to the Agency as an international organization playing a vital role in the battle against nuclear proliferation. In particular, he stressed the Agency's contribution to the economic prosperity of the developing countries and to the achievement of peace in the world through the verification of compliance with obligations under the NPT.

15. He recalled that the Italian Government, despite its budgetary restrictions, had restored its contribution to the TCF. That decision would undoubtedly be appreciated by the Member States which relied on the TCF to improve their countries' know-how, technology and prosperity. As a major donor, fully committed to the Agency's objectives, Italy was ready to assume a greater role and increased responsibilities in making human resources and specialized skills available to assist the Agency in carrying out its mission.

16. As indicated in the statement made on behalf of the European Union, the Agency was widely regarded as a model international organization. In that context, he welcomed the Director General's decision to improve the Agency's programme delivery through implementation of an internal management action plan. As far as the reorganization of the Agency's programmes was concerned, he welcomed the Director General's decision to set up a group of senior experts from 21 Member States to examine and advise on the future direction of the Agency's main programmes and activities. Italy was proud that one of its most prominent nuclear experts had participated in that group. It was confident that that work would make an effective contribution to identifying the priorities of the Agency's main programmes and it hoped that the Medium Term Strategy referred to by the Director General at the September Board would take due account of the main conclusions of the expert group's report.

17. There were a number of areas to which Italy attached particular importance: the new safeguards activities to ensure that States complied with their obligations in the field of nuclear non-proliferation; nuclear power plant safety; safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel; decommissioning of nuclear installations; and the maximum use of spin-offs from nuclear energy in the framework of technical co-operation with developing countries.

18. The Italian Government was firmly committed to the fundamental purposes for which the Agency had been created - the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes - and therefore strongly condemned the nuclear tests recently conducted in South Asia. It had expressed on several occasions its concern at such actions, which ran counter to the international community's efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. Those tests posed a direct threat to peace and the international non-proliferation regime. He therefore urged all countries which were not yet parties to the NPT and to the CTBT to accede to them without delay. The initiative taken by the international community to set up a special committee to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for military purposes was an encouraging step toward worldwide nuclear disarmament. Italy was also in favour of the establishment, within the Conference on Disarmament, of a consultative group to facilitate the dialogue on nuclear disarmament issues. It therefore urged the United States of America and Russia to speed up their nuclear disarmament programmes and called on China, France and the United Kingdom to do likewise.

19. There was no doubt that the Agency would be entrusted with major new tasks in the near future. The question of the reduction of military stockpiles of fissile material and the new verification activities which could stem from the negotiations under way in Geneva would undoubtedly be on the agenda of future Agency Board meetings.

20. The Agency had an essential role to play in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the risks resulting from the application of nuclear technology. Misuse of nuclear technology could pose an unacceptable threat to mankind. Italy had therefore joined the consensus on the text of the additional protocols to safeguards agreements which were to be signed with the Agency by the non-nuclear-weapon States of the European Union. It urged countries not belonging to the European Union to sign similar protocols as soon as possible, in order to provide the Agency with the corresponding powers. He was confident that, in the discussions on the Agency's next two-year budget, the major programme on safeguards would receive the necessary support of Member States. In that context, he recalled that Italy had recently paid a bilateral contribution of US \$2 million to KEDO for the implementation of its programmes in the DPRK.

21. The international community remained concerned about the safety of old nuclear power plants in the former Soviet Union and the question of the safe disposal of nuclear waste. The Agency had the necessary authority and technical expertise to step up activities to disseminate a common nuclear safety culture throughout the world, and Italy welcomed the Agency's efforts to establish principles and rules which could be accepted by all countries using nuclear power for research and electricity production. His Government was making every effort to maintain, improve and update national know-how in the area of nuclear safety and radiation protection. It was therefore convinced that co-operation in international activities such as those carried out by the IAEA, the NEA and the European Commission, as well as bilateral agreements with other organizations responsible for nuclear safety, were of crucial importance.

22. Turning to Italy's activities in the field of nuclear energy, he noted that in November 1997 the National Agency for Environmental Protection, which was also the national nuclear regulatory body, had organized a national conference on nuclear waste safety. The main objective of that conference had been to highlight the urgent need for a co-ordinated national policy on the safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, as well as on the decommissioning of nuclear installations. In that connection, it had been recognized that the main objective was to identify a national site for the disposal of all low- and intermediate-level waste and for the interim storage of spent fuel and conditioned high-level waste. The main Italian operators, namely the Agency for New Technology, Energy and the Environment and the Italian National Electricity Company were currently taking steps to improve the safety of the management of fuel and radioactive waste.

23. Lastly, with regard to Article VI of the Agency's Statute, Italy was convinced that any change in the size and composition of the Board of Governors should be carefully evaluated. The previous year, the countries of the European Union had endeavoured to solve the issue by joining the consensus on the proposal of the former Chairman of the Board, Mr. Walker. Italy continued to support that proposal, which it regarded as a good compromise solution.

24. Mr. CODORNIÚ PUJALS (Cuba), after welcoming Benin as a new member of the Agency, expressed his appreciation of the progress which had been made by the Agency in recent years in the field of technical co-operation, and in particular the efforts made by the Department of Technical Co-operation to improve efficiency, effectiveness and impact. The

Agency's development, promotional and co-operation activities were of prime importance and should be strengthened. In a world where entire populations were suffering from hunger and disease, it was vital for nuclear energy to be deployed to help solve the acute problems faced by the great majority of countries. Experience acquired over more than 40 years, and in particular in recent decades, had shown that intelligent use of nuclear techniques could bring great benefits, whether in the breeding of more productive and resistant varieties of plants, the production of foodstuffs which were free of pathogens, or the improvement of diagnostic techniques for common illnesses. With such effective tools at its disposal for fighting some of the manifold problems facing humanity, the international community had a moral duty to make best possible use of them.

25. Some developed countries were inclined to minimize the importance of that area and even reduce their contributions to the TCF. The Annual Report for 1997 showed that the Agency had had difficulties funding the technical co-operation programme approved by the Board of Governors, and the General Conference was being called upon to approve, for the 1999-2000 biennium, figures which were far below what was required; nor had it been possible to come up with approximate figures for the period 2001-2002.

26. The Agency's technical co-operation activities fell within the wider framework of development aid. As the globalization process continued, the world would become a more and more intolerable place if countries, which for historical reasons were currently more developed, did not demonstrate a true desire to contribute positively to the development of those which were less advanced. If co-operation mechanisms were weakened and contributions to the development of the Third World cut back, the developing countries would be at the mercy of blind market forces, the gap between the two camps would become unbridgeable, and the problems would multiply to the point of becoming insoluble.

27. However, the situation was not hopeless and everyone had to play their part at such a crucial time in the history of humanity. It was the General Conference's duty to effectively strengthen Agency technical co-operation. That issue had been under discussion for several years and several resolutions had been adopted on it, but his country felt that what had been done to date was still insufficient. Certain measures had indeed been taken and a strategy had been developed which the Secretariat was now pursuing with positive results. However, no large-scale programme for strengthening technical co-operation comparable to that for safeguards had been developed. Indeed, the balance between those two essential branches of Agency activities seemed ever more fragile. There was an urgent need to give new impetus to technical co-operation through an integrated programme actively supported by all, not just in the form of statements, but above all with the financial support necessary to enable positive steps to be taken to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

28. In order to maintain the essential equilibrium between the Agency's activities, it was necessary to support the Secretariat's efforts to promote technical co-operation. Some of the measures which had been proposed - such as the setting up of regional centres of excellence - were of particular interest and should be given support. In that context, he was pleased to note that an agreement had been concluded among the Governments concerned for support of the ARCAL programme, an important step towards strengthening that co-operation mechanism

which was vital for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Cuban Government was especially pleased with that agreement as it had been finalized in La Habana in 1997 during the meeting of highest nuclear authorities of the member countries of ARCAL.

29. Turning to the question of safeguards, he noted that recent events had highlighted once again the fragility and inconsistency of the so-called non-proliferation regime which was essentially discriminatory in nature. It was time to recognize the fact that the only way of getting rid of the nuclear threat was to eliminate nuclear weapons completely. So long as different standards were applied and certain countries assumed the right to threaten and blockade their neighbours, peace would remain illusory. It was for those reasons of principle that Cuba had not joined the NPT. However, the absolutely peaceful and transparent nature of its programme was clear, and the Cuban Government had thus notified the Secretariat that it wished to engage in negotiations with the Agency with a view to incorporating certain of the provisions of the Model Additional Protocol into the INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreements it had concluded with it. Hence, Cuba's position on non-proliferation in no way impeded it from giving support to the Secretariat's efforts to strengthen safeguards and promote an atmosphere of mutual trust.

30. The arms race, which was unfortunately closely linked to the nuclear energy issue, was assuming dramatic proportions in a world where food, health, education or drinking water needs were so desperate. If globalization was inevitable, then either the whole of humanity would be saved or it would all perish. It was time for those States on whom the total elimination of nuclear weapons depended to open their eyes to world realities, while the rest should do their utmost to ensure that, in the near future, the word "nuclear" became synonymous with well-being and progress, and not war, death and blackmail.

31. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia), after congratulating the President and the other members of the General Committee on their election, and the Director General for the way in which he had managed the Agency over the preceding eight months, welcomed Benin which had just been admitted to the organization.

32. The forty-second session of the General Conference was taking place against the backdrop of the nuclear tests which had been carried out in May, first by India and then by Pakistan. Those tests constituted a severe challenge to the basic principle of the non-proliferation regime, namely that world security was better served by having the fewest possible nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapon States. Those events had prompted major concern. Even as the initial shock caused by the tests subsided, the political fallout continued to mount. That was inevitable, and no one could ignore the damage done to half a century's efforts to halt the spread of the atomic bomb. It was only by ensuring that the nuclear option brought with it more disadvantages than advantages that other States aspiring to become nuclear powers could be dissuaded from following the same path.

33. Ironically, despite all the justifications given by the two countries concerned, neither had gained from publicly crossing the nuclear threshold. If anything, their security had suffered, since a nuclear dimension had been added to their traditional bilateral tensions. Their

international standing had also been affected: as each had discovered, considerable costs had attended their momentary display of nuclear prowess.

34. What had been done could not be undone, but India and Pakistan could help mend the damage they had caused, and other States should look for ways of persuading them not to take further steps up the ladder of nuclear escalation. What needed to be done was well known. It had been repeated in national and regional statements, and in Security Council resolution 1172. Accession to the CTBT was one practical measure, and joining the NPT was another. Yet another would be a fissile material cut-off treaty, and the fact that India and Pakistan had agreed to join with others in Geneva the previous month in launching negotiations for such a treaty should be recognized and commended. India and Pakistan should also be encouraged to come to an agreement not to build the nuclear warheads they had tested, and not to deploy the long-range missiles they had developed. They could also agree, pending negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty and their accession to the NPT, to place all their nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards and to take steps without delay to conclude additional protocols to their safeguards agreements, as the General Conference had urged the previous year in its resolution on safeguards. Finally, both countries should be encouraged to abide by international norms regarding the export of sensitive nuclear technologies, as they had declared they would.

35. In short, just as both countries had a choice whether or not to test, they also had the option to put an end to their nuclear competition and roll it back. Australia would be joining other States before the end of the session in tabling a draft resolution in the Plenary covering some of those matters. That resolution would invite the General Conference to express its attitude on the nuclear tests which had taken place in May, but would then go further, looking to the future rather than to the past, with the aim of persuading the two countries to move closer to the international non-proliferation mainstream.

36. If the situation in South Asia looked partially redeemable, that was not the case in Iraq which, from the beginning, had shown itself to be obstructive and dissembling. On 5 August Iraq had declared that it was suspending its co-operation with both UNSCOM and the Agency. Henceforth it would permit access by their inspectors only to sites that it designated. That attitude, which Iraq had maintained, had seriously compromised the capacity of UNSCOM and the Agency's Action Team to carry out their respective mandates, preventing the Agency from implementing fully both its ongoing monitoring and verification role and the measures needed to ensure that the past programme was never reactivated. Clearly, it was time for steadiness of purpose in the Security Council and within the international community at large. The General Conference could help by giving specific support to the ongoing monitoring and verification efforts, and by defending the right of access required for a comprehensive and rigorous ongoing monitoring and verification plan.

37. The monitoring of the freeze on the graphite-moderated reactors located at Nyongbyon in the DPRK was another political challenge confronting the Agency. Its responsibility in that area was twofold and stemmed, in the first instance, from its safeguards agreement with the DPRK and, in the second instance, from the role assigned to it under the Agreed Framework concluded between the DPRK and the United States. Australia had welcomed the Agreed

Framework, as it had welcomed and supported the progress achieved through KEDO in the preparation of the site for the intended light-water reactors, and the delivery under contract of heavy fuel oil supplies to the DPRK in the interim. What Australia had found most unwelcome was the recent attitude of the DPRK which had been constantly threatening to break out of the Agreed Framework. Such threats, as well as the announcement by the DPRK that it was ready to sell to the highest bidder missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, and its attempt to launch a missile or place a satellite in orbit without notice or warning, with the rocket casings splashing down into the waters surrounding Japan, were not only provocative, complicating the security situation in North East Asia, but were also counter-productive as regards future international support for KEDO, and for humanitarian and other assistance to the DPRK.

38. Moreover, the DPRK was dragging its feet in fulfilling its safeguards responsibilities. In fact, ever since international inspectors had first queried the DPRK's initial inventory, the Agency had been forced into a cat and mouse game with that country. Seven years later, the Agency was still being refused the kind of access which would allow it to measure the plutonium content of the spent fuel rods. In view of that continued obstruction, it was doubtful whether the Agency would ever be able to unravel the history of the DPRK's nuclear programme and verify whether it had fulfilled its non-proliferation obligations with respect to the rest of the world.

39. However, not all the Agency's activities were so frustrating. Thus, progress continued to be made in the trilateral discussions involving the Agency on the one hand, and the Russian Federation and the United States on the other, regarding the submission of fissile material from the military sector to Agency verification. The decision by the United Kingdom, following its strategic defence review, to be the first nuclear-weapon State to declare the total size of its stocks of nuclear material held in both the civil and military sectors was also welcome. Equally, it was encouraging that the United Kingdom had now determined that substantial quantities of nuclear material were surplus to its defence programme and could therefore be placed under Agency safeguards.

40. One enduring problem in handling all that surplus material was how to immobilize it prior to any eventual geological disposal. Australia happened to be at the cutting edge of technological development in that field and was particularly pleased that a synthetic rock-based ceramic waste form, developed by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization in collaboration with some United States organizations, had recently been chosen by the United States Department of Energy to help dispose of surplus weapons plutonium in that country.

41. In addition to those encouraging developments in the nuclear-weapon States, it was gratifying to note that a decision had finally been taken the previous month at the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, which had long been a major foreign policy objective of Australia which now looked forward to engaging with others in what would undoubtedly be complex but, hopefully, also productive negotiations.

42. The Agency was also being confronted with institutional problems which merited some attention. In the safeguards field, the process which had started with the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol the previous year was continuing to move forward. Until the entry into force of Jordan's additional protocol in July 1998, Australia had been the only Member State with an additional protocol in force. It welcomed the fact that other States had already signed such protocols, and that others had expressed the intention of doing so shortly. Indeed, Australia wished very much to see universal adherence to the new protocol, and then swift integration of the new system with the old one. Classical safeguards would then give way to strengthened safeguards with implications across the Agency and beyond. Specifically, while the additional protocol might not yet be in effect in a sufficient number of States to establish it clearly as part of the Agency's safeguards system under the terms of Article III of the NPT, that moment would come, and the parties to the NPT would then need to address the implications for those States parties which had not accepted the strengthened safeguards system. Substitution of the strengthened safeguards system for classical safeguards would need to be addressed in terms of the definition of "full-scope safeguards" employed in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and elsewhere.

43. For some years, the Agency had been obliged to function on the basis of zero real growth. That had been a useful discipline, making the Agency a more cost-efficient organization. Nevertheless, zero real growth had been imposed at a time of escalating demands on the Agency which the Director General had spelt out at the previous meeting. The Agency had worked hard to achieve savings, as the Director General had mentioned but, as he had also said, the point had now arrived where further cuts would hamper programme implementation. He had therefore asked whether governments were prepared to provide the Agency with the financial resources which they said they wanted it to have, or whether the Agency's programme was to be solely dictated by its budget. In the latter case, the Director General would fix priorities which would have to conform to a predefined financial ceiling. He had gone even further in his comments, answering in a sense the question he had posed. He had not only called attention to the new important responsibilities that the Agency was having to, or would have to assume, as a result, inter alia, of extending safeguards to material covered by a possible fissile material cut-off treaty, but had also floated the idea of a special fund for arms control verification and security of nuclear material. Australia was prepared to give further consideration to that proposal, though of course it was not prepared to commit itself at such an early stage. Nevertheless, it was keeping an open mind, at least pending further developments in what would no doubt be hard fought negotiations in Geneva.

44. Finally, his country supported the nuclear safety strategy review on which the Agency had embarked. In particular, it hoped that the Agency would take a stronger, more active role in regional efforts to enhance nuclear safety, especially in the Asia and Pacific region which perhaps had the greatest potential for expansion of nuclear power generation in coming years. The Agency could, for example, play a more prominent role in the conferences on nuclear safety in Asia. To date, there had been two such conferences which the Agency had attended as an observer. Australia was of the opinion that it would be appropriate and highly beneficial for the Agency to play a more active facilitating role in the next conference in that series.

45. Mr. TAHIRI (Morocco) welcomed Benin's admission to the Agency and expressed the hope that the General Conference would adopt a resolution similar to that adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its last session in order to raise the level of participation of Palestine in the Agency's work.

46. Morocco had always been in favour of the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, as demonstrated by its accession to the NPT, its signing of the CTBT and the Pelindaba Treaty, and by its conclusion with the Agency of a comprehensive safeguards agreement. In that connection, he reiterated that Morocco was ready to engage in early consultations with the Agency with a view to concluding an additional protocol to its comprehensive safeguards agreement in the hope that the countries in the region would follow suit so as to promote the universality of the NPT and provide assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States against any nuclear threat. Morocco could only deplore the recent nuclear tests and express its full support for the Final Act adopted at the end of the NAM Summit held in Durban at the beginning of the month.

47. Morocco was in favour of the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world, particularly in the Middle East. It therefore called on the countries in that region to join in the efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and recalled that Israel was the only country not to have signed the NPT and not to have placed its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards, thereby representing a danger for neighbouring countries and a threat to international peace and security. Member States should, therefore, in accordance with the Agency's Statute, stop helping Israel to strengthen its arsenal and cease applying double standards by tolerating exceptions to the rule of international law.

48. Morocco reaffirmed its readiness to co-operate with the Agency and Member States in combating illicit trafficking in nuclear material and other radioactive sources, which posed a serious threat to world peace and security. It was also mindful of the problems posed, particularly for developing countries, by the transport of nuclear waste and by radioactive leakages. Morocco was particularly concerned at the fact that the Strait of Gibraltar was used as a passage for the transport of radioactive material. It therefore supported the draft resolution on the rationalization and control of such transports.

49. The strengthening of technical co-operation activities in the nuclear field to promote peace and development was one of the Agency's main objectives, and Morocco reiterated its support for the new approach consisting of elaborating medium-term country programmes for the use of nuclear technologies for development and drawing up Model Projects with an economic and social impact, taking national development priorities into account.

50. The Agency should develop a communication strategy and establish, in the light of the resolutions of the last Tokyo summit on climate change, its own "Agenda 21" to demonstrate how it could help to solve certain problems associated with development and the environment, with particular emphasis on the protection of the ozone layer and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

51. Morocco encouraged the Agency to give special attention to medium-sized nuclear power plants in view of the contribution which they could make to energy self-sufficiency and, hence, to sustainable development. It therefore looked forward to the Medium Term Strategy due to be prepared by the Director General and hoped that the most developed Member States would contribute to its implementation by providing the necessary human and financial resources. It was indeed regrettable that, whereas developing countries were increasingly in need of projects with economic and social impact, the financial resources allocated for that purpose by the Agency were diminishing.

52. There was a need to review existing international legal instruments in order to take account of technological developments and to respond better to the urgent needs of populations with respect to development; to use nuclear power for economic and social purposes and increasingly less for military purposes; and to strengthen satellite control and monitoring mechanisms in the nuclear field.

53. Within the framework of its efforts to strengthen its scientific and technical infrastructure in the nuclear field, Morocco had, inter alia, set up the National Radiation Protection Centre as well as a nuclear research centre and a food irradiation unit. In addition, it had carried out studies and research with a view to establishing a pilot nuclear desalination plant. It should also be noted that Morocco had taken steps to establish the necessary legislative framework in the nuclear field based on the international instruments that had been adopted in that area.

54. The pursuit of "atoms for peace" could help to remove two formidable obstacles to development: water shortage and energy shortage. Water was an increasingly important commodity for many countries, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, where demand was ever increasing as a result of population growth and industrial and agricultural development. It was therefore essential to develop joint strategies to deal with such shortages, the more especially as national development and stability and regional and world security were at stake. The Agency possessed considerable technical and human resources which could be mobilized systematically to solve that increasingly acute problem. In the field of nuclear desalination techniques and techniques for determining the origin of leaks in dams, the Agency had supported several Model Projects, including two in Morocco, which could be reproduced in other areas of the world, particularly in Africa and in the Arab world.

55. The effectiveness of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime depended both on the effectiveness and fairness with which the safeguards system was applied and on there being effective and democratic participation in decision-making within the Agency. It was therefore appropriate to mention two interdependent problems, namely the democratization of the Board of Governors and the loss of voting rights by several countries. In that connection, Morocco reiterated its support for the Africa Group concerning the number of additional seats and its support for the Arab position concerning the composition of the MESA Group, and paid tribute to Japan for the proposal it had made to try and solve that problem. The countries concerned should therefore redouble their efforts and find the necessary political will to solve that problem once and for all. With regard to the loss of voting rights, which affected a third of the members of the Agency - for the most part developing countries - that was a problem

which could jeopardize the universality of policy-making in the Agency and the credibility of the decisions taken, particularly those relating to peace and security.

56. Mr. ZHANG HUAZHU (China), having welcomed Benin, expressed satisfaction at the progress made by the Agency in formulating international legal instruments which would undoubtedly have far-reaching positive effects on international co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by promoting nuclear safety and preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

57. Among the many activities carried out during the past year to improve nuclear safety and radioactive waste management, he drew particular attention to the Model Projects designed to strengthen radiation safety infrastructures in developing countries, in which more than 50 countries had participated. He also noted the considerable progress made by the Agency in promoting the application of nuclear techniques in the areas of agriculture, industry, human health, water resources and environmental protection.

58. Since joining the Agency in 1984, China had always maintained a good co-operative relationship with the organization. It provided support for and participated actively in both the Agency's promotional activities and its safeguards activities. As a nuclear-weapon State, China had always been in favour of the complete banning and total destruction of nuclear weapons. In addition to supporting the indefinite extension of the NPT and signing the CTBT, China had also taken an active part in the negotiations on the Model Additional Protocol to strengthen the safeguards system and had helped to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the system by adopting measures in accordance with its obligations under Article I of the NPT. China was currently conducting negotiations with the Agency with a view to concluding an additional protocol to its safeguards agreement.

59. In order to strengthen the control of nuclear exports, China had joined the Zangger Committee in October 1997 and had promulgated two regulations subjecting nuclear exports and exports of nuclear-related dual-use items to legal control, which had helped considerably to promote co-operation and trade between China and other countries.

60. In order to meet electricity demand, China had constructed two nuclear power plants in the 1990s with a total installed capacity of 2100 MW, which were operating satisfactorily. During the ninth five-year plan it intended to construct four other plants with a total of eight units and a total installed capacity of 6600 MW, marking a new phase in the development of nuclear power.

61. China attached great importance to the safety of nuclear power and had promulgated nearly 90 laws, regulations and codes, which constituted a reliable multi-level safety management system. It also intended to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Having set up the implementation mechanism and prepared its national report, China was ready to take an active part in the organizational meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety planned for the following week and in the review meeting which would take place in 1999.

62. China had always maintained that the safety of nuclear facilities, and particularly major ones such as nuclear power plants was of crucial importance. It therefore believed that the Agency, as an intergovernmental organization, should place greater emphasis not only on nuclear safety management, but also on nuclear safety services by providing appropriate assistance to meet the various needs of its Member States. Strengthening nuclear safety was a prerequisite for the development of nuclear power in various countries and for international co-operation in the field of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

63. Since its establishment, the Agency had played an important role in promoting international co-operation in the field of the peaceful use of atomic energy and in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but it now had to face new challenges. The nuclear tests carried out by India and then by Pakistan had been universally condemned by the international community. Those tests had been a serious blow to international non-proliferation efforts and posed a threat to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, of which the NPT was the cornerstone. They had aggravated the nuclear arms race in South Asia and seriously undermined peace and stability in the region. His Government was very concerned at the situation and called on India and Pakistan to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1172 in full, to abandon their nuclear-weapons programme and to accede immediately and unconditionally to the CTBT and to the NPT. At the same time, the international community should take additional measures to strengthen the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to bolster the authority and universality of the NPT. The Agency should play an active role in that regard.

64. The balance between promotional activities and safeguards remained a subject of deep concern to Member States, particularly developing countries. His Government believed that those two types of activities should interact and complement each other. However essential safeguards might be, the legitimate rights and interests of Member States in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should not be disregarded nor the development of the nuclear industry or international co-operation and trade hampered in the quest to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

65. He noted with regret that the technical co-operation programme approved for 1997 had had to be reduced owing to a shortage of funds. That could only reinforce doubts about the reliability of technical co-operation resources. Since the TCF was financed from voluntary contributions, all Member States, in particular the developed countries, should honour their obligations by paying their contributions in full and on time. One of the main reasons for the imbalance between the two types of activity was indisputably the lack of technical co-operation funds due to the unpredictable nature of voluntary contributions. His Government was concerned to see that that situation was getting worse and urged that an immediate solution be found.

66. His delegation had always believed that the Agency's technical co-operation activities played a vital role in promoting the development and application of nuclear technology in developing countries and felt that the Agency should seek to strengthen its co-operation with those countries, ascertain their needs and formulate co-operation programmes adapted to the specific conditions and development objectives of those countries. Furthermore, the Agency

should explore ways of promoting co-operation among developing countries themselves and between developed and developing countries, so as to foster the self-sufficiency of developing countries and establish a new form of international relations.

67. Since the present Chinese Government had taken up office, government institutions had undergone structural reforms. The China Atomic Energy Authority continued however to formulate the national development strategy for the nuclear industry, to prepare development plans and to promote research, development and the application of atomic energy. The China Atomic Energy Authority was also concerned with co-operation and international exchanges in the nuclear field and matters related to the Agency, with which China intended to continue its close co-operation.

68. On the eve of the twenty-first century, the world was full of new challenges, as well as opportunities and hopes. China was convinced that the Agency would be able to discharge its heavy responsibilities with dynamism and optimism as long as Member States strengthened their co-operation, treated each other on an equal footing, tackled the major issues in a judicious and reasonable manner and respected the objectives and principles enshrined in the Agency's Statute.

69. Mr. MADUNA (South Africa), after welcoming Benin as the 129th member of the Agency, noted that the past year had been a period of consolidation and review. The new Director General had taken pains to examine every aspect of the Agency's activities with a view to enhancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness. South Africa looked forward with interest to the report of the panel of experts which would be completed soon and to the Medium Term Strategy which the Director General had promised to prepare on the basis of that panel's recommendations. It also welcomed the new thematic approach at the General Conference and the creation of a scientific forum.

70. Speaking as a representative of an African country, he wished to emphasize the role which the Agency should play and to a certain extent was already playing in developing countries and Africa in particular. As was well known, Africa was in danger of being increasingly marginalized in an era of globalization: many African countries faced the greatest economic and social development problems anywhere in the world. In its own sphere, the Agency could contribute in a real and tangible way to sustainable development, and his delegation urged the Director General and the Agency to examine how that impact could be maximized. The emphasis placed by the Department of Technical Co-operation on Model Projects, on regional co-operation, inter alia through its material support for AFRA, and on promoting the transfer of technology through TCDC was a clearly positive approach, and the Agency could be proud of its achievements so far.

71. Much more still needed to be done, but that raised the question of available resources. The TCF had seen impressive growth over the past decade, and the fact that all the major donors were now contributing or would soon contribute to the Fund was welcome news. However, the Fund appeared to have levelled off recently, which, at a time of growing demand, especially in Africa, could undermine the Agency's crucial work in the field of technical co-operation. South Africa was pleased to announce that it had paid its full share of

the target for 1998 and would contribute \$263 530 in 1999, which was again 100% of its share.

72. South Africa was glad to be able to participate in the Agency's projects in the region of Africa, including those it was financing under AFRA. Where the vital area of co-operation in training was concerned, South African institutions had received 32 fellows during the year, mainly from the region of Africa, and a further 20 applications for training at various nuclear institutions in South Africa were currently being processed. Over and above the Agency's fellowship programme, a further 140 persons from the region of Africa had also received training in South Africa through various training initiatives supported by the Agency.

73. With regard to the TC Model Projects in which South Africa was participating, all were progressing well and feedback from the Agency was very positive. The projects involved the eradication of fruit flies in the Western Cape Province using the sterile insect technique, the establishment of a regional centre for radiological protection, and water resource management using isotope hydrology.

74. The AFRA projects continued to contribute usefully to resolving the continent's problems, for example in the areas of strengthening regional waste management infrastructures, harmonizing radiation protection practices and improving clinical radiotherapy. In that connection, South Africa had offered the AFRA Chairperson the services of an assistant who would work on the AFRA Field Management Committee.

75. As to country programme frameworks, a team of local experts assisted by Agency officials had met in South Africa in August to draft a CPF for the purpose of strengthening the links between South Africa and the Agency's Department of Technical Co-operation. The preparation of a CPF for South Africa was proceeding remarkably well, given the country's large and diverse industry. The assistance provided by the two IAEA experts had played a crucial role in the success of the first part of the process.

76. Turning to the nuclear activities pursued in South Africa in the course of the past year, he said that his country had continued to establish itself as a recognized international supplier of medical and industrial isotopes. The bulk of those isotopes was produced by the Atomic Energy Corporation's SAFARI reactor, but a small quantity of special medical isotopes was also produced at the National Accelerator Centre near Cape Town. That programme was a good example of how weapons-grade highly enriched uranium from a dismantled nuclear weapons programme could be utilized fully for peaceful purposes.

77. The practical application of radiation-based technology to meet the needs of industry had gained further impetus from the Atomic Energy Corporation's development of an industrial coal ash monitor that measured the ash content of coal directly and continuously on a moving conveyor belt. That technology was now widely used by the coal mining industry in South Africa. The Atomic Energy Corporation had also designed a unique portable instrument which enabled the coal dust concentration to be measured directly in a coal mine in order to prevent coal dust explosions, which should lead to safer coal mining throughout the world.

78. The national radioactive waste disposal facility at Vaalputs (about 600 km north of Cape Town) had continued to receive low- and intermediate-level waste from the nuclear power plant near Cape Town. He was pleased to report that after some cracks had been discovered in the concrete containers for the intermediate-level waste, an IAEA expert team had investigated the situation and confirmed that no radioactive contamination could be found beyond the immediate confines of the affected concrete drums within the trench and that the situation was well in hand.

79. Still on the subject of nuclear power, he noted that Eskom, the national electricity utility, had been doing impressive work on a 100 MW(e) pebble-bed modular reactor for application in small power stations. That project had arisen from the integrated electricity planning process, which focused on the long-term electricity needs of southern Africa. International technical and economic feasibility studies had shown that the project held exciting possibilities, in particular for developing countries, which would now be able to contemplate acquiring small nuclear power stations of their own at a time when the traditional sources of power were coming under ever greater environmental pressures. In view of the safeness of the reactor, its positive aspects for the application of safeguards on its nuclear fuel, and its environment-friendly nature, the project could only be encouraged.

80. With regard to non-proliferation and the strengthening of the safeguards system, he noted that a fair number of additional protocols - some with countries having substantial nuclear industries - had already been approved by the Board and consultations had been started with many others, including South Africa. His country firmly supported the strengthening of safeguards, including the additional protocol, which it intended to sign and ratify once the current wide-ranging reviews of programmes and legislation had been completed. Just as the Agency was undergoing a thorough review of all its activities, South Africa was reviewing all its energy-related legislation and activities.

81. The situation was less encouraging where the formal entry into force was concerned - for obvious reasons such as the changes in national legislation that needed to be effected. However, his delegation believed that another important problem might be uncertainty about the practical aspects of implementing the protocol, in other words, the so-called "integration of current and new measures". The IAEA and its Member States would have to make a transition from a situation of restricted information and access (albeit compensated by very accurate materials accounting) to a situation of total nuclear transparency, which amongst other things would involve substantially more information and wider access. It was a difficult transition from a culture of "nuclear secrecy" with a highly quantitative implementation approach to a culture of openness where the only restriction would be the need to protect confidential commercial information. It was incumbent upon Member States to make that transition consciously, but also upon the Secretariat to be open and clear on how safeguards conclusions would be formulated in future on the basis of more qualitative judgements and more use of random access and verifications while taking into account the very different fuel cycle activities of Member States.

82. Member States might expect that the new way of applying safeguards would continue to be based on rigid models designed to ensure non-discriminatory application, but that might

not be possible. In his delegation's view, the mechanistic approach used earlier to achieve that was no longer viable and differentiation would have to be accepted. That new fact of life would be accepted much more easily if the Secretariat could demonstrate not only greater effectiveness, which was more of international interest, but also greater efficiency, which was of direct benefit to Member States.

83. The first report on nuclear safety in South Africa required under the Convention on Nuclear Safety had been compiled and submitted to the Agency. His country looked forward to the first international peer review meeting on country reports, which would be a major contribution to ensuring that adequate and harmonized standards of nuclear safety were maintained throughout the world.

84. South Africa was still considering signing the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Efforts were also continuing to develop a national policy on radioactive waste management.

85. Regarding the transport of radioactive materials, South Africa endorsed the IAEA safety standards. Consignors of spent fuel, plutonium and high-level wastes by sea were encouraged to maintain contact with coastal States and to provide timely information on the passage of shipments in the proximity of their coasts.

86. The Council for Nuclear Safety was collaborating with various bodies in South Africa with a view to establishing a regional radiation emergency response capability that would, through the AFRA organization, ensure an adequate response to radiation accidents and emergencies anywhere within the African region.

87. Turning to Article VI of the Statute, he said he regretted deeply that it had not been possible to solve the problem of expansion of the Board of Governors. Quite recently the Board had been close to reaching agreement on what had been described as a "small" increase in the number of Board members, which would surely have benefited Africa since the General Conference had always maintained that that continent (and of course the MESA Group) was under-represented. His delegation had therefore been more than surprised when the idea of linkage had surfaced which it felt was unreasonable and unfair to the Africa Group.

88. On the subject of disarmament, he said that South Africa deplored the nuclear tests conducted recently in South Asia and repeated its call to the States concerned to accede to the CTBT. At the same time it appealed to the nuclear-weapon States to redouble their efforts to achieve complete global nuclear disarmament. His delegation was heartened at the prospect of quantifiable progress in international nuclear disarmament arising from the trilateral initiative between the Agency, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. It encouraged the parties involved to pursue their discussions and activities vigorously. That initiative did, however, raise crucial questions over and above the technical and legal challenges it posed. One such was the institutional implications of involvement for the IAEA and the possible cost to the organization. At a time when some delegations were insisting on zero real or even nominal growth and resources were increasingly scarce, the Agency would be severely challenged in trying to meet the crucial obligations which might

fall upon it. His delegation had always maintained that if an activity was important enough, the resources necessary had to be found. That was true of technical co-operation, and it was also true of strengthened safeguards and nuclear disarmament verification.

89. Finally, he urged all African countries and others concerned to sign and ratify the Pelindaba Treaty for an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. Such ratification would enable the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (ASCONE) to be established.

90. In conclusion, he expressed his belief that the IAEA was a basically sound organization which would be able to meet future challenges under the dynamic leadership of the Director General.

91. Mr. KRECKLER (Argentina), having noted with satisfaction that a representative of Latin America was President of the session, said that Argentina would continue to participate constructively in the work of the Agency, whose role in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy it considered essential.

92. The key elements of Argentine policy in the area of non-proliferation were the agreement with Brazil for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy, the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement concluded with the Agency, the Tlatelolco Treaty and the NPT. Co-ordination and co-operation between Argentina and Brazil in the area of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy were of particular importance, and Argentina wished to congratulate Brazil which had just ratified the NPT, and to recall its own commitment to the international safeguards regime implemented by the Agency, particularly as that regime had been hard hit by the recent nuclear tests.

93. Since one of the main aspects of the Agency's activities was precisely safeguards, he drew attention to the activities undertaken by the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) that had been located in Rio de Janeiro since 1992 and played an important role with regard to the transparency of the nuclear programmes of the two countries and the implementation of the Quadripartite Agreement concluded with the Agency. ABACC and the Agency were co-operating increasingly closely, in no small measure due to the good offices of the Director General, and they had recently concluded a technical co-operation agreement. Argentina and Brazil were entirely satisfied with the work of ABACC and were willing to share the experience acquired in that connection with other countries.

94. The promotion of co-operation in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was another equally essential aspect of the Agency's activities. In that regard, it was noteworthy that a draft text had recently been arrived at for a technical co-operation agreement for the promotion of nuclear science and technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would constitute the institutional framework of the ARCAL programme. He was confident that, with the benefit of the Agency's experience, that intergovernmental agreement would serve to promote multilateral co-operation between the countries of the region and help avoid any duplication of effort; Argentina intended to sign the agreement as soon as possible.

95. In support of the Secretariat's efforts to streamline the work of the General Conference, he would only speak on certain items of the agenda - other items could be discussed in the Committee of the Whole. With regard to the composition of the Board of Governors, his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Chairman of the Board, the Resident Representative of Japan. It was essential that the solution finally adopted ensured equitable representation for all regions.

96. The transport of radioactive materials was a subject of concern in Latin America, and Argentina was pressing for improvement of the regulations on that subject. The Agency had a key role to play in that regard. At the national level, Argentina was complying scrupulously with the provisions of the Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Materials.

97. While the Joint Consultative Group on IAEA/CTBTO Co-operation had concluded its work, Argentina still felt that there was ample scope for co-operation and exchange of experience between the Agency and the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

98. Turning to the study of the radiological situation at the Mururoa and Fangataufa Atolls, he said that, in addition to its political significance, that operation was of great technical value and would enable the international scientific community to better understand the phenomena involved when evaluating the radiological situation at other sites where nuclear tests had been carried out.

99. With regard to the recent nuclear tests, which posed a threat to international security and the international non-proliferation regime, he said that the Agency clearly had a key role to play. Argentina hoped that all countries would accede to the CTBT and called upon all States, whether or not parties to the Treaty, to cease tests. It supported the Secretariat's efforts to perform the tasks assigned to it by United Nations Security Council resolutions and to apply safeguards agreements, and hoped in that connection that Iraq would comply with its obligations and resume co-operation with the Agency.

100. Turning to Argentina's achievements over the previous year, he said that the principal event was the commissioning of the RA-8 critical assembly, which would be used to adjust the design parameters for the Argentine CAREM low-power reactor (25 MW(e)), specifically intended to supply electricity in isolated regions, and possibly to be coupled to a seawater desalination system, as indicated in document GC(42)/1/Rev.1. The second notable achievement was the completion and commissioning of the 22 MW(e) multi-purpose reactor and related facilities being supplied to Egypt.

101. The sale of heavy water to Germany and the Republic of Korea by the ENSI Company, which had also supplied heavy water to Canada to replace what it had borrowed for the Embalse nuclear power plant, attested to the vitality of the Argentine nuclear sector. Furthermore, the two Argentine nuclear power plants were operating smoothly using fuel and heavy water produced in the country. The availability factor of the two plants had risen from 90.9% in 1997 to 95.7% during the first half of 1998, and their production accounted for 11.5% and 12.08% respectively of the gross output of the Argentine power system.

102. Within the framework of the law on nuclear activities enacted in August 1997, regulating nuclear matters in Argentina and specifying the functions of the Nuclear Regulatory Authority and the National Atomic Energy Commission, work had commenced on a strategic plan establishing the institutional priorities for the years to come.

103. In December 1997, Argentina had signed the three instruments negotiated that year under the auspices of the Agency, namely the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, which should all help promote the future development of nuclear activities. Argentina had thereby underlined its support for the Agency's efforts to regulate various complex aspects of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

104. Finally, the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, an independent body responsible for radiation protection, nuclear safety, safeguards and physical protection, was continuing to develop its activities in a satisfactory manner; it was taking an active role at the international level and was co-operating with the Agency, particularly in the areas of radiation protection and safeguards. In May 1998, the second forum of Latin American regulatory bodies had been held in Argentina under the auspices of the Nuclear Regulatory Authority and had dealt, inter alia, with the safety of radiation sources.

105. Argentina remained committed to strengthening co-operation in the nuclear field at both the multilateral and bilateral levels. At the bilateral level, it had close relations both with countries from which it could profitably receive know-how and technology and with those to which it could transfer its own technology. In making such transfers, Argentina adhered to the requirements laid down by the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. Furthermore, it was continuing to participate in the Agency's technical co-operation programme as well as the ARCAL programme by hosting courses, workshops and scientific meetings, training Agency fellows, receiving scientists from abroad, and also by making its experts and lecturers available to the Agency. Congratulating the Secretariat on the success of the programmes it had implemented, he said that, as in previous years, Argentina would contribute to the TCF to the extent of its means. Lastly, on the bilateral plane, he recorded the entry into force of co-operation agreements with the Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, the United States of America, EURATOM, Morocco and Thailand, the signing of an agreement with Armenia, the adoption of modalities of execution of existing agreements with the United States of America and the Russian Federation, and also the stepping up of technical co-operation with Brazil.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

