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President: Ms. LAJOUS VARGAS (Mexico)
Later: Mr. RYZHOV (Russian Federation)
Mr. MEER (United States of America)

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[*] GC(42)/20.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(42)/INF/13/Rev.3.

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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
ARCAL	Regional Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASSET	Analysis of Safety Significant Events Team
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IEA	International Energy Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPF	Indicative Planning Figure
IRRT	International Regulatory Review Team
IRS	Incident Reporting System
KEDO	Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization
Kyoto Conference	Third Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency (of OECD)
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Trilateral Initiative	Trilateral Initiative launched by the Minister of the Russian Federation for Atomic Energy, the Secretary of Energy of the United States and the Agency's Director General on 17 September 1996 to consider practical measures for the application of IAEA verification to fissile material originating from nuclear weapons
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
WHO	World Health Organization

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

1. Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) congratulated Benin on its admission to the Agency. Turning to the issue of Israel's nuclear capabilities and threat, he said that in requesting that item's inclusion again in the agenda, the Arab States were seeking the adoption of a clear resolution on the threat posed by Israel's nuclear capabilities for the security of the Middle East and, consequently, for world stability and security. The peace process had been in deadlock since the current Israeli Government had reneged on all the commitments undertaken by the previous Government and had undermined all international initiatives.
2. Israel, which claimed to agree to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, had never taken any initiative to prove its good faith. On the contrary, it continued to defy the world community by refusing to accede to the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. Israel's nuclear armament policy had not been the result of any nuclear arms race, since all the States in the region, with the exception of Israel, had signed the NPT and had concluded safeguards agreements with the Agency. In fact, Israel's policy was in line with its expansionistic and hegemonistic aims. The international community should not stand by and watch while the Israeli nuclear arsenal expanded. After having been the subject of numerous General Conference resolutions, South Africa had eventually renounced its nuclear option, thereby permitting the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. He therefore called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel. That vital issue had to be addressed by the General Conference, for no departure from the rule should be allowed in such a sensitive case with such profound implications for regional security.
3. With regard to the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East, he said that previous resolutions did not reflect present-day political realities. The references in paragraph 4 of resolution GC(41)/RES/25 to the ongoing bilateral peace process and to the activities of the multilateral working group on arms control and regional security distorted the facts and were misleading to the international community. In reality, the peace process had been paralysed for years because of the current Israeli Government's obstinate refusal to honour the commitments entered into by the previous Government. As for the multilateral working group, its activities had been placed on hold since the suspension of the peace negotiations.
4. While he was grateful to the Director General for his efforts, he was surprised that in paragraph 5 of document GOV/1998/45-GC(42)/15, the Director General indicated that Israel attached importance to the CTBT but did not mention the fact that some States of the Middle East had signed additional protocols to their comprehensive safeguards agreements in the past year and that some had already committed themselves to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. The failure to name Israel clearly in resolution GC(41)/RES/25 merely confirmed that double standards were being applied. It was time to amend the text so as to reflect present realities.

5. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, he said that linking the issue of expansion of the Board with that of the composition of regional groups would only further hamper the settlement of the issue, which had been under consideration for over two decades. Resolution GC(39)/RES/22 clearly stated that the primary responsibility for deciding upon the composition of regional groups lay with the respective groups themselves and the Director General had explicitly stated in his report contained in document GC(40)/11 that the attribution of a State to a particular area was one in which factors other than geographical considerations played a role. The members of the Middle East and South Asia Group had rejected Israel's inclusion in the Group for objective reasons: Israel was occupying Arab lands, building settlements there and expelling the Arab populations with the use of violence. Israel refused all international initiatives to restart the peace process. Under such circumstances, no regional co-operation was possible and it was in fact the MESA Group and the Africa Group, and not Israel, as it alleged, that were being subjected to discrimination, in so far as their legitimate rights were being subjugated to the illegitimate interests of a single State.

6. With regard to technical co-operation, while the reduction in resources for the TCF owing to non-payment or tardy payment of contributions explained why the "due account" provisions had been applied, he nevertheless had reservations about that approach. The Agency should rather encourage the main donors to pay their shares to the TCF under the commitment made to the developing countries within the framework of the NPT.

7. In 1997, West Asia had had the lowest project implementation rate and the Agency should do something about that problem. It should also allocate a higher portion of technical co-operation resources to the supply of equipment because of the difficulties faced by the developing countries in meeting their equipment needs.

8. Judgement No. 1733 of the ILO's Administrative Tribunal, which declared the Agency's government sponsorship practice applied by the Agency since its inception as null and void, would deprive developing countries of the services of human resources trained on government fellowships.

9. In conclusion, he emphasized the importance of co-operation between the Arab Atomic Energy Agency and the IAEA through regional co-operative projects and expressed the hope that such co-operation would be strengthened.

10. Mr. GOMIS SAÉZ (Spain) welcomed the election of the Mexican Ambassador as President of the General Conference and paid tribute to Mr. ElBaradei, the Agency's new Director General, who had visited Spain on one of his first official trips. He fully endorsed the statement made by Austria on behalf of the European Union and welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency.

11. Reviewing the major events in the Spanish nuclear sector since the previous session of the General Conference, he said that in 1997, Spanish nuclear power plants had accounted for 55 279 GWh, or 29.3% of the country's total electricity production. With an availability factor of 86.8%, the reliability level, which was among the highest in the world, had remained

unchanged compared with previous years. Investments continued to be made in order to maintain the safety and reliability of nuclear power plants as well as to increase their production capacity.

12. In November 1997, a new law had been adopted which radically modified the regulatory framework for electricity production and distribution, introducing a process of liberalization and competition in Spain that was unprecedented in Europe. Given that new development, Spanish nuclear power plants had to continue to optimize operating and maintenance costs in order to maintain current levels of availability without jeopardizing safety.

13. With regard to radioactive waste management, the Senate Commission established in late 1996 to study the matter had heard the views of international experts and representatives of various organizations. The fact that its work was continuing longer than expected demonstrated the difficulties it was facing in reaching a consensus. Its conclusions, which were expected to be produced in the near future, would provide guidance to the Government in the search for more appropriate solutions to the problem of radioactive waste management.

14. The Ministry of Industry and Energy had authorized the dismantling of unit 1 of the Vandellós nuclear power plant and transfer of its ownership to the national radioactive waste company, which was currently proceeding with the partial dismantling of the unit to level 2 and which, after a waiting period of 30 years, would complete the dismantling work (level 3). The site could then be used for any purpose.

15. Turning to the Agency's activities, he drew attention to the efforts made to strengthen the safeguards system. The adoption by the Board of Governors in May 1997 of the Model Additional Protocol represented significant progress. It was now up to Member States, particularly those that had nuclear installations, to negotiate and conclude additional protocols without delay, as Spain and the other members of the European Union had done. Reciprocity was the cornerstone of international safeguards.

16. Spain had been one of the first countries to ratify the NPT, thereby reconfirming the importance it attached to the strengthening of the international system for the prevention of nuclear proliferation. The safeguards system would have to face a formidable new challenge in the years to come, with the voluntary submission to safeguards of large quantities of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium and of installations for the production of such materials. His delegation welcomed the consideration being given within the framework of the Trilateral Initiative to the technical, legal and financial problems posed by the verification of materials derived from nuclear weapons. Spain had also noted that the measures adopted so far in that area had been financed by voluntary contributions in order not to upset the Agency's Regular Budget, which was already constrained.

17. With regard to nuclear safety and radiation protection, Spain was deeply committed to the Convention on Nuclear Safety and had done everything possible to ensure that its first national report reflected the implementation in Spain of its obligations arising from that Convention. The report would be submitted to the organizational meeting of the Contracting Parties scheduled for the following week. Spain hoped that the other parties would submit an

honest analysis of the status in their countries and that countries with a high level of nuclear development which had not yet signed the Convention would do so before the first review meeting in 1999.

18. Spain, which had signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in June 1998, had noted with satisfaction that progress was being made with the signature of that Convention and looked forward to contributing to the elaboration of the relevant rules and procedures.

19. In the area of radiation protection and particularly the health effects of exposure to low doses of radiation, he drew attention to the international conference held in Seville, from 17 to 21 November 1997 under the auspices of the Agency and WHO. The large number of participants - scientific specialists and health and nuclear safety officials - and the high quality of the technical reports attested to the international community's interest in the Conference. The lessons learnt would undoubtedly help to optimize the radiation protection of workers exposed to radiation and of the general public.

20. Spain had continued to participate in the Agency's programmes to train the staff of regulatory bodies in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and had undertaken a new co-operative effort with the Agency to improve nuclear safety in the Far East.

21. Spain attached great importance to the Agency's services in the field of nuclear safety through the IRS, and through OSART, ASSET and IRRM missions. The OSART mission carried out in June 1998 to the Ascó nuclear power plant had demonstrated the absolute priority that Spain attached to the safety of its installations.

22. He appealed to the international community to avert a repetition of events such as the one in May 1998 in one of his country's steelworks involving the melting of a caesium-137 source which, while having had no radiological impact on the staff or the public, had required the mobilization of massive human and financial resources. At the International Conference on the Safety of Radiation Sources and the Security of Radioactive Materials, held at Dijon the previous week, Spain had put forward initiatives adopted in response to that incident with a view to improving the control at their destination of potentially radioactive or contaminated materials that were transported. Such improvements would be effective only if rigorous controls of radioactive sources were applied in the country of origin. In view of the frequency of such incidents throughout the world, his delegation called on the international community to study the transport of such materials in order to identify factors susceptible to control.

23. Finally, with regard to technical co-operation activities, he welcomed the efforts made to make them more effective. The implementation of the technical co-operation strategy adopted by the Board of Governors would undoubtedly make it possible to maximize the contribution of nuclear energy to sustainable development. A concern for quality was essential, particularly at a time of overall budgetary restrictions. Spain had managed to maintain the level of its voluntary contribution to the TCF in 1997 and did not rule out an increase in that contribution in future within the limits of available budgetary resources. The decision to halt

the increase of IPFs in real terms for 1999 and 2000 was a timely one. The substantial drop in the proportion of the target achieved proved that raising the IPFs indiscriminately and without regard to the evolution of the Agency's Regular Budget was not realistic. Owing to the voluntary nature of contributions, excessive growth in the IPFs was not accompanied by an increase in the resources of the TCF.

24. In addition to its voluntary contribution to the TCF, Spain was contributing to the Agency's technical co-operation activities by hosting fellows and participants in courses, sending Spanish experts on technical assistance missions and supporting various projects.

25. In conclusion, he said that his country supported the Agency's initiatives aimed at improving co-operation with other international organizations working in the same fields, particularly the Nuclear Energy Agency of the OECD. Such co-operation should result in more efficient use of Agency resources and, consequently, in greater advantages for Member States.

26. Mr. AL-BOUANIN (Qatar) expressed satisfaction at Benin's admission to the Agency. Referring to the Director General's report on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East (GOV/1998/45-GC(42)/15), he said that, while Qatar was aware of the need for all countries in the Middle East without exception to accede to the NPT, it was greatly concerned at the setbacks in the peace process resulting from the repressive measures and acts of provocation by the Israeli Government, which continued to build settlements in the occupied Arab territories and sought to renege on the commitments made under the agreements concluded with the Palestinian Authority. Qatar emphasized the need to make a commitment to achieving overall peace, in accordance with United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Member States should therefore provide greater assistance to the Director General to enable him to intensify his consultations with countries in the Middle East in order to ensure the full application of the safeguards system and to bring all the facilities in the region under the Agency's control. The conclusion of an agreement to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East would be a determining factor on the road to creating a climate of mutual trust and an important step towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

27. The Arab Member States of the Agency, supported by the member countries of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, had asked for the item entitled "Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat" to be included again in the agenda because the strengthening of the Israeli nuclear arsenal represented a serious danger for all countries in the Middle East. The Arab countries had always shown their willingness to take specific measures with a view to establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, while Israel continued to challenge the international community and refused to accede to the NPT and to make all its installations subject to comprehensive Agency safeguards. All Member States were therefore requested to take a firm stand in the face of that threat.

28. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, the increase in the number of Member States meant that the issue of equitable representation of developing countries on the Board of Governors was more urgent than ever. As to the composition of regional groups, all

the political factors at stake should be taken into account, with the relevant decisions being taken by the regional groups concerned.

29. The Agency could play an important role in the application of the latest nuclear technologies to supply water to the populations in arid regions. In that connection, he was pleased to note that the projects for setting up facilities to produce drinking water by nuclear desalination, which were ecologically sound and economically competitive, had finally produced tangible results.

30. As to technical co-operation, close examination of the figures relating to the resources allocated to West Asia revealed that the share received by Arab countries in that region was very small. Those countries relied heavily on the peaceful applications of nuclear energy in areas such as agriculture, health, environmental protection and food preservation in order to improve the living standards of their populations. The Agency was therefore invited to pay greater attention to that region and to strengthen the technical co-operation projects in those countries. Similarly, the industrialized countries were invited to honour their commitments with regard to the financing of the Agency's technical co-operation and technology transfer activities.

Mr. Ryzhov (Russian Federation) took the Chair.

31. Mr. FRANK (Israel), having congratulated Benin on its admission to the Agency, said that 1998 was a special year for Israel, since it marked the fiftieth anniversary of its independence. Nine years after its independence, true to its scientific and technological aspirations, Israel had become a founding member of the Agency. However, Israel was still subject to discrimination in the Agency's policy-making organs, since it was deprived of its legitimate right to participate in the activities of the region of which it formed part - the Middle East and South Asia - contrary to the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States enshrined in the Agency's Statute. Permitting any infringement of statutory rights was, in the long run, bound to undermine the essential basis on which Member States participated in the Agency's activities.

32. While it appreciated the efforts made by the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Israel was disappointed that his proposal to advance the process of expanding the Board postponed indefinitely the approval of the assignment of Member States to regions. Although the proposal had the considerable merit of establishing a link between those two components, it fell short of maintaining the necessary balance between them. Israel would strongly oppose the expansion of the Board until each Member State fully enjoyed its sovereign statutory rights and until Israel was no longer deprived of its place in the MESA Group and of its right to serve on the Board. Nothing was more just, important and urgent than restoring the principle of sovereign equality in the Agency's policy-making organs.

33. The General Conference was called upon to reconsider an obsolete item entitled "Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat", which had originally been included in the agenda at the request of Iraq and had been withdrawn in 1992. Since that time, numerous developments had taken place in the nuclear field: the sombre experience gained by UNSCOM and the Action

Team; other dangerous proliferation initiatives in the Middle East and South Asia region; the DPRK crisis and other events known only too well to the General Conference. Israel was not involved in any of those events but, by contrast, had demonstrated exemplary self-restraint. It had neither threatened any of its neighbours, nor violated any international norm. There was no justification for putting the item back on the agenda and singling out Israel again.

34. Israel's aim was to establish, in due course, the Middle East as a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and missiles. A nuclear-weapon-free zone should be established and supported by all the States concerned in the region. It could not be imposed. All States Party to the NPT had reaffirmed in such terms their support for those principles in 1995 in the document on the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, in which it was stated that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhanced global and regional peace and security. In the same document, the Parties also agreed that the development of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions of tension, such as in the Middle East, as well as the establishment of zones free of all weapons of mass destruction should be encouraged as a matter of priority, taking into account the specific characteristics of each region. The draft resolution before the General Conference, which grossly deviated from those agreed principles and objectives, would not change the situation prevailing in the region and was certainly counter-productive. The sponsors of the resolution openly admitted that their purpose was to coerce Israel into taking a decision essentially based on its national sovereignty, in clear contravention of the spirit of consensus. Delegates were therefore urged to oppose the draft resolution and to demonstrate their wish that the General Conference should not become an arena for political confrontation, or a venue for discrimination, since that ran counter to the Agency's statutory responsibilities and activities.

35. International organizations were at their best when consensus prevailed among them. In that spirit, the General Conference was invited to consider the resolution on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East, on the subject of which similar resolutions had been adopted by consensus since 1991. Despite the inherent deficiencies of those resolutions, Israel had joined the consensus in the past, because it recognized that the establishment, under the appropriate circumstances, of a regionally verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone would eventually serve as a useful complement to the overall peace, security and arms control process in the region.

36. From a more general point of view, Israel pinned its expectations on a security arrangement for the Middle East that would combine bilateral as well as multilateral elements. Inspired by the experience in Latin America and Asia as well as Europe, Israel was hopeful that proliferation problems would ultimately find their remedy through a combination of internal democratization and economic development, bilateral settlements and regional arrangements, such as those that had become commonplace in other regions.

37. The nuclear issue could not realistically be dissociated from such a comprehensive framework of peace and security in any region. The vast experience accumulated with similar processes elsewhere had shown that such an overall setting was a necessary condition for

disarmament and non-proliferation. 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 relevance of those two caveats was nowhere more apparent than in the Middle East. Tinkering with the text of the resolution adopted the previous year was bound to be dangerous and counter-productive, not least because it might engender false hopes that the regional process could be circumvented by manipulating resolutions in international bodies.

38. In principle, Israel supported the strengthening of safeguards and considered that the Model Protocol could contribute to such strengthening. While it was aware that in theory no verification could guarantee compliance with the agreements, the Israeli Government stressed that, at the end of the day, it was the political context and culture that provided the essential basis of any effective verification regime. The most instructive experience of recent years - that in Iraq - should serve as a warning. Under certain conditions, the Model Protocol could substantially improve the safeguards system, but it could not guarantee compliance. Thus, special caution should be exercised. Although the Model Protocol did not apply to INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreements, Israel intended to examine to what extent the measures contained therein were consistent with its policy and commitments in the area of safeguards.

39. Tribute should be paid to the excellent work carried out by the Department of Technical Co-operation. Israel firmly believed that with regard to regional co-operation, the Agency could make an exceptional contribution that would meet both regional needs and help to build confidence. The medfly eradication technical co-operation project in the Middle East was a good example of fruitful regional co-operation. Additional topics for future consideration could include nuclear medicine, hydrology and food preservation. In that respect, Israel considered that even subregional initiatives could be beneficial, and it was willing to support such initiatives in its immediate neighbourhood with Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority.

40. In order to preserve the culture and spirit of the Agency, it was necessary to resist any attempt to impair its competence and impartiality, and to shield it from the debilitating effects of over-politicization. Indeed, political initiatives and energies should be channelled into further regional co-operation in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. Israel looked forward to working with the Agency and hoped that, as in previous years, reason and moderation would prevail, and that the resolutions which the General Conference would adopt at its current session would strengthen the Agency in the pursuit of its objectives.

41. Mr. SUAREZ (Ecuador) said that 1998 marked a turning point in the institutional life of the Ecuadorian Atomic Energy Commission (CEEA): it had undergone a complete change and made a 180° turn towards autonomy, self-management and total integration in the community. With a new statute, it was now dedicated to meeting the needs of national laboratories and to pure and applied research.

42. Six ARCAL projects and four Model Projects under the Agency's technical co-operation programme were in progress. The CEEA, which had adopted the Partners in

Development concept, had submitted three new Model Projects for the Agency's consideration in 1998, in strict conformity with the Agency's guidelines for planning and designing projects.

43. Despite his country's great difficulties in paying its contribution arrears to the Agency, its intention was to settle them by 2003.

44. Ecuador contributed to the battle against nuclear proliferation. Within the framework of the CTBTO, it was in the process of installing two nuclear test detection stations on the Galapagos islands. In that connection, he associated himself with the appeals to India and Pakistan to accede to the NPT and CTBT. He believed that nuclear weapons did not help to overcome poverty and that mutual trust was the best way of guaranteeing regional and international peace and security.

45. Mr. HAJI HASHIM (Malaysia), after welcoming Benin as a new member, took note of the measures which the Director General had taken to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency and assured him of his country's full support.

46. With regard to the financing of technical co-operation, the adoption of the new TCF planning cycle that would permit indicative planning figures to be determined every two years for a four-year period was a step in the right direction. However, the failure to recommend target figures for 2001 and 2002 was a step backwards. Malaysia therefore urged all Member States, particularly donors, to strive towards the implementation of the planning cycle adopted for the TCF and expressed appreciation to those which had paid their full share of the target and, in particular, to those which had made extrabudgetary contributions as well. Malaysia, for its part, would continue to pay its share of the target of the TCF.

47. As both a recipient and donor State, Malaysia understood the need for the "due account" principle, but felt that it should only be applied taking into account the priority needs of developing Member States, with project quality being the overriding factor. Similarly, as far as Agency assistance was concerned, the graduation principle should be confined to the provision of major equipment and not to expert missions, training or fellowships.

48. Malaysia was happy to continue to support the Agency's activities in the area of technology transfer. In May 1998 it had hosted an FAO/IAEA International Conference on Area-Wide Control of Insect Pests Integrating the Sterile Insect and Related Nuclear and Other Techniques. That conference had been held in conjunction with the Fifth International Symposium on Fruit Flies of Economic Importance. Over 300 participants from some 70 countries, including 58 developing countries, and representatives of six international organizations, had attended the two meetings.

49. With regard to nuclear safety and waste management, Malaysia fully subscribed to the conclusions of the last ASEAN expert working group meeting held in Manila (Philippines) from 26 to 28 August 1998. In addition to Agency co-operation mechanisms on nuclear safety and nuclear waste management, the participants in that meeting had recommended the

establishment of a regional framework of co-operation to address the specific common problems of ASEAN member countries.

50. With regard to the maritime transport of nuclear waste in particular, Malaysia welcomed the strengthening of regional co-operation to incorporate a procedure of prior notification and consent in the IMO Code for the Safe Carriage of Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium and High Level Radioactive Wastes in Flasks on board Ships (INF Code). That code should be made mandatory to ensure that the maritime shipment of spent nuclear fuel or nuclear waste originating from or destined for countries outside the region occurred only with the prior consent of the transit States.

51. Malaysia was concerned by the international community's failure to achieve a complete ban on nuclear testing and to prevent nuclear proliferation, as evidenced by the recent tests in South Asia. It was strongly opposed to nuclear testing and the continued possession of weapons of mass destruction. The importance of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in achieving the universal goal of general and complete disarmament and enhancing peace and stability could not be over-emphasized. Moreover, nuclear-weapon States should demonstrate a stronger commitment to the goals of nuclear disarmament and the ultimate elimination of those weapons through a programme to reduce and eliminate their nuclear arsenals. It was to be hoped that all countries would actively participate in international efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

52. Malaysia noted the recent decision of the United Kingdom to be the first nuclear-weapon State to declare the total size of its stocks of nuclear material, both civilian and military. With regard to the suggested establishment of a nuclear arms control verification fund under the aegis of the Agency, Malaysia looked forward to the financing options which the Director General intended to put forward, and hoped that the bulk of such funding would be borne by the nuclear-weapon States.

53. As to the streamlining of the work of the General Conference, he welcomed document GC(42)/4 and the recommendations it contained. Almost ten years had passed since the last review of the working practices of the General Conference by an inter-sessional working group under the chairmanship of Ambassador Halim of Malaysia, who had been President of the thirty-second regular session of the General Conference. Malaysia appreciated in particular the proposals to focus discussions on certain themes, to cluster items and to envisage the biennial consideration of certain items.

54. Mr. ZAIDE (Philippines), having welcomed Benin to the Agency, thanked the Director General for his statement and for the Annual Report for 1997, which reflected the excellent work done by the Secretariat. The current review of the Agency's programme, which was aimed at fine-tuning directions and priorities, was extremely interesting, and his delegation looked forward to the Medium Term Strategy paper which the Director General was preparing.

55. The second ASEAN informal summit held in Kuala Lumpur in December 1997 had addressed the proposal of the former President of the Philippines, Mr. Ramos, for regional

co-operation in nuclear safety and nuclear waste management. Following that initiative, an ASEAN group of experts meeting in Manila had recommended a framework for co-operation identifying potential initiatives in that area. The Agency should provide support for those initiatives, which corresponded to the Director General's idea of regional co-operative arrangements.

56. In the Philippines, a radiological emergency plan had been approved, preparations were under way for hosting a demonstration course on predisposal waste management methods and procedures in November 1998, and a nuclear safety profile was being prepared for inclusion in a compendium of regional safety profiles. In addition, in March 1998, the Philippines had signed 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.

57. The Philippines deeply appreciated the technical assistance provided by the Agency and its contribution to enhancing the quality of life of its population. In the agricultural sector, mango producers were benefiting from the use of nuclear techniques to eradicate fruit flies, while the use of radiation to develop banana varieties resistant to a particular virus or to induce mutations in coconut palms for resistance to disease had increased the incomes of millions of farmers and helped alleviate rural poverty.

58. In the fisheries sector, nuclear techniques were being used to evaluate "red tide" contamination, a seasonal phenomenon of great concern to fishermen and the public at large. In the health sector, nuclear medicine techniques were helping to improve the diagnosis and treatment of urinary tract problems in thousands of school children, thus mitigating the risk of permanent kidney damage.

59. At the regional level, the Philippines was extremely pleased with the progress of activities under the RCA and was honoured to be the lead country in a subproject on water resources and to serve as regional resource unit for a subproject on marine coastal environment. The Philippines was a strong supporter of the Agency's technical co-operation programme - as manifested by its financial and in-kind contributions - and trusted that it would be increasingly responsive to development needs.

60. With regard to safeguards, the Philippines welcomed the measures taken in respect of the handling and confidentiality of information, inspector training, access arrangements, the use of new technologies, and particularly the speedy conclusion of over 30 additional protocols. Having itself signed an additional protocol, the Philippines invited other countries to do likewise, so as to advance universal acceptance of the Model Additional Protocol and non-proliferation.

61. Turning to the transport of radioactive materials, he welcomed the report on legally binding and non-binding international instruments and regulations (GOV/1998/17 and Add.1), which could serve as a useful reference document for future work in that area, such as, the harmonization of the Agency's Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material

with other international norms such as the IMO Code for the Safe Carriage of Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium, and High-Level Radioactive Wastes in Flasks on board Ships.

62. The Secretariat's continuing efforts, described in document GC(42)/INF/4, to strengthen its activities in the area of technical co-operation were much appreciated. The Philippines fully endorsed the technical co-operation strategy and the Partners in Development concept described therein. It also welcomed the increase in the indicative planning figure for 1999-2000 from US \$71 million to \$73.5 million. Given the importance that the Philippines and the developing countries attached to technical co-operation, it was to be hoped that improvements in the quality and management of the technical co-operation programmes would be matched by a proportionate increase in funding for technical co-operation in 2001-2002.

63. He acknowledged the outstanding efforts of Mr. Benmoussa of Morocco, Chairman of the working group to develop criteria or guidelines for consideration of requests for the restoration of voting rights, and the procedural rules and practice related to notification to Member States in arrears contained in document GC(42)/10. To address the basic problem of non-payment, measures to facilitate the payment of contributions should be adopted at an early date.

64. With regard to the pending issue of the revision of Article VI, he expressed appreciation for the efforts of everyone, and in particular Mr. Ikeda, Ambassador of Japan, who strived to reach a just and realistic solution. Like many other delegations, he believed that the expansion of the Board of Governors should rectify the under-representation of the developing countries and hoped that an expansion by seven seats would be possible.

65. Lastly, he noted that the Philippines, like other States, was gravely concerned at the recent nuclear tests and called for their total cessation. It urged all parties to refrain from developing arms programmes or deploying missiles to deliver nuclear weapons, to prevent the transfer of nuclear-weapon-related materials, technology and equipment to third countries, and to sign the NPT and the CTBT. It likewise called on the nuclear-weapon States and all other States to accept the invitation put forward by the majority of the international community to negotiate a nuclear-weapons convention for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a certain time-frame. Those initiatives had been endorsed by the fifty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Agency's statutory objective to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy could only be achieved by eliminating the harmful uses of nuclear energy.

66. Mr. NIEWODNICZANSKI (Poland), having welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency, said that Poland, as a State associated with the European Union, fully endorsed the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the representative of Austria.

67. He recalled that, at the previous session of the General Conference, Poland had signed 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 an additional protocol to its safeguards agreement, and that

two years previously the President of Poland had signed the CTBT in New York. His country intended to ratify all those legal instruments in the near future. By signing them, Poland had demonstrated not only its support for worldwide nuclear safety, but also its determination to co-operate with other countries in creating a solid legal framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

68. The Agency had always played an important role in establishing a legal framework for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and one of its greatest achievements in that area was without doubt the development, adoption and entry into force two years previously of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Poland, which was proud to be among the original parties to that Convention, welcomed the progress made at the first preparatory meeting in April 1997. An organizational meeting of the parties to the Convention was due to be held in Vienna the following week to prepare for the first review meeting which was to take place in spring 1999.

69. Poland congratulated the Agency on its active role in drawing up those important international instruments. In order to gain public acceptance of the development of nuclear energy in countries where economic and environmental considerations justified such development, it was vital to ensure the operational safety of nuclear power plants and the safety of radioactive waste management. The new instruments, which formed part of the international nuclear safety culture, were of considerable assistance to national institutions responsible for nuclear safety.

70. Poland, which strongly supported the action taken by the Agency in the field of safeguards, expressed its profound regret at the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan. Such tests could lead again to a dangerous nuclear arms race and damage the integrity of the global non-proliferation regime of the NPT, to which nearly 200 States were party. The tests also jeopardized the CTBT and the achievement of one of the international community's basic objectives, which was to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and eventually eliminate them completely. The first essential step was therefore to persuade all countries capable of conducting tests not to do so, whether or not they were parties to the above-mentioned international instruments.

71. The issue of illicit trafficking in nuclear material and radiation sources was also closely linked to the international community's efforts to ensure that nuclear energy was used for peaceful purposes. It was extremely important to control movements of nuclear material and other radiation sources and to detect illicit trafficking. Poland accorded the highest priority to that problem and very much appreciated the Agency's co-ordinative and advisory role in the field of the physical protection of nuclear material and combating illicit trafficking and, more generally, in combating the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

72. Poland welcomed the action taken by the Secretariat to strengthen technical co-operation between the Agency and its Member States as well as among Member States themselves. It supported the new initiatives proposed by the Secretariat to make technical co-operation more efficient and profitable for both recipients and donors. Since the resources available for technical co-operation were not increasing, effectiveness in that area could only be improved by careful management throughout the project cycle, from identification to

evaluation, and by better follow-up of all the activities related to technical co-operation, whether they were funded by the TCF, the Regular Budget or extrabudgetary resources.

73. Poland, which had participated successfully for many years in various technical co-operation activities under the auspices of the Agency, as both donor and recipient, appreciated the assistance provided by or through the Agency. It continued to consider that the periodic meetings on technical co-operation organized by the Agency for the developing Member States in Europe were very useful and productive. Those meetings contributed also to better distribution of the resources allocated to the regional programme for Europe. Poland realized that it was important for the Agency to have the necessary resources available to implement the technical co-operation programme properly and therefore had decided to pledge, as it did every year, its full share of the target for the TCF.

74. The fact that the nuclear option had not been mentioned in various international declarations issued after the Kyoto Conference demonstrated the high level of public concern about the risks associated with nuclear energy. In that regard, Poland welcomed the Agency's initiative to establish co-operation with relevant international organizations such as WHO, UNEP, the IEA and the NEA for the purpose of comparative assessment of different energy sources.

75. The excellent results achieved by the Agency in various areas could be attributed to the Secretariat's continuing efforts to make the best possible use of the resources at its disposal. It should be congratulated particularly for the care it took to maintain efficiency in the process of preparing the programme and budget for the next biennium and particularly for its adherence to the principle of zero real growth in the budget for 1999.

76. He was well aware, from personal experience, of the problems which could hamper the work of the General Conference and therefore strongly supported the conclusions and recommendations of the inter-sessional working group on streamlining the work of the General Conference. Member States' acceptance of those proposals and active co-operation to implement them would make the working practices of the General Conference more efficient and facilitate the achievement of the necessary agreements.

77. Mr. AL-GHAIS (Kuwait), having welcomed the admission of Benin, said that the countries of the Middle East aspired to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, which would require Israel to accede to the NPT and place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards. He hoped that the Middle East would be rid of all types of weapons of mass destruction. That issue was, however, closely linked to the application of safeguards in the Middle East, and the Agency was requested to continue its work in that field.

78. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, Kuwait was in favour of expanding the Board of Governors in such a way as to increase the number of seats reserved for the under-represented geographical regions, namely the Middle East and South Asia and Africa, without establishing any link between the three aspects of the issue. He wished to note that resolution GC(39)/RES/22 emphasized that "the primary responsibility for deciding upon the composition of regional groups lies with the respective groups themselves". He

considered also that it would be more logical to leave unchanged the provision of Article VI which banned the immediate re-election of members whose mandate was about to expire.

79. Kuwait which, like many other countries, suffered an acute shortage of potable water resources, had become for that reason a pioneer in the field of desalination and therefore supported all the studies carried out by the Agency on that issue. Any progress which could relieve the severe shortage of water would be welcome, all the more so because it was a problem which had the potential to become a source of conflict in several regions of the world.

80. Referring indirectly to documents GOV/INF/1998/16 and GC(42)/14, he noted that, on 5 August 1998, Iraq had announced that it was suspending co-operation with the Agency; that it would not permit access to "capable" sites or to sites other than those on which it provided regular declarations in accordance with the monitoring and verification plan; and that it would not co-operate with any activity involving investigations into its clandestine nuclear programme.

81. On 11 August 1998, the Director General had addressed a letter to the President of the Security Council, stating that the limited activities undertaken by the Agency in Iraq, as a result of the restrictions imposed by Iraq, had fallen far short of full implementation of the ongoing monitoring and verification plan and had been resulting in a significantly lower level of assurance than would be provided through the full implementation of the plan. In his reply dated 18 August, the President had considered the announcement made by Iraq to be totally unacceptable and in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the memorandum of understanding signed by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq on 23 February.

82. The new escalation of tension with respect to Iraq had led to the unanimous adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1194 (1998) dated 9 September 1998, in which it condemned Iraq's decision and demanded that Iraq rescind it. For its part, the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Co-operation Council had, in the final communiqué issued at the end of its sixty-eighth session, which had taken place on 27 and 28 August 1998, expressed its grave concern at Iraq's decision and had demanded that Iraq rescind it. In that regard, Kuwait considered that the activities carried out by the Agency in Iraq made a substantial contribution to ensuring peace and stability in the region.

83. Kuwait, which fully appreciated the Agency's work, especially in the fields of medicine, agriculture, industry and the environment, would continue to assist the Agency in carrying out its noble task, which was to safeguard the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to develop the scientific and technical capabilities of developing countries in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

84. Ms. AGGREY-ORLEANS (Ghana), welcoming Benin, said that the Agency's expanding membership was testimony not only to the increasingly important role played by the organization since the end of the Cold War, but also to the untiring efforts it was making to direct the use of atomic energy towards the promotion of prosperity, peace and security.

85. The numerous conflicts worldwide and the depletion of resources in the face of population growth made it imperative that nuclear energy and the other instruments of technological advancement should be utilized to improve the human condition and to promote harmony and understanding among nations. Any other use of atomic energy, even as a means of deterrent, was ultimately detrimental to the well-being of humanity. Member States should therefore provide their unqualified support to the Agency in the pursuit of its objectives.

86. Ghana believed that peace was a prerequisite for economic development and human progress. It therefore invited all States to sign and ratify the NPT and the CTBT together with the other treaties and conventions concluded under the Agency's auspices in order to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and make the world a more peaceful and safer place.

87. The common destiny of mankind placed on both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States the inescapable obligation to be genuinely supportive of efforts towards complete nuclear disarmament. Any act which was inconsistent with that objective or any selective approach to the issue of a ban on nuclear weapons constituted a threat to world peace. Special assistance should be granted to States in nuclear-weapon-free zones in recognition of their decision to forego such weapons and to encourage them to explore the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The implementation of major development projects in those zones would, in addition, motivate other regions to follow their example. Ghana therefore supported the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East and in all other regions of the world.

88. Having noted Ghana's signature of an additional protocol in June 1998, which affirmed the significance it attached to Agency safeguards, she commended the Agency's efforts to assist Member States in the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. At a time when drought and famine affected a large portion of the world's population, including Africa, the transfer of nuclear technology could be of enormous benefit. In that regard, she drew attention to the resolutions adopted by the fortieth and forty-first regular sessions of the General Conference on the evaluation of the technical and economic feasibility of the production of potable water from the desalination of sea water by means of nuclear energy. She called for urgent action to implement those resolutions in order to guarantee a lasting solution to the problem of water shortages, whether for human consumption or agricultural production.

89. Ghana expressed satisfaction at the fruitful relations which existed between the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission and the Agency. In May 1998, the President of Ghana had commissioned a radiotherapy centre established as part of the first Agency Model Project in West Africa. She also thanked the Governments of China and the United States of America for the valuable support they had provided for that project.

90. Research in Ghana was being vigorously pursued with a view to the genetic improvement of important staple crops such as cassava. Such studies, if given the appropriate level of support, could lead to an improvement in the nutrition not only of the people of Ghana, but also of the entire region.

91. Furthermore, the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission was using neutron activation analysis in studies on the nutrition of ruminants. Another important study undertaken by the Commission, with the Agency's co-operation, related to the extraction of precious metals by means of biological agents so as to reduce the use of environmentally unfriendly techniques.

92. Thanking the Agency for its work, she assured it of her country's steadfast support rooted in the belief that nuclear energy could greatly contribute to economic development and to the progress of humanity in a climate of peace and security. She was also convinced that the Agency could only carry out its work with the unreserved support of the international community.

93. Mr. TOSHEVSKI (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) welcomed the constant increase in the Agency's membership, the latest addition to which was Benin. It was satisfying to note the Agency's continuing efforts to encourage the safe use of nuclear energy to foster the sustainable economic and social development of its Member States, including the preparation of legal instruments. In that connection, it was important to recall once again that countries with nuclear power plants operating at a critically low level of safety should co-operate closely with the Agency in the application of nuclear safety standards. He emphasized the particular importance of the measures for strengthening and improving regional co-operation for the purposes of adopting a more integrated approach to safety and environmental problems; in that regard, the attention being paid by the Agency, despite its limited resources, to the regional projects within the proposed technical co-operation programme for 1999-2000 was extremely valuable.

94. The Agency should be congratulated on the way in which it responded to the needs of its Member States. Through its assistance, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was participating with other countries in the region in the Model Project entitled "Upgrading Radiation Protection Infrastructure". As a result, a new law on radiation protection had been drafted and there were plans to hold a training course on the problems of radioprotection in the area of industrial radiography designed and funded by the Agency.

95. Furthermore, as a country in transition, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia needed to adopt a new approach to energy planning and it hoped that the Agency would assist it in that area. It also wished to thank the Agency for the valuable technical assistance which it provided in the application of nuclear techniques, which had become an integral part of the country's technical and economic development. Despite the budgetary constraints which it was experiencing, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had made a contribution to the TCF in order to facilitate the implementation of the national projects supported by the Agency. Those projects related to nuclear medicine, animal production, irrigation and non-destructive testing techniques in industry. The projects for the following cycle had been defined with the assistance of an Agency mission. Finally, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would be happy to host any training activities organized by the Agency in the areas in which it possessed a high level of technical expertise.

96. Ms. MOSLEY (New Zealand) said that the people of her country were deeply shocked by the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan, and that her Government had

condemned those tests. Consistent with its position on the matter, New Zealand had co-sponsored a draft resolution on nuclear testing, the main aim of which was to urge India and Pakistan, together with all other countries, in particular those with nuclear capabilities, to sign without conditions and without delay the NPT and the CTBT.

97. The growing number of countries which had signed the CTBT was a source of great satisfaction and it was particularly gratifying that two nuclear-weapon States were among the 21 countries that had ratified the Treaty. She expressed the hope that other key countries would shortly follow suit. New Zealand itself would be in a position to ratify the CTBT before the end of the year. A top priority for New Zealand was to work towards a steady and credible build-up of the CTBT's verification systems so that the Treaty would be operational as soon as it entered into force.

98. Emphasizing the importance of the contribution made by the Agency in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament through the safeguards system, she expressed concern at the fact that more than 50 countries had not yet concluded NPT safeguards agreements. However, she was pleased to note that an ever increasing number of States were concluding additional protocols to their safeguards agreements, and New Zealand would itself be signing its additional protocol the following day which would enter into force immediately. New Zealand would thereby demonstrate its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In that regard, she welcomed the significant efforts made during the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, including the decision to set up an ad hoc committee responsible for negotiating a treaty banning the production of fissile material for military purposes. Nevertheless, the outcome of the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference had been disappointing, and the international community should be prepared to face formidable challenges at the third meeting to be held in New York in April 1999.

99. Noting the negative report presented by the Director General on the DPRK, she endorsed the Agency's view that the safeguards agreement between the Agency and the DPRK remained in force and was binding, and that the DPRK was in breach of that agreement. New Zealand supported the Agreed Framework and was a participant in KEDO, an ambitious project whose implementation depended on compliance with commitments made with respect to the Agency. The recent provocative acts by the DPRK could diminish support for the project. The DPRK was therefore urged to adopt a more responsible approach to regional security issues.

100. New Zealand was concerned to note that once again Iraq had failed to co-operate fully with the Agency. It had always advocated that Iraq should demonstrate full and complete co-operation with the Agency and comply strictly with the relevant Security Council resolutions. It remained fully committed to supporting the United Nations position on Iraq.

101. New Zealand was concerned at the risks to its population, environment and economy represented by the transport of radioactive materials by other countries. It therefore fully supported the initiative of the current session of the General Conference which would provide greater transparency with regard to the status and implementation of the relevant national laws

and regulations; it considered, however, that the initiative fell far short of assuaging its concerns. There should at least be prior notification and, ideally, prior informed consent procedures. Furthermore, she welcomed the study on the radiological situation on the atolls of Mururoa and Fangataufa, and the conference devoted to that study held in Vienna.

102. Looking back over the period during which her country had been a member of the Board of Governors, she noted that it had been marked by the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol, and by the departure of Mr. Blix and his replacement by Mr. ElBaradei.

103. Mr. FÖRSTER (Netherlands) said that his delegation was impressed by the various steps taken by Mr. ElBaradei to improve the Agency's functioning, particularly the studies he had initiated and the changes in the management structure he had made to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The Netherlands delegation also welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency. In addition, it endorsed the comments made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

104. The key words in the Netherlands energy policy were: reliability, affordability and cleanliness. The current main focus of attention was energy conservation, renewable energies and liberalization of the electricity and natural gas markets. In June 1998, new legislation opening up the electricity market had been passed by Parliament. As a result, the State's role would change considerably; its role in planning would decline and its task of regulating prices would largely disappear. On the other hand, it would have to create conditions allowing the market to function properly and monitor compliance with the rules.

105. Nuclear energy played a relatively modest role in the Netherlands. At present, there was only one nuclear power plant, the Borssele plant, which would stay in operation until the end of 2003. However, the Netherlands continued to play a substantial role in the front end (gas centrifuge enrichment) and the back end (waste processing and storage) of the nuclear fuel cycle. The nuclear picture in the Netherlands would not be complete without mentioning the Petten high-flux reactor. That research reactor was owned by the European Commission, but operated by the Netherlands Energy Research Foundation. It remained a major tool for Netherlands and European nuclear research and had become the main European supplier of radiopharmaceuticals. In addition, it played a leading role in boron neutron capture therapy.

106. No increase in nuclear capacity was anticipated in the Netherlands in the foreseeable future. The Government's policy was to keep the nuclear option open in order to be able "to board the train" in the twenty-first century, if that proved desirable. In that context, the Netherlands was participating in international research projects in the fields of nuclear safety, decommissioning and nuclear waste. It remained interested in the development of new reactor concepts, such as advanced light-water reactors and high-temperature gas-cooled reactors, in order to contribute to a sustainable energy supply in the long term.

107. With regard to Agency activities, three issues were particularly important for the Netherlands, namely nuclear safety, technical assistance and the strengthening of safeguards. In the area of nuclear safety, the Netherlands was actively involved in various international efforts aimed at improving the safety of the nuclear power plants in Eastern Europe and the

Commonwealth of Independent States, an involvement that included contributions to the Nuclear Safety Account and to the Chernobyl Shelter Fund, to which Fund the Netherlands had been one of the first countries to contribute, with an amount of \$3 million. It was also collaborating with Norway and other countries to help the Government of the Russian Federation improve the management of nuclear waste of both civilian and military origin. In that connection, the Netherlands was concerned that the Nuclear Safety Account and the recipient countries had not reached a consensus on the early closure of unsafe reactors, and called on the countries concerned to honour their commitments.

108. With regard to technical assistance, the Netherlands had had the privilege of chairing the Informal Working Group on the Financing of Technical Assistance during the past year. The report of that Working Group (GOV/1998/36), whose recommendations had been approved by the Board of Governors in June, stated that technical assistance to the developing Member States remained one of the Agency's main activities. It urged Member States to regard their contributions to the Agency's technical co-operation programme as a firm political commitment. Consensus had later been reached on increasing the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 1999 to \$73 million. The large number of countries which had responded to the call to continue, or resume, contributing to the Fund was encouraging, and the level of contributions was much higher than the previous year. The Netherlands, as always, would pay its share of the target for voluntary contributions to the Fund in full and on time.

109. The signing ceremony for the additional protocols concluded between the 15 countries of the European Union, the European Commission and the Agency had taken place the day before. Like other members of the European Union, the Netherlands would take the necessary steps to implement its protocol as soon as possible, and urged all countries which had not yet done so to conclude such agreements with the Agency and implement them so that the non-proliferation system would be truly strengthened making the world a safer place for all.

110. Finally, the Netherlands shared the concerns expressed by the United States of America, and others, about the serious consequences that the malfunctioning caused by the millennium change could have on nuclear reactors and other critical systems. The Netherlands called on the Agency to investigate the matter thoroughly and to use its expertise to advise Member States. It also called on Member States not to underestimate the problem and to make sure that their critical systems were not vulnerable.

111. Mr. NGUNI (Zambia), having welcomed Benin, stressed that the Agency should continue to strengthen its technical co-operation activities that benefited the largest number of Member States. The Model Project concept was commendable, as it enabled the developing countries to take advantage of a technology which had initially been perceived as applicable only to the developed countries.

112. The nuclear medicine facility set up in Lusaka under the technical co-operation programme had had a significant impact on the country's health system. Efforts were being made to link that facility to its South African counterpart with a view to practising telemedicine, thereby improving diagnosis and treatment. That was a good example of

mutually advantageous South-South co-operation. There were also plans to establish a similar link with a hospital in Ndola, in the North-East of the country.

113. The plant tissue culture facility was contributing to the expansion of the agriculture sector by providing growers with virus-resistant potato seed. In addition, it was now providing farmers in drought-prone areas with disease-free cassava plant material. Research on improving various crops through induced mutation had produced promising results. The country also had the physical and technical capacity for producing tissue grafts from pigskin.

114. Over the past year, the Radiation Protection Board had provided technical assistance to the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) company with a view to the immobilization of radioactive sources. It had already been possible to condition and store 178 sources. Work was continuing with a view to conditioning the remaining spent radioactive sources in the ZCCM mines, as well as those belonging to other users. The challenge now facing the Radiation Protection Board was to acquire the capacity to trace abandoned sources and to detect illicit activities.

115. In an effort to increase public awareness, the Radiation Protection Board had organized joint workshops with environmental protection associations. A national conference on radioactive waste had also been held, as well as an awareness workshop on radiation protection for customs officials.

116. Zambia, which continued to value technical co-operation within the framework of AFRA, had hosted three regional conferences aimed at initiating and implementing AFRA projects. In view of the importance of the AFRA programme for the development of nuclear science and technology, Zambia urged the Agency and other partners to provide the necessary support.

117. Zambia appreciated the assistance provided by the Agency over the past year for the development of human resources. Several Zambian technicians and scientists had acquired new technical skills as a result of training fellowships, scientific visits and training courses.

118. He welcomed the measures being taken to strengthen nuclear safety and waste safety. He also commended the efforts to strengthen the safeguards system, to apply the Model Additional Protocol and to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources.

119. In connection with the expansion of the Board of Governors, Zambia reaffirmed that amendment of Article VI of the Statute should take into account the geographical representation of the Agency's members. Finally, he announced that his country pledged its full share of the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 1998 and had taken steps, effective from the following day, to settle all its outstanding arrears.

120. Mr. ALFONSO DE ALBA (Mexico), having congratulated Mr. ElBaradei on the work he had done since assuming the post of Director General, welcomed Benin, whose

membership of the Agency reaffirmed the principle of the universality of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

121. In Mexico's view, the nuclear tests which had been carried out ran counter to universal strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, undermined the principles laid down in the CTBT and, above all, endangered international peace and security, not to mention the effects they had on the environment and human health. As a consequence, the Mexican Government had, on numerous occasions, spoken out in favour of a total ban on such tests and had made firm commitments to help preserve and strengthen the nuclear weapons non-proliferation regime and to bring about an early start to negotiations on the total elimination of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems within a specific time-frame. It had condemned the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan on the day it had been informed about them and had reiterated its condemnation in all the competent forums.

122. Mexico was convinced that vertical and horizontal non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as a clear commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to a wide-ranging process of general and complete disarmament under effective international control, were two indissociable elements crucial to the establishment of world peace. Thus, Mexico and seven other countries were making efforts to start a new series of negotiations aimed at nuclear disarmament, as set down in the declaration of 9 June 1998 entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda".*

123. Recalling that in recent years there had been a strengthening of the international nuclear safety regime, which was now based on the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, he was pleased to inform the General Conference that the Mexican Government would sign the latter Convention in the near future.

124. The Agency should develop and strengthen its role so as to be able to face future problems in the application of safeguards, technical co-operation and nuclear safety. Regarding the application of safeguards, Mexico expected the Agency to play a key role, not only to ensure compliance with the requirements of a future treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, but also to verify that the material removed from nuclear warheads would not be reused to develop new weapons. In that regard, it was to be hoped that, appropriate mechanisms would be put into place, within the framework of the Trilateral Initiative, in which the Agency was taking part, to verify that the fissile material derived from the arms programmes of the Russian Federation and the United States of America would not be reused for military purposes.

125. It was clear that the policy of zero real growth in the budget would have to be re-examined if the Member States wanted the Agency to perform the new tasks before it and, especially, if they did not want to exacerbate the imbalance between the verification system and the technical co-operation and nuclear safety programmes.

* Reproduced in document INFCIRC/565.

126. Mexico was convinced that the Agency's safeguards policies were well-founded and contributed to promoting international peace and security, and, in particular, that the protocols additional to safeguards agreements could only strengthen the non-proliferation regime and promote a climate of confidence favouring comprehensive nuclear disarmament. It was equally important that technical co-operation activities should develop in proportion to the verification activities if the foundations and principles underlying the Agency's Statute were not to be emasculated.

127. Mexico had always supported the Agency's technical co-operation activities and the Partners in Development arrangements between the Agency and its Member States. He appealed once again to the Agency and its Member States to take measures to strengthen those activities. In that regard, the Mexican Government welcomed the conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement for ARCAL. That agreement, following the regional co-operation agreements for Africa and Asia, would help further strengthen co-operation between the States of the region.

128. Since its commencement 14 years previously, the ARCAL programme had been an important mechanism for the exchange of experience and knowledge at the regional level. It had enabled vertical and horizontal co-operation and had benefited the development of human resources in such key areas as agriculture, human health and the environment. Technicians and experts in the region were travelling more and more frequently to other countries at the request of their governments and institutions to provide consultant services. In addition, the number of training courses was increasing from year to year, both under the ARCAL programme and the regular technical co-operation programme.

129. A high priority for the Mexican Government was collaboration with Central America and the Caribbean. Thus, in 1998, as part of a joint effort by the Agency, the United States of America and Mexico, a project had been set up to control the screwworm in Jamaica. Mexico, which had the largest sterile insect production centre in the world, had in the past provided its services to control the screwworm in other Central American and Caribbean countries.

130. With regard to the national nuclear programme, he said that the OSART missions to Mexico in February 1997 and August 1998 had given a favourable assessment of the operational quality assurance programme. The National Commission for Nuclear Safety and Safeguards had been continuing its work and had not recorded any major incident concerning nuclear safety or security.

131. Various technical co-operation projects between the Agency and the National Institute for Nuclear Research had been successfully completed and the Institute was continuing the activities started with Agency assistance using its own resources. Given the importance of technical co-operation for strengthening international ties, for the developing countries and for training in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, he urged all Member States to pay their contributions to the TCF in full and on time.

132. The hopes of the international community of living in a safe world could not be realized by rhetoric alone or by promises which invariably ended in prevarication. Thus, Mexico urged delegations to make even greater efforts so that the General Conference could achieve tangible results and thereby respond to the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the peoples of the world.

Mr. Meer (United States of America) took the Chair.

133. Mr. VALENTUKEVIČIUS (Lithuania), having welcomed Benin to membership of the Agency and commended the Director General, said that Lithuania was seriously concerned by world developments, particularly the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan.

134. For the past six years Lithuania had been a leading world producer of nuclear-generated electricity. In the previous year, the Ignalina nuclear power plant had produced more than 81% of the country's electricity. Improvement in safety at that plant was one of the Government's main goals and considerable resources were being used to that end. A detailed assessment had shown that the plant's safety level was satisfactory and there was no need for an immediate permanent shutdown and decommissioning. For the first time, Lithuania had started the licensing process for one of the Ignalina units, with the invaluable assistance of the world nuclear community.

135. Lithuania had started to update its energy strategy. A recent study had confirmed that nuclear energy remained the cheapest solution for the short term and it was expected to continue playing an important role in electricity generation at least until the year 2010.

136. Lithuania had acceded to the NPT in 1991. It had concluded a safeguards agreement with the Agency in 1992, and signed an additional protocol in March 1998. To enforce the Treaty and to be able to control the nuclear material on its territory, Lithuania had established a State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material, together with the associated regulations. Most of that material was spent fuel from Ignalina.

137. In accordance with the requirements of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, to which Lithuania had acceded in 1994, the competent authorities had elaborated procedures which took into account local criteria while meeting international standards. Also, Lithuania was exercising strict control over the export of nuclear-related items.

138. Good radioactive waste management was essential for the operation of nuclear power plants and the development of nuclear energy. Lithuania had signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management at the forty-first session of the General Conference. In 1998, a draft law on radioactive waste management, drawn up with the help of Agency experts, had been submitted to the Lithuanian Government. The problems associated with the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel and low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste could only be solved through a joint effort on the part of the world nuclear community, with the Agency playing an all-important co-ordinating role.

139. Lithuania had been one of the first countries to sign the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage. The Ignalina nuclear power plant was not yet insured against nuclear accident, but the required conditions were gradually being achieved.

140. Lithuania was especially grateful to the Agency for the assistance it had provided under regional technical co-operation projects to upgrade radiotherapy facilities and to develop a legal framework for nuclear activities and radioactive waste management. It intended to pay, subject to parliamentary approval, its full share of the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF in 1999. Furthermore, it was considering making special contributions to the TCF to finance specific tasks.

141. Mr. CHAUNY de PORTURAS-HOYLE (Peru) made a special point of congratulating the Ambassador of Mexico on her election as President of the General Conference and welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency.

142. The Agency's technical co-operation was crucial to the development of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, especially in the developing countries. In that regard, he highlighted the substantial aid that Peru had received under various projects, enabling it not only to profit from the experience of leading international experts, but also to receive valuable equipment. In addition, a large number of national specialists had participated in training programmes abroad. In particular, the Peruvian Government was grateful for the extrabudgetary contributions made by the Government of the United States of America to finance major projects in the fields of health and agriculture.

143. During the past year, the Peruvian Institute of Nuclear Energy had continued, and improved, implementation of a series of measures to ensure adequate radiation protection for the population, considering that there were now more than 2600 ionizing radiation sources being used in such sectors as medicine, industry, teaching and research.

144. Peru had increased its radioisotope production by almost 4.5% compared with the previous year. Particularly noteworthy was the development of two new radiopharmaceuticals, one for renal function studies and the other for cerebral perfusion studies.

145. In the field of environmental radiological monitoring, Peru was working in accordance with its commitments under the Antarctic Treaty and the Permanent South Pacific Commission. Thus, experts from the Peruvian Institute of Nuclear energy were participating for the second year running in a scientific expedition to study radiation levels in the Antarctic.

146. In the health sector, more than 12 000 Peruvian patients had continued to benefit from the diagnostic and therapeutic nuclear medicine services provided by a pilot centre for nuclear biology and medicine.

147. In the industrial sector, the multi-purpose irradiation facility, which had been in operation for three years, had been used for the conservation of more than 234 000 kilograms of food products for domestic consumption and export.

148. Peru had signed the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage and the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage as it was convinced that those two instruments laid the foundations of an international solidarity regime for the compensation of victims. Peru had also signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management with a view to incorporating its requirements in national regulations so as to ensure adequate protection of the population and the environment against the harmful effects of ionizing radiation. Furthermore, it would take part in the organizational meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, to be held in Vienna from 29 September to 2 October 1998.

149. In the past year, Peru had hosted several technical meetings, one of which, held in October 1997, had been for users of gamma cameras and software. In addition, Peru had organized, with Agency support, a Latin American workshop to harmonize radiopharmacy training programmes as well as a seminar on nuclear techniques to mark the Agency's fortieth anniversary.

150. He underlined the importance for Peru of the ARCAL programme which, following the wish of the countries of the region, was expected to acquire new scope as an intergovernmental agreement based on the Partners in Development concept. As a result of that new impetus, all the countries of the region would strengthen the co-operation links already uniting them and move towards sustainable development from which the Latin American population as a whole would profit directly.

151. Peru, which had always been a supporter of worldwide disarmament under strict international control, attached particular importance to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or weapons with indiscriminate effect, which had motivated it to sign and implement the main relevant international instruments. For that reason, the Peruvian Government deeply deplored the nuclear tests conducted in May in South Asia and emphasized the need to restart multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, particularly with a view to achieving universal accession to the NPT and the entry into force of the CTBT.

152. Mr. NIITENBERG (Estonia), having congratulated Benin on becoming a member of the Agency, associated himself with the statement made by Austria on behalf of the European Union.

153. He was deeply concerned about the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan, which posed a serious threat to the non-proliferation regime and to world peace and security. He therefore called on all States which had not already done so to accede to the NPT, the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. He also urged States with nuclear capabilities to sign and ratify the CTBT so as to enable its early entry into force.

154. Welcoming the recent establishment of an ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, he said that nuclear disarmament was a continuing process whose ultimate goal was the elimination of nuclear weapons. Care should be taken, however, not to hamper the process as a whole by setting unrealistic time-frames for attainment of the objectives and by excluding the possibility of intermediate measures. His Government hoped that the work of the ad hoc committee would be rapidly concluded.

155. His delegation welcomed the strengthening of the safeguards system and the signature of additional protocols by a number of States, particularly all the States of the European Union. His Government had demonstrated its support for the non-proliferation regime by concluding a safeguards agreement with the Agency in November 1997, and it was currently investigating the possibility of concluding an additional protocol.

156. His delegation noted with satisfaction that more and more States were acceding to the three legal instruments opened for signature in September 1997. Two of them, the Protocol to Amend the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage and the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, were creating a solid legal basis for extending the amount of compensation awarded to victims of nuclear accidents.

157. With regard to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, he reiterated his Government's support for the Convention's principles and announced that the necessary preparations for accession to it had already begun.

158. Estonian legislation in the field of radiation protection had also advanced in 1997 and 1998. The law on radiation protection, which had come into force in May 1997, had designated the Estonian Radiation Protection Centre as the national authority responsible for implementing and improving the relevant legislation. That Centre, which had 25 employees, was functioning effectively under the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment. A series of draft regulations had been prepared, five of which - mainly concerning licensing procedures for activities involving radiation - had already entered into force. In addition, a decree on the registration of radiation sources had been promulgated. Eight further regulations were expected to be completed by the end of 1998, and the process would continue the following year. While putting that legislative framework in place, the Estonian authorities were taking due account of the internationally accepted safety standards, and he thanked the States and international organizations which had assisted Estonia in that process.

159. Estonia was also grateful to the Agency for the assistance it had provided under technical co-operation projects and especially welcomed the inclusion in the 1999-2000 programme of a feasibility study on a final repository for radioactive waste. The Estonian Government intended to play an active role in international co-operation projects. It was fully aware of its obligation to ensure the safety of its population and its territory. That principle also applied to the activities of Estonian authorities within the framework of the country's "historical legacy", namely the decommissioning of the former Soviet military base at Paldiski and the work which had just started on restoration of the uranium milling tailings dump in

Sillamäe in north-eastern Estonia. A group of international experts had been advising on the decommissioning of the Paldiski base since 1994 and a similar group responsible for Sillamäe issues had been established in November 1997. His Government thanked all the States and international organizations which were participating in the activities of those groups.

160. Ms. KAWONZA (Zimbabwe), having welcomed the fact that Benin had been approved for membership of the Agency, said that Zimbabwe was benefiting from Agency technical assistance in four sectors identified in the Country Programme Framework as being of high priority: food and agriculture, human health, hydrology and radiation safety. Three projects involving the peaceful applications of nuclear techniques were currently under way with Agency support.

161. The purpose of the project on isotopes in water resources assessment and development was to establish a laboratory which would perform routine analyses for the carbon-14 dating of groundwater with a view to determining whether the aquifers in question had been charged recently, the rates of recharge and the vulnerability of the groundwater to pollution. The laboratory equipment had been installed, and groundwater from several aquifers in different parts of the country was being studied. Technicians had been sent to Australia and South Africa for training in the use of that modern nuclear equipment.

162. Significant progress had been made in the project on biological nitrogen fixation for increased crop production for smallholders - a Model Project from which the African region as a whole should benefit.

163. The sterile insect technique, which had been applied successfully on the island of Zanzibar, was now being applied in Zimbabwe to combat the tsetse fly.

164. Zimbabwe was examining its national radiation protection regulations and discussing with the Agency ways of strengthening international co-operation in nuclear, radiation and waste safety.

165. The aim of all those activities was to improve the quality of life of most of Zimbabwe's less privileged people, who lived in rural areas. Her delegation was therefore in favour of Agency technical co-operation being strengthened through generous contributions to the TCF.

166. On 29 April 1998, Zimbabwe had joined AFRA, enabling it to co-operate with other African Member States in the development of nuclear science and technology. In July, Zimbabwe had - in collaboration with the Agency - hosted a regional training course on the production of basic reagents for radioimmunoassay of tumour markers.

167. As to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, Zimbabwe was in favour of an expansion of the Board by seven seats - one of them to be assigned to Africa.

168. In conclusion, she said that Zimbabwe was aware of its obligations as a member of the Agency with regard to its contributions to the Regular Budget and payment of assessed programme costs. It had not been able to fulfil its obligations on time, however, owing to the

introduction of an 18-month budget cycle which would be ending in December. It would rectify the matter in the budgetary year that would start in January 1999.

169. Mr. AMIN (Afghanistan) said that his country attached great importance to the various legal instruments relating to non-proliferation, a ban on nuclear testing and complete disarmament - including nuclear disarmament - and to the steps being taken by the international community to implement those instruments. That was why it had been alarmed at the nuclear tests carried out on 28 May 1998 just 20 km from its southern border. Those tests had increased the danger of nuclear confrontation in the region and had also exposed the Afghan population to nuclear radiation. Although Afghanistan had appealed officially to UNEP after Pakistan's May 1998 nuclear tests, no tangible measures had been taken to ascertain the effects of those tests on the Afghan population and environment. His country expected the Agency and WHO to determine whether the population of southern Afghanistan had been exposed to nuclear radiation as a result of the tests and to assess the environmental damage which might have been caused by them.

170. It should be recalled that an earthquake had occurred in northern Afghanistan on 30 May, only two days after the nuclear tests, killing over 5000 people and destroying some 15 000 homes. The interrelationship between Pakistan's nuclear tests and the earthquake should become the subject of scientific scrutiny, and Afghanistan hoped that the relevant organizations within the United Nations system would look into the matter.

171. Pakistani expansionism had given rise to regional tensions. Unfortunately, the occupation of certain parts of Afghanistan by Taliban mercenaries and Pakistani military personnel had made confrontation very probable. Massive human rights violations - such as the massacre of thousands of Shi'ite Hazaras during the previous month and the killing of Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist - had been condemned worldwide. The sad irony of it all was that Pakistan was continuing to urge a reluctant international community to recognize the Taliban, contrary to the wishes of international humanitarian organizations. Pakistan's military circles should abandon their dangerous policy of hegemony.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.

