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President: Ms. LAJOUS VARGAS (Mexico)

Later: Mr. MIAH (Bangladesh)

CONTENTS

<u>Item of the agenda*</u>		<u>Paragraphs</u>
7	General debate and Annual Report for 1997 (continued)	1 - 83
	Statements by the delegates of:	
	Yemen	1 - 6
	Niger	7 - 11
	Venezuela	12 - 19
	Iraq	20 - 33
	Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization	34 - 40
	Luxembourg	41 - 46
	Uruguay	47 - 50
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	51 - 58
	Greece	59 - 64
	Portugal	65 - 68
	Thailand	69 - 74
	Jordan	75 - 83

[*] GC(42)/20.

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

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Delegates are kindly requested to bring their own copies of documents to meetings.

Abbreviations used in this record

AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
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
Bangkok Treaty	Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
CTBTO PrepCom	Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
LDC	Least developed country
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PTS	Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
RIA	Radioimmunoassay
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
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
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
VIC	Vienna International Centre

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

1. Mr. MAKKI (Yemen), having welcomed the admission of Benin to the Agency, said that the Agency played a vital role in the peaceful use of nuclear techniques for economic and social development in the world, while applying safeguards to prevent the diversion of nuclear material for military purposes or the misuse of nuclear technology. The conclusion of new international instruments and conventions, as well as the additional protocols to comprehensive safeguards agreements, reflected the progress that had been achieved with regard to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, the banning of nuclear tests, the fight against illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources, and in the area of nuclear safety.
2. Technical co-operation was a key area, especially for the developing countries in general and the LDCs in particular. It was therefore essential to strengthen the TCF by encouraging Member States, in particular the major donors, to discharge their financial obligations with respect to the Fund, and by expanding its resources, either by funding from the Regular Budget or by taking other measures to ensure that there was a balance between the Agency's activities.
3. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, Yemen favoured expansion of the Board of Governors and considered it the right of each regional group to decide on its own composition.
4. Despite the economic climate, Yemen was continuing its policy of administrative, financial and economic reform, and was endeavouring to develop a legal framework which would enable it to further its relations with the Agency in several areas. Yemen intended to sign a comprehensive safeguards agreement and to accede to or ratify the international conventions concluded under the auspices of the Agency. He hoped that the Agency would provide Yemen with assistance in that regard, particularly because his country lacked qualified national staff, equipment, laboratories and material. The Agency's support was also essential in fields such as radiation protection, medicine, agriculture, the environment and hydrology, and he called upon the Agency to increase and develop the co-operation activities that it was already carrying out in Yemen.
5. Yemen welcomed the results obtained by the Agency with regard to the application of safeguards and the implementation of Security Council resolutions. However, it hoped that progress would be made in the application of safeguards in the Middle East in order to establish the region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone and to rid it of all weapons of mass destruction. It was clear that the obstinacy of Israel - a country which had so far refused to submit its facilities to inspection and verification - was hindering the application of safeguards in the Middle East. It should also be noted that Israel was the only country in the region that had not signed the NPT, although it now had a significant nuclear capability that it had used to produce nuclear weapons; that was a serious threat to security, stability and peace in the region and in the world as a whole.

6. Yemen therefore called upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities and take every step to make Israel comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. The Agency should also take measures, with the same resolve and determination that it had demonstrated with regard to Iraq, to persuade Israel to submit its nuclear facilities to safeguards and to ensure that it did not develop nuclear weapons. Yemen urged Israel to sign the NPT, since such a step would help to increase trust among the countries of the region.

Mr. Miah (Bangladesh) took the Chair.

7. Mr. ABDOU-SALEYE (Niger) expressed his country's total commitment to the ideals and principles of the Agency and its satisfaction with the quality of technical assistance it had received in areas such as agriculture, water resources, health, mining, nuclear safety, and basic and applied research. Niger welcomed the new orientations, procedures, concepts and tools that had been adopted for the Agency's technical co-operation programme.

8. Despite being the world's third largest producer of uranium, which accounted for 75% of its export earnings, Niger was still one of the LDCs and faced great challenges in terms of poverty, hunger, thirst, desertification, illiteracy, and maternal and infant mortality. It therefore attached great importance to the AFRA programme and, in recognition of the Agency's commendable efforts, Niger had, despite its economic difficulties, paid ten years' arrears of contributions to the Agency's budget in 1997.

9. Niger had been a Party to the NPT since October 1992 and negotiations were currently under way on the conclusion of a comprehensive safeguards agreement.

10. In the area of safety, Niger was strengthening its radiation protection infrastructures and developing and adopting a number of legislative and regulatory texts relating to protection against ionizing radiation. Furthermore, following the establishment of a radiation protection laboratory at the uranium mining sites and of the Institute for Radioisotopes, a technical advisory committee for radiation protection and nuclear techniques had been established, as well as a national radiation protection centre. Very shortly, two radionuclide and seismological monitoring stations were due to be set up under the aegis of the CTBTO.

11. Turning to the question of amendment of Article VI of the Agency's Statute, he said that the gap between the industrialized and the developing countries should be reduced, if not eliminated. The General Conference should accept the proposal put forward by the Group of 77. The changes that had taken place in the world argued in favour of increasing the membership of the Board and of reducing the dominant role played by the countries that were most advanced in the technology of atomic energy, since the nuclear fuel cycle was the concern of all States.

12. Mr. BOERSNER STEDER (Venezuela), having welcomed Benin, expressed support for the Director General's efforts to implement administrative reforms aimed at improving the preparation and management of the Agency's programmes.

13. During the Agency's existence, the capacity of nuclear energy to help resolve or ameliorate problems afflicting mankind had been amply demonstrated. The benefits brought by nuclear techniques in fields such as crop improvement, potable water production, groundwater management and the diagnosis of disease were universally acknowledged. Venezuela had encouraged and endorsed the efforts to strengthen technical co-operation, which had recently begun to produce a positive impact on the quality of projects submitted for approval.

14. However, those positive results had generated greater demand for funding and Venezuela was therefore concerned at the tendency of some donor countries to reduce their contributions to the TCF. His delegation accordingly appealed to all Member States not to lose sight of the vital importance of the Agency's technical co-operation activities. For its part, despite its current financial difficulties, Venezuela had, during the past year, managed to clear almost all of its arrears in payments to the Agency.

15. Venezuela welcomed the recently adopted Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would support the ARCAL programme and constitute a fundamental tool for channelling regional co-operation. Venezuela was currently involved in 11 ARCAL projects.

16. Turning to the content of the Agency's technical co-operation programme, he noted with satisfaction that technology transfer and training were now geared to direct participation by end-users. The Agency's Model Projects in Venezuela were closely linked to national development objectives aimed at improving the population's standard of living, covering areas such as screening for neonatal hypothyroidism, animal nutrition and productivity and groundwater resources.

17. Venezuela strictly applied the provisions of the Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material and, as a party to the Tlatelolco Treaty, had joined with the other States of its region in undertaking to promote non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Venezuela was one of the many countries inspired by the ideal of complete disarmament, and believed that the NPT constituted the most suitable framework and instrument for achieving that objective. Venezuela deplored the recent resumption of nuclear testing and appealed to all States to accede to the NPT and to the CTBT, and urged all countries - whether parties to the latter treaty or not - to cease such testing.

18. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, Venezuela continued to favour an expansion in Board membership which would allow more equitable representation for all regions. He commended the Chairman of the Board of Governors on his efforts to seek a consensus solution acceptable to all Member States.

19. Finally, he expressed his country's unreserved support for the Agency's efforts to achieve balanced implementation of its technical co-operation and safeguards activities. Venezuela highly appreciated the Agency's commitment to strengthening and extending its co-operation with developing countries.

20. Mr. AL-JANABI (Iraq) noted that seven years had passed since the Agency had been authorized by the Security Council in section C of resolution 687 to destroy, remove and render harmless the former Iraqi nuclear programme. During that time, the Agency had carried out all the missions assigned to it, yet as a result of pressure by the United States, the Security Council had not yet taken a decision to transfer the nuclear file from the disarmament stage to the monitoring stage. The Agency had regrettably reinforced such pressure by stating in its report to the Security Council on 27 July 1998 that the non-existence of indications of the availability of prohibited equipment, materials or activities did not rule out their existence. It had also raised doubts about Iraq's co-operation and accused it of lack of full transparency.

21. Iraq had fulfilled its obligations under paragraphs 12 and 13 of section C of Security Council resolution 687. The Agency's reports had for years shown that, with the exception of some details, its disarmament activities had been completed and that it was at present only carrying out monitoring and verification. Indeed, upon completion of the thirteenth IAEA on-site inspection mission, the Agency had destroyed and rendered harmless all known key facilities and equipment, as stated in paragraph 9 of document GOV/INF/663. The Director General, in his report to the Security Council dated 5 April 1995 (reproduced in document GOV/INF/770) had indicated in paragraph 47 that the Agency was confident that the essential components of Iraq's clandestine nuclear programme had been identified and destroyed, removed or rendered harmless and that the scope of the past programme was well understood. Paragraph 35 of the same document also stated that all weapons-usable nuclear material had been removed from Iraq. The on-site inspection missions specified by resolution 687 had been completed several years previously and a technically coherent picture of Iraq's former nuclear programme had also been developed by the Agency as stated in all its reports on that subject.

22. The on-going monitoring and verification programme had been implemented in practice since 1991 inasmuch as the third paragraph on page 2 of the report on the eighth IAEA on-site inspection (GOV/INF/641) stated that monitoring activities initiated during the seventh inspection mission had continued during the eighth - in other words, before implementation of the monitoring plan had officially been initiated in 1994. The Agency had used the most advanced technological equipment and procedures in its monitoring and verification operations. It had not reported the existence of any prohibited facilities, materials or activities or any serious violations, as the Director General had confirmed in his reports and statements during the past two years of Agency inspection work in Iraq. Those reports therefore confirmed that the essence of section C of resolution 687 had been implemented and that the on-going monitoring and verification system was functioning efficiently and with the full co-operation of Iraq. Specifically, in paragraph 8 of his report to the Security Council on 7 October 1996 (reproduced in the Attachment to document GOV/INF/801), the Director General had stated that no indication of prohibited equipment, materials or activities had been detected, and in paragraph 28 of the same report had stated that the Iraqi counterpart had continued to co-operate with the Agency in a productive way.

23. The Director General's report to the Security Council in July 1998 (reproduced in document GOV/INF/1998/16) had also stated, in paragraph 35, that there were no indications

of Iraq having retained any physical capability for the indigenous production of weapons-usable nuclear material in amounts of any practical significance, nor any indication that Iraq had acquired or produced weapons-usable nuclear material. However, the report raised secondary topics that were made to sound as if they were outstanding matters that prevented the closure of the nuclear file and included certain unfounded claims that caused unnecessary suspicions.

24. In his report submitted to the Security Council on 27 April 1998 (reproduced in the Attachment to document GOV/INF/1998/13) the Director General had not raised any such suspicions and had stated, in paragraph 30, that the Iraqi counterpart had produced a document containing a summary of the technical achievements of its nuclear programme which was regarded by the Agency as being consistent with the technically coherent picture of Iraq's nuclear programme developed by the Agency in the course of its activities in Iraq. That report, therefore, did not indicate any technical obstacles. Nevertheless, three months after that report, during which a number of inspection missions had been carried out by the Agency's Action Team, the Team had started to abandon the technical procedures adopted by the Agency in favour of a political course at the instigation of the United States, a country hostile to Iraq.

25. The Director General had not, as Iraq had hoped, described the positive achievements of the monitoring and verification activities during the period from April to July 1998 and Iraq was forced to question the motives for the Agency's apparent change of attitude and ask why, in the July report, it had started to cast doubts on the efficiency of the monitoring and verification system that had been functioning for more than six years.

26. Iraq's decision on 5 August 1998 to suspend co-operation with UNSCOM and the Agency was an objective one and needed to be understood in its proper context. It was based on the fundamental fact that Iraq's obligations with respect to the disarmament requirements had been fulfilled. In return, Iraq expected the Security Council to start to fulfil its own obligations by implementing paragraph 22 of resolution 687 and lifting the sanctions against Iraq. In the meantime, as a sign of good will, Iraq was prepared to continue the monitoring activities under the terms of resolution 715.

27. In letters to the President of the Security Council dated 11 August 1998 and 2 September 1998, the Director General had claimed that the ongoing monitoring and verification system could not be fully implemented. Those two letters served to encourage hostility against Iraq. Iraq had already clarified its position on the matter in two letters sent by its Deputy Prime Minister to the President of the Security Council dated 13 August 1998 and 7 September 1998. Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister had pointed out that co-operation with the Agency was continuing normally and effectively in the area of ongoing monitoring, but that it had suspended the disarmament activities which the Agency had confirmed, in paragraph 72 of document S/1997/779 of 8 October 1997 (reproduced in the Appendix to document GOV/INF/827), that it had fully and comprehensively fulfilled; that the Agency was conducting inspection activities at 162 sites with the full co-operation of Iraq, although most of the sites were not related to nuclear activities; that the Agency was conducting on an almost daily basis environmental radioactivity surveys at all industrial facilities, as well as in the

streets of Baghdad and other governorates throughout the country to ensure that there was no nuclear activity; and that the Agency was now implementing an environmental monitoring programme under which two air sampling systems had been installed in Baghdad and another six sites designated for the installation of such systems, with Iraq having provided all the facilities necessary for the operation of those systems. The Deputy Prime Minister had made it clear that there were no grounds for suggesting that the implementation of the ongoing monitoring and verification plan was limited.

28. The Conference should therefore call upon the Agency and its Action Team to tell the whole truth and to refrain from raising issues that did not reflect the technical work that had been carried out in Iraq. The Agency, for its part, should declare that the Iraqi nuclear file was closed.

29. The joint efforts of Iraq and the Agency had been characterized over the years by professional and practical co-operation despite the effects of the sanctions which had caused the Iraqi people to suffer from shortages of food and medicine. Death rates had increased sharply and serious diseases had spread. During the 1991 war, the United States and British forces had used depleted uranium shells against civil and military targets, which had led to serious and long-lasting environmental damage. The international community should condemn the unforgivable crime that had been perpetrated against Iraq and help mitigate the radiation effects.

30. The Security Council resolutions allowed Iraq to use radioactive isotopes for agricultural, industrial and medical purposes. The Agency had offered some technical assistance in those fields and Iraq had been hoping that that could be expanded, but the political influence of the United States had prevented the implementation of assistance programmes. In 1997, Iraq had requested additional technical assistance to eradicate the old world screwworm. The amount of technical assistance offered was not enough to combat the spread of the epidemic and it was likely that the insect would spread to neighbouring countries. Iraq therefore appealed to the General Conference to increase the Agency's assistance and speed up the implementation of the screwworm eradication programme.

31. The Conference should realize that the member of the Sanctions Committee from the United States had objected for no good reason to the import of a gamma camera to be used for the diagnosis of cancer and to Iraq's participation in the interregional project on saline groundwater and wastelands for plant production. It was perfectly clear that such applications could hardly be used to develop weapons of mass destruction.

32. Seven years had elapsed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 687. Paragraph 14 of that resolution, calling for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, had not been implemented. In a unique precedent, the Security Council had demanded in resolution 487 in 1981 that Israel should subject its nuclear facilities and installations to Agency safeguards. The fact that Israel had never complied with that resolution was evidence of the double standards adopted by the United States in its selective implementation of Security Council resolutions.

33. In conclusion, he urged the General Conference to call upon the Agency to meet its obligations in the light of Iraq's compliance with the relevant international resolutions; to state the truth, without distorting facts or raising doubts about them; and to refrain from writing contradictory or misleading reports. The Agency could thus show itself to be a trustworthy and reliable organization committed to the support of the peaceful uses of atomic energy for the benefit of mankind.

34. Mr. HOFFMANN (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization) recalled that negotiations on the CTBT, the aim of which was to halt vertical as well as horizontal proliferation, had been concluded in summer 1996 and the Provisional Technical Secretariat had started work in March 1997 and, with the signing of the Host Country Agreement between the Preparatory Commission and the Republic of Austria on 18 March 1997, the CTBTO PrepCom had formally established itself as a new international organization in Vienna. The Provisional Technical Secretariat had, from the outset, sought to develop co-operative arrangements with the other VIC-based organizations and since self-sufficiency in all administrative areas had not initially been feasible, some routine operations had been outsourced. It had subsequently become clear that outsourcing was not the most cost-effective method and the PTS had reduced the level of outsourcing and worked to develop its own facilities for carrying out its various administrative tasks. In building up the organization, an attempt had been made to remain lean and to achieve maximum flexibility while minimizing its administrative expenses.

35. Agency expertise had facilitated his organization's work in a number of ways, notably through the provision of financial services and advice regarding their implementation through the use of rules modelled on those of the Agency. The PTS now had more than 150 staff members and all its units were to some extent operational. The CTBTO PrepCom had established three subsidiary bodies: working group A on administrative and budgetary matters, working group B on verification issues and an advisory group on financial, budgetary and associated administrative issues.

36. According to the CTBT, the verification regime needed to be operational at the time of the Treaty's entry into force. The global international monitoring system set the verification regime of the CTBT apart from verification measures contained in other treaties. The regime would consist of a worldwide network of monitoring stations, an international data centre in Vienna, and on-site inspections. A network of 321 seismic, infrasound, hydroacoustic and radionuclide stations would gradually be built up over the coming years, and, supported by 16 radionuclide laboratories, the international monitoring system would be capable of registering vibrations underground, in the sea and in the air, as well as detecting traces of radionuclides released into the atmosphere from nuclear explosions. Data generated by the four complementary technologies would be transmitted via a global communications system to the international data centre in Vienna for processing. All the data, raw or processed, would be made available to the States Signatories and ambiguous events would be subject to consultation and clarification. As a final verification measure, an on-site inspection might be requested. The progressive establishment of the international monitoring system was the main task of the Preparatory Commission and the Provisional Technical Secretariat.

37. The international monitoring system had so far been authorized to initiate work at 79 stations in 29 countries. Training courses and programmes were being held. The international data centre was being established progressively: the first seven computer servers had been installed in March 1998, with all remaining hardware and commercial software having been procured, installed and tested on schedule. During the period of the announced Indian nuclear tests - 11 to 13 May 1998 - the Provisional Technical Secretariat had been just in the process of installing the software and had therefore not been able to conduct real-time processing and analysis of results, but shortly thereafter the international data centre had retrieved the data for archiving and test analysis. It received data for both announced Pakistani nuclear explosions on 28 and 30 May and automatic processing of seismic data from primary seismic stations had provided first estimates of the event location.

38. The CTBTO had completed procurement and implementation of its global communications infrastructure, which would involve routing data directly from the international monitoring system stations to the international data centre and, at the same time, distributing data and products to States Signatories. In addition, a high-speed link had been established between the international data centre and the prototype international data centre in Arlington, United States of America. The on-site inspection division had made substantial progress on procedures and guidelines, and would be drawing up an operational manual.

39. The Treaty's ultimate success would depend on its implementation being guaranteed by the worldwide verification system so that each State Signatory could be assured that all others were adhering to the Treaty or that any violation would be detected, and on it becoming a global treaty, with as many countries as possible signing it. With 150 States Signatories, the Treaty was rapidly approaching the status of a universal treaty. Twenty-one States, including 10 of the 44 required for entry into force, had deposited their instruments of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the ratification process was well under way in other States. It was also essential that the United States of America, the Russian Federation and China should ratify the Treaty in addition to France and the United Kingdom, which had already done so.

40. The hope of achieving a world free of nuclear tests had not been thwarted by the recent tests carried out by India and Pakistan and he was even optimistic that there would be no further nuclear tests. He welcomed the declaration of the Prime Minister of Pakistan that his country would join the CTBT and again called on India to join in signing and supporting the common efforts to achieve a truly global and definitive ban on nuclear testing.

41. Mr. SANTER (Luxembourg) welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency and endorsed the statement made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, which reflected the Government of Luxembourg's position, in particular with regard to the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan and the regional tensions caused by Iraq and the DPRK in not fulfilling their international obligations.

42. He was pleased to have been able to sign the additional protocol for Luxembourg the previous Tuesday alongside his European Union colleagues, since it was during Luxembourg's presidency of the European Union in the second half of 1997 that his

Government had decided to give priority to efforts within the Union to bring about the early signature of additional protocols. He also hoped that the co-operation between the Agency and EURATOM, whose Safeguards Directorate was in Luxembourg, would continue to contribute to substantial savings for the Agency's budget while maintaining the effectiveness of the strengthened safeguards system.

43. Turning to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, he said that he looked forward to the organizational meeting of the Contracting Parties due to be held the following week in accordance with the Convention's provisions. He was convinced that the Convention would make a significant contribution to strengthening the safety of nuclear power plants in the world and urged all States, especially those which had nuclear power plants, to become parties to the Convention without delay and without conditions. One of the important provisions of the Convention on Nuclear Safety was the periodic review meetings to examine national reports by all the Contracting Parties in order to check that they were fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. Luxembourg looked forward with interest to the first review meeting which would take place in spring 1999.

44. He appealed to all States which had not yet done so to become parties without delay to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in order to allow that important instrument to enter into force quickly.

45. Finally, he appealed to all States which were not yet parties to the legal nuclear non-proliferation instruments to become parties without delay, in the interests of peace and regional and global security. He hoped also that the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty would soon come to a successful conclusion and noted that the Agency, by virtue of its experience and expertise, would be the key partner in implementing the treaty's verification system.

46. The entry into force of important conventions, the adoption of new legal instruments and the allocation of new tasks to the Agency would enhance the already prestigious image of the Agency, which was an international institution serving the interests of nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation, as well as the economic and social development of humanity.

47. Mr. SERVIÁN (Uruguay), after welcoming Benin to membership of the Agency, said that, in the sphere of nuclear applications, Uruguay had concentrated on projects intended to achieve specific results in areas such as animal and plant production, the control of animal diseases, environmental contamination, and health. Uruguay had succeeded in achieving a 100% screening rate for the early detection of neonatal hypothyroidism, which affected 1 child in 1000 in iodine-deficient regions, using RIA techniques developed with Agency assistance.

48. In the field of radiation protection, Uruguay was continuing its programme of training and activities to upgrade protection. With regard to nuclear safety, he said that the spent nuclear fuel from Uruguay's research reactor had recently been removed from the country and he thanked the United States Department of Energy for making that possible, and the Agency

and its Department of Safeguards, which had supervised the fuel shipment operation with speed and efficiency.

49. It was nearly 60 years since the discovery of nuclear fission had initiated a chain of events that included the invention, use and refinement of nuclear weapons, as well as the establishment of the Agency. It was to be hoped that a concerted effort could be made to ensure that the beginning of the next century became known as the era when such weapons were eliminated. In that regard, the increasing number of accessions to the NPT and CTBT were welcome developments. However, there was also bad news such as the continuing horizontal proliferation exemplified by the recent nuclear tests, the delay in eliminating nuclear arsenals, and the recent threat posed by illicit trafficking in nuclear material. In order to free the world of nuclear weapons, it would be necessary to introduce a series of measures, including an international ban on the production of fissionable nuclides that could be used to produce nuclear weapons, undertakings not to threaten to use such weapons or to use them first, greater controls, and the establishment of more nuclear-weapon-free zones. Uruguay had confirmed its commitment to non-proliferation by signing the NPT, the CTBT and an additional protocol to its safeguards agreement.

50. Finally, he reiterated his country's support for the Agency's technical co-operation activities and for the Agency's efforts to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. For its part, Uruguay intended to pledge a contribution to the TCF.

51. Mr. ABDULAATI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), having welcomed Benin's admission to the Agency, commended the Director General on the new approach to technical co-operation. It was not easy to reconcile the Agency's Statute with the Member States' desire that the Agency's contribution to the improvement of living standards and to sustainable development should be strengthened, and that a balance should be established between verification activities and technical co-operation.

52. His country attached great importance to the technical co-operation activities carried out by the Agency in all fields of nuclear energy utilization. He welcomed the projects being implemented, but recalled that technology transfer to his country had suffered owing to the unjust embargo which had been imposed on it. As a result, there had been delays in a large number of projects and a freeze on others, such as the one concerned with non-destructive testing. The continuation of the total embargo was retarding his country's technological development and was generating considerable health problems through the lack of pharmaceuticals. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya hoped that the Agency would take the necessary steps to restart the project on non-destructive testing and allow Libyan engineers to attend training courses organized by the Agency on that subject.

53. As a result of the freeze on its assets, his country was experiencing enormous difficulties in fulfilling its financial obligations to international organizations, including the Agency, and co-operation with the Agency was being hampered. Nevertheless, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had taken all the necessary steps to fulfil its financial obligations to the Agency by paying its contribution to the Regular Budget for 1998 and its share of the target for the TCF for 1998.

54. There were many developing countries like his own which would not be able to meet their growing energy needs over the coming decades without exploiting nuclear power. Small and medium-sized reactors were well suited to the level of consumption in small countries. It was therefore essential to give such reactors greater priority, particularly since they could also be used for potable water production. His country also wished to use nuclear techniques for groundwater exploration, and he stressed the importance of hydrological projects, particularly in countries with acute water shortages.

55. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the steps that the Agency had taken to strengthen international co-operation in nuclear and radiation safety, the safe transport and management of radioactive waste, and in tackling illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.

56. His country also attached great importance to nuclear disarmament matters because weapons of mass destruction were a threat to international peace and security. In international forums it had thus always advocated the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In that regard, it was vitally important to persuade Israel, the only State in the region which possessed nuclear weapons, to place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards in accordance with the NPT. There could be no peace in the Middle East as long as certain powers continued to support Israel. That being so, international organizations should abandon their discriminatory approach to the implementation of international resolutions, and the General Conference should take the measures needed to ensure that Israel complied with the wishes of the international community and implemented the relevant international resolutions.

57. Turning to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, he said that the changes which had taken place on the international scene provided grounds for advocating Board expansion, particularly since an expansion would increase the Board's credibility and moral and political authority. Africa was the poor relation when it came to representation on the Board, a state of affairs acknowledged by resolution GC(XXV)/RES/389, which had recommended that a solution be found. The reservations still being expressed by certain delegations were unjustified and the linkage being made between expansion of the Board and the composition of regional groups constituted an unacceptable delaying tactic, given the tragic situation in the Middle East. His delegation supported the Africa Group's position with regard to the number of additional seats, and the Arab countries' position with regard to the composition of regional groups.

58. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya welcomed the Agency's efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the safeguards system and to improve its efficiency through the strengthened safeguards system, whose objective was to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the very fact that reference was made to non-proliferation rather than the elimination of weapons of mass destruction amounted to explicit recognition of the right of certain countries to possess such weapons, a situation which constituted flagrant discrimination and left the spectre of mass destruction to roam free. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya believed that all weapons of mass destruction had to be destroyed before Programme 93+2 could become truly universal in scope. Israel's nuclear arsenal was subject neither to Agency safeguards nor to any other sort of international control. If the situation was

not remedied, safeguards would only serve to allow a few countries which possessed nuclear weapons to assert their domination over others.

Ms. Lajous Vargas (Mexico) resumed the Chair.

59. Mr. YENNIMATAS (Greece), having endorsed the statement made on behalf of the European Union, said that Greece had already signed the additional protocol to its safeguards agreement with EURATOM and the Agency. The measures foreseen in the Protocol, together with those already applied, provided the basis for a strengthened and more cost-effective safeguards system. However, it was essential to promote the universality of the safeguards regime. He therefore hoped that countries with substantial nuclear activities would before long accept the strengthened and integrated system of safeguards and enable the Agency to implement the system in a comprehensive and credible manner. The idea of a special fund to finance the Agency's expanded safeguards programme needed careful consideration. Greece welcomed the Trilateral Initiative launched by the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the Agency to explore ways and means of verifying that nuclear materials removed from weapons programmes were not returned to military use, and welcomed the initiative of certain countries with respect to the management of civil plutonium as a step towards greater transparency, which in turn contributed to further strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. It hoped that an agreement would soon result from the work of the ad hoc committee set up to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty and welcomed the decision of India and Pakistan to participate in those negotiations.

60. Turning to the area of nuclear safety, he stressed the important role played by the Agency in supporting intergovernmental efforts to strengthen nuclear safety worldwide by preparing for the implementation of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and by fostering the exchange of information and developing common safety standards. However, the Agency's role in nuclear safety issues worldwide had not been properly explored in the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and should be enhanced, since a number of events in the past year had highlighted the need for continuous efforts to maintain and improve safety. Although the overall safety trend was positive, Greece felt that special attention should be given to the older types of reactors and particularly those which had almost reached the end of their lifetime. It was important to expand the Agency's programme on the decommissioning of nuclear facilities beyond the training and consultative stage, and to deal with practical problems related to the decommissioning process and to provide the necessary assistance with respect to safety issues. The Agency's role should also be expanded so as to embrace an impartial overview of the general safety and seismological aspects of national programmes for the future introduction of nuclear power. Although Greece had signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, it regretted the fact that reprocessing facilities had not been included in the Convention.

61. Greece would like the Agency to undertake, in co-operation with Member States, more programmes related to the evaluation of border monitoring systems, particularly at sensitive borders, to deal with trafficking in nuclear material and radioactive sources. The Agency should accelerate its assistance to States in improving their physical protection measures for nuclear material at facilities and during transport.

62. The Agency's Annual Report for 1997 contained statistics relating to staffing, and while those concerning geographical distribution and the recruitment of women in the Professional category showed substantial improvement, the situation as far as Greece was concerned was not satisfactory. All applications submitted by Greek nationals for Secretariat posts had been systematically turned down, and his delegation urged the Director General to pay greater attention to its concerns in the matter.

63. Turning to national activities, he said that Greece had signed an agreement with Romania for early notification in the event of a nuclear accident and had renewed a five-year agreement with the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the exchange of technical information and co-operation in nuclear safety matters. The Greek Atomic Energy Commission was making preparations to harmonize existing Greek radiation protection regulations with the new European Union regulations in that area. Greece was also completing installation of an automatic telemetric radiation monitoring system covering the whole country as part of its efforts to strengthen its emergency preparedness. In addition, it had upgraded its two-year postgraduate programme for the training of scientists and technicians in the field of radiation protection, and was organizing special training seminars for radiation workers.

64. Finally, he said that Greece approved both the Agency's Annual Report for 1997 and the Programme and Budget for 1999 and 2000, and shared the Director General's view that a slight increase in the Regular Budget would be required to enable him to implement the Agency's important statutory functions and activities in order to avoid most of them being financed from extrabudgetary resources. The higher the percentage of extrabudgetary resources, the more difficult it would be to manage the Agency as a whole and for it to carry out its duties in accordance with the views of all Member States without discrimination.

65. Mr. MENDONÇA E MOURA (Portugal), having welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency and endorsed the statement made on behalf of the European Union and associated countries, expressed appreciation of the Agency's continued efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the technical co-operation programme through internal measures, such as restructuring the Department, as well as measures in recipient States. It supported the steps taken to overcome difficulties in obtaining the funds needed to cover planned activities and regretted that the current restrictions were hampering the expansion of activities which everyone wanted see.

66. More than 60% of technical co-operation expenditure related to sectors such as food, agriculture, health, water resources and industrial applications and it seemed unlikely that public opinion was aware of the extent and variety of the non-power applications of nuclear energy. The Agency's public information initiatives were therefore very important, especially the provision of information via the Internet, and via other media in areas where Internet access was not widespread.

67. He welcomed the progress made in strengthening safeguards over the past year and the efforts of both the Agency and Member States which had led to the signing of 32 additional protocols, including ones relating to the European Union countries, of which two were

nuclear-weapon States. However, he regretted the fact that there were still some States which were not parties to the NPT, the nuclear tests that had been conducted, the DPRK's lack of co-operation with the Agency and Iraq's refusal to grant Agency inspectors access to sites which had not been inspected before.

68. Nevertheless, the Agency and the majority of Member States had come a long way towards creating a world where all nuclear materials would be subject to independent verification so that the spectre of nuclear destruction would be banished for ever.

69. Mr. PROMPOJ (Thailand) said that all the people of his region aspired to a South East Asia that was free of nuclear weapons. For the Bangkok Treaty to be truly meaningful, the co-operation and support of all nuclear-weapon States with respect to the Protocol to the Treaty were essential. Consultations between the States Parties to the Treaty and the nuclear-weapon States to find a mutually agreeable solution were under way.

70. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was interested in the issue of nuclear safety and waste management, and had set up a working group to study the possibilities for ASEAN co-operation in that area. The group recognized the Agency's important role and regarded the possible ASEAN framework of co-operation as a complementary mechanism at the regional level which would lead to increased co-operation between ASEAN and the Agency.

71. Thailand was deeply concerned about the nuclear tests undertaken by India and Pakistan, which had undermined international efforts to ban such tests and reduce nuclear weapons. Thailand welcomed the announcement by Pakistan in the General Assembly of the United Nations that it would adhere to the CTBT, and hoped that consultations between India and Pakistan would lead to substantive progress towards them both joining the NPT and CTBT as soon as possible. The nuclear tests underscored the importance and necessity of an effective verification regime, and Thailand believed that the CTBTO verification regime and the Agency's strengthened safeguards system should be implemented in a complementary manner aimed at creating the cornerstone of the global arms control regime. The Agency and the CTBTO should work closely together and wherever possible share expertise, experiences and other resources.

72. Despite the global economic and financial difficulties, which had had an extensive and deep impact on the Thai economy, Thailand was determined to pay its contributions to the Agency in full and to pay its share of the target of the TCF for 1999. He urged all Member States to make full and timely payment of their assessed contributions, and implored donor countries to maintain their generous assistance to developing countries under bilateral or multilateral technical co-operation frameworks.

73. As a developing country, Thailand had benefited substantially from the peaceful use of nuclear energy for its economic and technological development, mainly through technical co-operation programmes under the auspices of the Agency or the RCA. One notable success in the area of public health was the neonatal screening programme for the early detection of iodine deficiency to prevent hypothyroidism, which was expected to cover all newborn babies by the year 2000.

74. As the new millennium approached, there should be no excuse for nuclear armaments, as nations realized that their enemies lay not beyond their borders but within them, in the myriad forms of poverty, ignorance, economic and social problems, and a deteriorating environment. Although Thailand did not yet have a nuclear power plant, the issue of nuclear power was still the subject of policy study and discussion. There had been lively debates in government and academic circles, as well as with non-governmental organizations and the general public. It was therefore essential for Thailand to have a programme for the dissemination of accurate public information, and it was grateful for the Agency's offer to assist in implementing its public information programme with extrabudgetary funding from Japan.

75. Mr. TWAL (Jordan), having welcomed the admission of Benin to the Agency, said that the Agency should place greater emphasis on regional co-operation, particularly in the areas of laboratory analyses and the provision of advisory services, especially for projects of economic and social benefit.

76. Jordan greatly appreciated the Agency's efforts in various fields, including the strengthening of international co-operation through the elaboration of conventions such as the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

77. The Agency should strengthen its activities in the Middle East with a view to extending the application of comprehensive safeguards agreements to all nuclear facilities in the region as a first step towards transforming the region into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and to eliminating all weapons of mass destruction from it. He commended the Director General on his untiring efforts in that regard.

78. Jordan had met all its commitments in connection with the nuclear non-proliferation regime. After having signed the NPT in 1968 and ratified it in 1974, Jordan had signed the CTBT in September 1996 and had ratified it the previous month; furthermore, it had just signed an additional protocol to its comprehensive safeguards agreement.

79. Nuclear activities, tests, accidents and various peaceful applications of nuclear energy in certain countries had led to the accumulation of large amounts of radioactive waste and environmental contamination in other countries lacking such techniques. There was a moral obligation towards future generations to solve those problems.

80. With regard to technical co-operation, Jordan favoured the concept of Model Projects; emphasis should be given to the development of human resources in developing countries, particularly with regard to the maintenance and repair of nuclear equipment. It might be useful to establish regional centres in order to strengthen national capabilities in that area.

81. Potable water was one of the major problems facing the developing countries: it was scarce and shortages were exacerbated by increased demand resulting from population growth - a phenomenon sometimes caused by huge influxes of refugees. Seawater

desalination was one of the possible solutions to this problem. He welcomed the plans to produce potable water economically using nuclear techniques, and pointed out that it would be even more useful to use nuclear reactors to produce both electricity and potable water. In that way, the Agency could also help to resolve the energy problems facing several Member States.

82. With regard to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, he said that the issue of equitable representation for the regions of Africa and of the Middle East and South Asia in the Board of Governors was more necessary than ever, since the members of those regions had made substantial progress in the nuclear area.

83. The Arab Atomic Energy Agency, whose headquarters were in Tunis, was a regional organization providing scientific and technical services in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, the volume and quality of the assistance that it provided were suffering because of its shortage of financial resources. Jordan therefore called upon the Agency to provide more support to that organization.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.