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International Atomic Energy Agency  
**GENERAL CONFERENCE**

GC(42)/OR.8  
7 January 1999  
GENERAL Distr.  
ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

**FORTY-SECOND (1998) REGULAR SESSION**

RECORD OF THE EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna  
on Thursday, 24 September 1998, at 3.10 p.m.

President: Ms. LAJOUS VARGAS (Mexico)  
Later: Mr. MADUNA (South Africa)

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[\*] GC(42)/20.

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

98-03484 (XXXIX)

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



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
Bangkok Treaty	Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
INIS	International Nuclear Information System
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
Rarotonga Treaty	South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty
TCDC	Technical co-operation among developing countries
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
(GC(42)/9 and GC(42)/21)

1. The PRESIDENT recalled that in 1989 the General Conference had approved a procedure whereby, when there was agreement regarding the candidate or candidates from a particular area, no secret ballot was held; balloting only took place for those areas where no candidate had been agreed upon. That procedure facilitated the efficient use of the General Conference's time. Accordingly, she proposed that Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which provided that elections to the Board should be by secret ballot, be suspended in respect of those areas for which there was agreement.
2. Mr. HOBEICA (Lebanon), speaking on behalf of the League of Arab States, requested the President to defer the election of the floating seat, which that year fell to the MESA Group, until the following day, since negotiations and consultations were still being held in the Arab Group.
3. The PRESIDENT, having agreed to that request, proposed to follow the above-mentioned procedure for the election of members to the Board of Governors in respect of the areas for which there was agreement. Drawing attention to document GC(42)/9, containing a list of the Agency Member States which the Board of Governors had designated to serve on the Board from the end of the Conference's present session until the end of the following session, she recalled that, under Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure, she had to indicate to the General Conference those elective places on the Board which had to be filled and, in that connection, invited delegates to refer to document GC(42)/21.
4. She took it that the General Conference wished to elect Brazil, Chile and Uruguay to the three vacant seats for Latin America.
5. Brazil, Chile and Uruguay were duly elected.
6. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect Norway and Greece to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.
7. Norway and Greece were duly elected.
8. The PRESIDENT took it that General Conference wished to elect Slovakia to the vacant seat for Eastern Europe.
9. Slovakia was duly elected.
10. The PRESIDENT took it that General Conference wished to elect Egypt and Sudan to the two vacant seats for Africa.
11. Egypt and Sudan were duly elected.
12. The PRESIDENT took it that General Conference wished to elect Saudi Arabia to the vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.

13. Saudi Arabia was duly elected.

14. The PRESIDENT took it that General Conference wished to elect Singapore to the vacant seat for South East Asia and the Pacific.

15. Singapore was duly elected.

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

16. Ms. ROMERO de GONZÁLEZ (Paraguay), having welcomed the admission of Benin to the Agency, said that Paraguay, which continued to benefit from international technical co-operation in the area of nuclear energy, paid tribute to the way in which the Agency carried out its task of promoting atomic energy for the peace, health and prosperity of all, while ensuring, so far as it was able, that the assistance provided by it or at its request or under its auspices was not used for military purposes. For that reason, Paraguay supported the Agency's safeguards activities.

17. Paraguay was participating in various technical co-operation projects that were of considerable importance to it through public bodies such as the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare (quality control of radiopharmaceuticals and improvement of brachytherapy), the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (feed supplementation for improving cattle productivity), the National Animal Health Secretariat (project on foot-and-mouth disease), and the Sanitary Works Corporation (use of tracers in water supply and pollution studies and the use of isotopes in groundwater studies in two regions of Paraguay). In addition, the National Atomic Energy Commission and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare were continuing to participate in the interregional project on radiation protection: they were involved in drawing up a unified document that would constitute the national regulations for protection against ionizing radiation and for the safety of radiation sources, and that would be used by the two bodies. Furthermore, as part of the interregional project on sustainable technologies for managing radioactive wastes, a programme for the conditioning of spent radium sources was to be implemented as from October 1998.

18. Paraguay was continuing to participate in all the activities carried out as part of the ARCAL programme, and like its partners, had endorsed the steps taken in preparation for the conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement that would make it possible to gain further benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. That agreement had just been approved by the Board of Governors and a decisive step had thus been taken towards the strengthening of the ARCAL programme, as a result of which the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean would be able to co-operate under excellent conditions.

19. The Faculty of Chemistry at the National University of Asunción now offered a course in radiopharmacy, which took account of the recommendations made during the workshop organized in Peru in November 1997 within the framework of the ARCAL programme. Furthermore, in connection with an ARCAL project on food irradiation in the countries of the Southern Cone, seminars for health professionals had been organized in collaboration with the

Institute of Food and Nutrition; the participants, approximately 60 in number, had studied the model regulations on irradiated food for Latin America and the Caribbean adopted by the International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation. The National Institute for Technology and Standardization had been informed of the results of the work so that it could use them as a point of departure for the preparation of new regulations with a view to harmonization at the regional level. Furthermore, a conference on food irradiation had been organized for Paraguayan industrialists to stimulate their interest in that technique of food preservation. In July 1998, the National Atomic Energy Commission had held an open day with the primary objective of providing information on the activities in progress under the ARCAL programme: the project co-ordinators had talked about their work and the results obtained. The projects in which Paraguay was participating covered areas such as the production and control of radiopharmaceuticals, nuclear medicine, radiotherapy, nuclear instrumentation, the use of radioimmunoassay for research on animal products and the marketing of those products, and nuclear information. The Nuclear Information Centre at the National Atomic Energy Commission, which represented INIS in Paraguay, offered users information research services on INIS CD-ROMs, and ensured the selective dissemination of that information as well as access to the INIS Internet pages and databases. The libraries at the National University of Asunción were involved in those activities, in co-operation with the National Agronomy Library, the Health Science Research Institute, the Technical Planning Secretariat and the United Nations Information Centre in Paraguay.

20. In conclusion, she thanked the Agency for its untiring support for the implementation of a whole series of projects which made an important contribution to sustainable development in Paraguay.

Mr. Maduna (South Africa) took the Chair.

21. Mr. MKRTCHIAN (Armenia), having welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency, said that he was pleased to announce that Armenia had deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention on Nuclear Safety on the first day of the General Conference. The Armenian Nuclear Regulatory Authority was currently preparing the national report to be submitted in accordance with the Convention, and the Armenian delegation was looking forward to taking an active part in the first review conference in April 1999.

22. His delegation fully associated itself with other delegations in denouncing the nuclear tests carried out in South Asia in May. It was particularly concerned about the possible negative consequences of those tests on the international non-proliferation regime and on the commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals further. It was pleased that no other tests had been planned, and urged the two States concerned to sign the CTBT. Armenia was convinced that once that step had been taken, the entry into force of the CTBT and the rapid conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty would provide the declared nuclear-weapon States with the necessary prerequisites for rapid decisive action towards fulfilling their obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

23. Armenia's policy with regard to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was clear and consistent, since it was based on a serious and genuine commitment to the

objectives and principles of non-proliferation. On 24 September 1991, exactly three days after the country had declared independence, the Armenian Parliament had adopted the decision to accede to the NPT. Shortly afterwards, Armenia had concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the Agency. Since that agreement's entry into force on 5 May 1994, all Armenia's nuclear material subject to the agreement had been placed under full-scope Agency safeguards. During the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995, Armenia, which was in favour of the Treaty's indefinite extension, had co-sponsored the Canadian resolution that had enabled the Conference to take a consensus decision to that effect.

24. Armenia was eager to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and had been the first State with an operating nuclear power plant to sign, on 29 September 1997, an additional protocol based on the model approved by the Board of Governors in April 1997. Signature of additional protocols by an increasing number of States with exemplary non-proliferation behaviour would serve two purposes: firstly, to subject the part of the nuclear fuel cycle currently under comprehensive safeguards to strengthened safeguards; and, secondly, to establish a new international standard and exert the necessary influence on States inclined to carry out undeclared nuclear activities to ensure that they respected that standard. Thus, the Armenian delegation urged all States that had not yet done so to conclude, in the near future, an additional protocol to their safeguards agreement with the Agency. For its part, Armenia had already begun the constitutional process for ratification of the protocol and the matter would be brought before Parliament at the autumn 1998 session.

25. The Agency's technical co-operation programme contributed greatly to the sustainable development of the developing countries and Armenia wished to thank all the donor countries that had helped the newly independent States to improve their technological and scientific knowledge in areas such as the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the elaboration of operational safety standards, occupational radiation protection in nuclear power plants, seismic safety and the training of staff. It hoped that they would continue to make contributions to the TCF in the next few years to enable the newly independent States to continue to strengthen their national infrastructure and train their staff to ensure the safe use of nuclear energy and the harmonization of their operating standards with those laid down by the Agency.

26. Despite the serious economic difficulties that Armenia was facing, it had been able to pay its contributions to the Regular Budget and the TCF. In 1998, it had paid US \$92 000 to the TCF - part of that amount had been to clear its arrears of assessed programme costs and the rest had been a voluntary contribution. The previous week, the Armenian Government had formally pledged to pay in full its share of the TCF target for 1999.

27. In conclusion, he thanked the Department of Technical Co-operation, the Department of Safeguards and the Legal Division for the very useful and productive discussions they had had with the Armenian delegation during the General Conference, and the entire Secretariat for the excellent organization of the Conference.

28. Mr. URRUELA PRADO (Guatemala) said that as part of the country's general reorganization, a new General Directorate for Energy that was better suited to current needs

had been established. The modernization process also encompassed other areas of the Ministry of Energy.

29. For a long time, Guatemala had attached importance to the development of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in various areas, which had helped to improve the population's quality of life and had contributed to the country's sustainable socio-economic development. In 1997 and 1998, the radiation safety programme had been developed with the licensing of different activities involving radiation and the conclusion of new co-operation agreements with different universities in the country to strengthen teaching capabilities and the use of nuclear applications in the areas of radiation safety and dosimetry.

30. The interregional projects on radiation protection and radioactive waste management had made it possible to update the inventory of radiation sources. The establishment of regulations and standards had continued and Guatemalan specialists and technicians had continued to attend seminars and courses to further their knowledge in that area. The Guatemalan Government had also benefited from co-operation with the Brazilian Government and the Agency on the conditioning of discarded radium-226 sources.

31. The General Directorate for Energy had contributed to the development of the industrial sector through its laboratories for nuclear analysis, non-destructive testing and gamma spectrometry. The nuclear analytical laboratory had made it possible to perform rapid analysis of samples using total reflection X-ray fluorescence as part of studies involving the metallurgical, mining, food and petroleum industries. The non-destructive testing laboratory inspected structures and different types of metal objects and implemented quality control programmes.

32. With regard to the environment, in addition to the use of chemical and traditional methods, the development of nuclear techniques such as radioactive tracers had made it possible to study contamination and eutrophication of various water bodies in the country, to monitor greenhouse gases and to quantify environmentally hazardous metals.

33. Turning to interinstitutional co-operation, he drew attention to the action undertaken, together with the United States Department of Agriculture, which had led to the successful control of the Mediterranean fruit fly under the MOSCAMED programme. In that connection, the El Pino centre of excellence was currently developing a new strain which should permit even more effective control of fruit flies in the area under study. Sterile pupae were currently being exported to the United States, Israel and Latin America. Furthermore, each year the centre provided training to fellowship students from around the world in systems and techniques related to its work.

34. In the area of health, progress in diagnostic imaging and endocrinology using radioimmunoassay had enabled the nuclear medicine departments in the country to make that technique available to all and to treat thousands of patients. Furthermore, it was expected that the upgrading of gamma cameras within the framework of the ARCAL programme would make it possible to increase the number of diagnoses by dynamic imaging.



35. In the area of radiopharmacy, activities concerned, on the one hand, the preparation and production of freeze-dried radiopharmaceuticals to supply all the nuclear medicine centres in the country, and, on the other, the development of research projects for the production of new radiopharmaceuticals for therapy and diagnosis.

36. The National Cancer Institute had recently received, through the ARCAL programme and the technical co-operation programme, new equipment and radiation sources to treat, in particular, cervical cancer, the second most common cause of death among women in Guatemala. At the same time, radiotherapy quality control programmes had been established, as well as a programme for the training of specialists and technicians.

37. In the agricultural sector, the Guatemalan Agricultural Science and Technology Institute had developed improved varieties of plants using biotechnology and radiation-induced mutations. Agricultural research to improve the nutritional quality of various species, such as the bean, which was part of the staple diet of the Guatemalan people, had led to the marketing of several products. Similar research had also been carried out on wheat and other food plants.

38. Guatemala had participated in the ARCAL programme by organizing regional meetings, co-operating with countries of the region and also receiving their assistance, and it supported the strategies to ensure the programme's future. Finally, he noted that the Agency's assistance had made a major contribution to the development of nuclear applications in Guatemala. His Government was committed to providing the necessary support to the technical co-operation programme in order to achieve the desired objectives and to paying its voluntary contribution to the TCF.

39. Mr. TRUJILLO GARCIA (Colombia) welcomed the election of a representative of Mexico as the President of the General Conference. Drawing attention to the restructuring of the bodies responsible for Colombian nuclear policy, launched in 1997, he said that the Government had started by enacting two decrees to allocate the tasks of the Institute of Nuclear Science and Alternative Energy (INEA), which was part of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and those of the Research Institute for Geological Sciences, Mining and Chemistry (INGEOMINAS). The Agency had sent an expert mission to Colombia to assess the physical safety of the nuclear reactor, as well as the quality of the inspection and licensing system. The visit had provided Colombia with new information for a review of the organization of its nuclear infrastructure and it was now necessary to make the required corrections and adaptations. He hoped that the work would enable his country to strengthen its co-operation ties with the Agency, whose work it greatly appreciated.

40. Although the process of restructuring had had an effect on the regular implementation of certain scientific and technical activities, Colombia had nevertheless recently upgraded its research reactor, replacing the fuel with a less enriched fuel in order to reduce the radiation risk; the reactor would be used for teaching purposes and basic research only. It should be noted that Colombia did not mine radioactive ore and did not therefore manufacture nuclear fuel.

41. Colombia imported radioisotopes since it was unable to produce them owing to the limited flux of its reactor. An inventory was currently being taken of the radioisotopes used and the facilities licensed to use them. In the medical field, the radium needles used in brachytherapy had been replaced by safer equipment involving caesium-137 sources.

42. With regard to radiation protection and nuclear safety, an interim storage facility for spent sources had been constructed with Agency assistance at the premises of the INEA in Santafé de Bogotá. Radiation protection and nuclear safety were of the utmost concern to the Colombian authorities, which intended to establish, in the near future, an efficient and independent regulatory system, as well as a unified radiation monitoring system. Furthermore, through INGEMINAS, Colombia was participating in the world nuclear test monitoring programme; with Canadian assistance, it had established a broad band seismological station at El Rosal, which complemented the Colombian seismic monitoring network.

43. The Agency's prime objective continued to be to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, an objective it achieved by providing developing Member States with effective assistance in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Colombia was therefore pleased to note that the ARCAL agreement would be signed by the countries of the region during the present session of the General Conference; after fruitful negotiations, they had managed to draft a binding agreement which, with the co-operation of the Agency, would make it possible to strengthen further co-operation between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of teaching, research and the development of nuclear science and techniques - that was a great success for horizontal co-operation. With regard to the TCF, he said that it should be strengthened through the provision of adequate resources. For its part, Colombia was making every effort to pay its contributions on time and it hoped that other countries would do the same.

44. Like all countries striving for peace, Colombia was aware that that dream would only become a reality when there was general and complete disarmament. It could, therefore, only deplore, in the strongest possible terms, the conducting of nuclear tests of whatever type, since they jeopardized international peace and security and were a serious threat to the environment and human health. Colombia also regretted that the nuclear-weapon States had not taken sufficient steps to ensure the rapid elimination of all such weapons. Colombia, which was a party to the Tlatelolco Treaty and the NPT, and a signatory to the CTBT, was a strong advocate of the elimination of nuclear weapons and had urged the international community to begin negotiations immediately on nuclear disarmament. In its opinion, the responsibility for taking decisive measures to rid the world of the nuclear threat lay with the States that possessed such weapons. Those States should demonstrate their political will by supporting the establishment, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, of a special committee for nuclear disarmament negotiations. The only solution and the only way out of the current deadlock was the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

45. Mr. MICHAELIDES (Cyprus), having welcomed Benin as a new member of the Agency, recalled that the previous year Cyprus had encouraged all Member States of the

Agency to co-operate more closely and to help the Agency to enhance its activities and its role so that mankind would continue to benefit from its work in the future.

46. Over the previous year, Cyprus had worked towards that goal: it had created a suitable infrastructure and an operational legal framework to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials, and had ratified the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. The Council of Ministers had recently approved the ratification of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the ratification process was expected to be completed by the end of the year. Furthermore, it had also approved the ratification of the additional protocol to the safeguards agreement, and he hoped that, with the Agency's assistance, that ratification process would also be completed by the end of the year.

47. One even more important step was the decision of the Council of Ministers to establish the Cyprus Atomic Energy Committee. In the near future, with the Agency's assistance, the necessary legislation would be adopted and the competent authorities and required infrastructure would be established to ensure that the people of Cyprus were protected against the harmful effects of ionizing radiation and that Cyprus was meeting its international commitments.

48. In order to strengthen further its co-operation with the Agency's Member States, and to demonstrate its strong commitment to combatting proliferation and illicit trafficking in nuclear-weapon materials and nuclear-related dual-purpose items and technologies, Cyprus had recently applied to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Furthermore, it had signed the CTBT and was modifying its legislation with a view to ratifying that Treaty.

49. Eager to ensure a peaceful future for mankind, Cyprus had contributed as far as possible to strengthening international security and the safeguards system. Further steps could be taken to establish peace in the world through international co-operation and mutual understanding.

50. In conclusion, he fully supported the Director General's initiatives and noted that Cypriot experts had derived great benefit from their participation in national and regional technical co-operation projects, and in various courses, seminars, workshops and conferences organized during the year by the Agency.

51. Mr. UMER (Nigeria), having welcomed the admission of Benin to the Agency, noted with satisfaction the Agency's achievements in 1997 in various sectors of its activities and the important measures introduced in the management of technical co-operation, especially the incorporation of projects in the national development objectives of Member States. He welcomed the fact that the new strategy, involving closer collaboration right from the project conception stage, was being implemented on an increasingly wide scale. He also commended the research and technology transfer programmes that had made a positive contribution to sustainable soil and water management, animal production and health, food irradiation techniques and plant breeding using mutation techniques. The encouraging results of the studies conducted in Nigeria on the value of nitrogen-fixing plants for rehabilitating and maintaining the fertility of tropical soils was generating increasing interest in the country and he would welcome the Agency's continued assistance in that area. He also commended the

Model Project concept, which was being pursued on a wide geographical basis, and mentioned in particular the water resources management project in which Nigeria was actively participating.

52. Nigeria, which continued to attach high priority to the technical co-operation programme, was very concerned at the unexpected decline in contributions to the TCF. Notwithstanding the conclusions of the Informal Working Group on the Financing of Technical Assistance, he believed that, in order to ensure the effective implementation of that important part of the Agency's activities, all Member States should renew their commitment to pay their contributions in full and on time. As a gesture of its commitment to the technical co-operation programme, the Nigerian Government was pledging a contribution of \$50 000 to the TCF for 1999.

53. In September 1988, representatives of African Member States had met during the thirty-second regular session of the General Conference to consider ways of intensifying regional co-operation in the use of nuclear techniques for development. That had given rise to AFRA, which in ten years had proved to be an important framework for the exchange of information and experience among African scientists and technicians in the field of nuclear science and technology. As a founding member of AFRA, Nigeria played an active role in all its programme activities, and Nigerian scientists were participating in ten AFRA projects. Nigeria had also hosted two AFRA training workshops at the Centre for Energy Research and Training in Zaria, one on the evaluation of the hazards associated with waste with an enhanced concentration of naturally occurring radionuclides, and the other to formulate guidelines for the management of waste from medical applications and consumer products. In that connection, he expressed Nigeria's appreciation to the Agency for its regular support to AFRA, and to the United States, France, the UNDP, OPEC and all those that had contributed to AFRA's success. Nigeria continued to seek funds from other developed countries to enhance AFRA's activities.

54. Nigeria's determination to use nuclear energy for peaceful and for research purposes was demonstrated by its miniature neutron source reactor project. The project was progressing well with the completion of approximately 90% of the infrastructure, while the reactor itself had already been dispatched by the Chinese manufacturers. He thanked the Agency once more for its assistance with that project.

55. Nigeria attached great importance to nuclear safety and welcomed the preparations for the implementation of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. It also supported international efforts in the areas of nuclear safety, radioactive waste management and radiation protection, and welcomed the positive measures outlined in that connection by the Secretariat.

56. Nigeria had observed with concern the prolonged negotiations on the amendment of Article VI of the Statute. The call for amendment was motivated by the serious under-representation of developing Member States on the Board of Governors. He therefore urged all the parties concerned to demonstrate a spirit of compromise in the coming negotiations.

57. Ms. PADILLA TERCERO (Nicaragua) hailed the election of a Mexican woman as President of the General Conference as an honour for all the women of Latin America and welcomed Benin's admission to the Agency.

58. The Department of Technical Co-operation was to be commended on having strengthened its efficiency and effectiveness in recent years. The technical co-operation given to Nicaragua in conjunction with national projects had been instrumental in solving some of the country's urgent problems. In the area of health, the Agency had given considerable support for the establishment of the National Radiotherapy Institute, which was of great benefit to the economically deprived sectors of the population and, in the area of the environment, it had also provided support for the cleaning up of Lake Managua and the development of geothermal resources, providing solutions to socio-economic and ecological problems.

59. She appealed to the generosity of the donor countries to provide extrabudgetary support for the continuation of the Agency's technical co-operation programmes in Nicaragua in the 1999-2000 cycle. The radiotherapy unit provided with the help of the Norwegian Government and the Agency was not sufficient to cope with the increasing number of patients. Nicaragua did not have the necessary resources to purchase a second unit, which was nevertheless needed. It was also essential to start to develop nuclear medicine, which did not yet exist in Nicaragua and which was only available to a few people who had the means to be treated abroad. Nicaragua also needed to have a research reactor to promote the country's scientific development. Nicaragua had paid its contributions to the TCF for 1997 and 1998 and to the Regular Budget and hoped that that major effort would encourage the donor countries to meet their commitments to the developing countries in full.

60. Poverty, the enemy of progress, could only be fought on a common front. Nicaragua welcomed the Board's approval of the intergovernmental ARCAL agreement, under which the States Parties would devote themselves to using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to defending their mutual interests with respect to development. The Nicaraguan Government had decided to sign that agreement. Nevertheless, mechanisms would have to be established to promote co-operation between ARCAL States Parties, regardless of their size, so that the least developed among them could receive the assistance which they needed.

61. Mr. BULBULA (Ethiopia), having welcomed Benin, thanked the Agency for its efforts in transferring nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Among the Agency's activities of global significance was the establishment in Africa of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, which ensured the safety of the African continent from nuclear threats.

62. The Ethiopian Government, through the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission, was in the process of establishing the necessary capacity for implementing programmes and projects of socio-economic relevance. It was confident that its partnership with the Agency would bear fruit.

63. Ethiopia co-operated with the Agency in the eradication of livestock diseases such as trypanosomiasis using the sterile insect technique, in isotope hydrology and in the

development and management of groundwater and geothermal resources. Those activities were backed up by the training of human resources in nuclear technology and physics. Ethiopia was grateful to the donors which had been able to complement their support by providing cost-free experts.

64. Ethiopia also benefited from the Agency's programme in the field of nutrition and participated in regional programmes, particularly through AFRA, and Model Projects. The technical working group meetings of AFRA were useful both for the technical management of the programme and for the consideration of issues related to African development. The technical co-operation network developed through TCDC was taking root.

65. Ethiopia's institutional approach, together with the Agency's willingness to be an effective and solid partner in the country's development efforts, provided an opportunity which Ethiopia wished to foster. The Country Programme Framework, complemented by short-term, medium-term and long-term plans, would enhance the partnership between the Agency and Ethiopia for technical co-operation purposes. Areas of opportunity would be clearly identified in terms of their relevance.

66. In April 1998, the Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission had published a special bulletin on the occasion of the Agency's fortieth anniversary, highlighting its co-operation achievements and future projects. Also in April, Ethiopia had hosted the ninth technical working group meeting of AFRA in Addis Ababa, headquarters of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

67. Mr. HEZZAH (League of Arab States) said that the League, which had a co-operation agreement with the Agency, wished to strengthen that co-operation. The visit to the Agency by the League's Secretary-General in July 1998 and his discussion at that time with the Agency's Director General would undoubtedly open up new prospects for co-operation between the two organizations. It was to be hoped that the Agency would strengthen its role in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by establishing a balance between its safeguards and nuclear safety activities and its technical co-operation activities. The League would make every effort to rid the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. It should be recalled that all Member States of the League had acceded to the NPT and had submitted their nuclear facilities to comprehensive safeguards. The international community was called upon to invite Israel to accede to the NPT without delay and to submit all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive Agency safeguards as a necessary step towards the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, which would permit the consolidation of peace and security in the region. The Director General was therefore urged to intensify his contacts with the countries of the region with a view to accelerating that process.

68. Mr. ROMAN-MOREY (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) welcomed the election of a woman representing a Latin American country as President of the General Conference.

69. As was well known, the Tlatelolco Treaty had been the first international instrument to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated region of the planet. More than three decades after its adoption, that Treaty, to which all the countries of the region had acceded, had become a model for the world's other nuclear-weapon-free zones, which constituted the backbone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The Tlatelolco Treaty established, both in its spirit and in its letter, the inalienable right of States to use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes for their socio-economic development and provided for the application of the necessary international safeguards by the Agency.

70. During the past year, OPANAL had had to take a clear and firm stand in response to the severe blow suffered by the global efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons as a result of the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean earnestly hoped that those tests would be the last to be witnessed by mankind. In that connection, Pakistan's intention to sign the CTBT in the near future was comforting news.

71. Another matter of considerable concern to OPANAL was the transport of radioactive materials in the zone of application of the Tlatelolco Treaty. There were major international shipping routes in that zone, notably the Caribbean Sea, the Panama Canal and the Straits of Magellan. The General Conference of OPANAL and the Agency's Board of Governors had frequently expressed their views on that subject. It was to be hoped that at the present session of the Agency's General Conference, new and more comprehensive safety measures would be proposed and, where appropriate, approved - in particular, measures for the protection and safety of those States along whose coasts increasingly dangerous nuclear cargoes were carried. The Tlatelolco Treaty did not cover such matters, and the countries of the region, which had always demonstrated the greatest respect for international law, depended on international bodies to protect the interests of the coastal populations concerned.

72. With regard to nuclear disarmament, although the Latin American and Caribbean region had established a nuclear-weapon-free zone, its efforts did not stop there, and it was campaigning for the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in other populated regions of the planet. It should be recalled that no less than 110 countries had put those principles into practice through the Tlatelolco Treaty in Latin America, the Rarotonga Treaty in the South Pacific, the Bangkok Treaty in South East Asia and the Pelindaba Treaty in Africa. It was to be hoped that the nuclear Powers, which had made specific commitments through the Additional Protocols to the Tlatelolco Treaty, would apply themselves with greater vigour and transparency to eliminating nuclear weapons.

73. The Tlatelolco Treaty had been signed by all the countries of the region and the principle of universality was for them particularly important. It was OPANAL's earnest hope therefore that, as in the past, the Agency would encourage international events at the regional level to promote universal respect for its requirements in the areas of safeguards and nuclear safety through additional protocols. Other States of the region that were not yet members of the Agency might also be encouraged to profit from the benefits it offered and be ready to assume the concomitant obligations. There were many areas in which the Agency and OPANAL could co-operate and OPANAL, for its part, was, as always, ready to respond to or to propose initiatives.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.