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RECORD OF THE FIRST PLENARY MEETING

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on Monday, 18 September 2000, at 10.05 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. KADRI (Algeria)
President: Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic)

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[*] GC(44)/1 and Add.1.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(44)/INF/18.

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Abbreviations used in this record

Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty	Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems
AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
Agreed Framework	Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Early Notification Convention	Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
EU	European Union
HEU	High-enriched uranium
ICRP	International Commission on Radiological Protection
INSAG	International Nuclear Safety Advisory Group
INSARR	Integrated Safety Assessment of Research Reactors
Interpol	International Criminal Police Organization
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRT	International Regulatory Review Team
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
LWR	Light-water reactor
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
START II	Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Trilateral Initiative	Trilateral Initiative launched by the Minister of the Russian Federation for Atomic Energy, the Secretary of Energy of the United States and the Agency's Director General on 17 September 1996 to consider practical measures for the application of IAEA verification to fissile material originating from nuclear weapons

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OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared open the forty-fourth regular session of the General Conference.
2. In accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, he invited delegates to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.

3. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat, the members of the General Committee and to all delegations, whose efforts during the forty-third session of the General Conference had greatly contributed to its success.
4. The annual session of the General Conference provided an opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to using nuclear energy exclusively for economic and social development, and to renew their support for the Agency, especially in its predominant role in developing and enhancing the non-proliferation regime and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
5. One of the most important achievements of the forty-third session of the General Conference had been the adoption of all resolutions and decisions by consensus, most notably in respect of the amendment to Article VI of the Statute after almost 25 years of hard negotiations. It was to be hoped that that amendment would soon enter into force and that consensus decisions would again prevail at the present session of the General Conference.
6. The current session was taking place only a few months after the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which had reaffirmed the Agency's role as the organization responsible for the enhancement and development of the non-proliferation regime and had underlined the importance of the Agency's activities to promote international security and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It had also emphasized the need for the Agency to be provided with adequate human and financial resources to enable it to carry out its mandate.
7. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the forty-fourth session would be a very successful one.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

8. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.
9. Mr. CHIDAMBARAM (India), speaking on behalf of the Middle East and South Asia Group, proposed Mr. Othman (Syrian Arab Republic) for that position.
10. Mr. Othman (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected President by acclamation.

11. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT congratulated Mr. Othman on his election and wished him every success in his task.

Mr. Othman (Syrian Arab Republic) took the Chair.

12. The PRESIDENT thanked all delegations, particularly the members of the MESA Group, for their support and confidence in electing him as President and expressed his appreciation to the outgoing President, Mr. Kadri, who had presided over the previous session of the General Conference.

13. Since its establishment, the Agency had carried out its activities in accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations by promoting international peace and co-operation. Syria had been one of the first countries to join the Agency and to sign international conventions concluded in pursuance of the Agency's policies. Together with other Arab countries in West Asia, Syria was trying to establish a regional group to promote technical co-operation programmes and to decrease the burden on the Secretariat.

14. It was to be hoped that at the present session of the General Conference - the first in the new millennium - a spirit of understanding and co-operation would prevail, enabling resolutions to be adopted by consensus and enabling the Agency to emerge stronger and more effective after the Conference. All countries had a responsibility for preserving the planet's resources, for using science for the good of mankind, and for ensuring that nuclear energy was used for peaceful purposes.

15. Turning to the election of officers and appointment of the General Committee, he recalled that under rules 34 and 40 of its Rules of Procedure, the Conference had to elect eight Vice-Presidents, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole and five additional members of the General Committee resulting, with himself as Chairman, in a Committee of 15. From the consultations that had taken place, he understood that there was a consensus on the matter and he therefore proposed that the delegates of Australia, Kuwait, Malta, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Russian Federation and United States of America be elected as Vice-Presidents, that Mr. Gregorič of Slovenia be elected as Chairman of the Committee of the Whole and that the delegates of Canada, France, Luxembourg, Mexico and South Africa be elected as additional members of the General Committee.

16. The President's proposals were accepted.

17. The PRESIDENT further proposed that, prior to the General Committee's meeting and its submission of its recommendations on the agenda, the General Conference waive Rule 42 of its Rules of Procedure and proceed with its consideration of items 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the provisional agenda in order not to lose time.

18. The President's proposal was accepted.

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE AGENCY
(GC(44)/2, 3 and 17))

19. The PRESIDENT drew attention to documents GC(44)/2, 3 and 17 containing applications for membership by Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and the Central African Republic respectively. All three applications had been endorsed by the Board, which had also submitted three draft resolutions for adoption by the General Conference.

20. He took it that the Conference wished to adopt all three draft resolutions by acclamation.

21. It was so decided.

22. Mr. AZIMOV (Azerbaijan) thanked all delegations for supporting his country's application for membership. The end of global confrontation and totalitarian ideology in Europe had created a unique opportunity to carry forward the process of disarmament and to unite efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A number of remarkable achievements had already been made in that connection, and the 2000 NPT Review Conference had recently set another important milestone on the way to nuclear disarmament. The international community clearly remained convinced that the integrity and effective operation of the NPT, which could not have been implemented so successfully over the past three decades without the Agency's efforts, were essential to international peace and security.

23. Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan attached great importance to combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and supported every effort to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Caucasus and to create an effective export control system inside the country.

24. Despite having neither nuclear materials nor nuclear reactors, Azerbaijan was experiencing problems associated with the disposal of radioactive wastes, deactivation of contaminated areas and the training of specialists in appropriate fields. Nevertheless, its strong scientific potential would enable it to develop multifaceted relations with the Agency and it would spare no effort to contribute to the Agency's activities, which were vital to international efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons.

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

25. Mr. BJORNSSON (Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations) read out the following message:

“It gives me great pleasure to convey my warm greetings to the forty-fourth session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The IAEA plays a vital role in meeting the challenges the international community has to face in the areas of peace and development. By preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, improving and strengthening nuclear safety, and helping to develop the peaceful uses of

nuclear technology for sustainable development, the Agency makes a unique contribution to the purposes of peace and prosperity in the world.

“I would like to turn first to the Agency’s role in seeking to prevent nuclear proliferation. Despite some progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons - in particular the Russian Federation’s ratification of the START II agreement - there is deep concern within the international community at the major threat that such weapons continue to pose to international peace and security. The positive outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is therefore encouraging. For the first time in 15 years, States Party to the Treaty were able to reach a consensus on several issues crucial to the security of all the peoples of the world. They pledged to make new efforts aimed at the total elimination of nuclear arsenals, halting the global spread of nuclear weapons, and strengthening the essential standards governing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I am also pleased that at the Millennium Summit, just two weeks ago, world leaders have resolved to keep all options open for achieving the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

“The Agency has played a significant role in the success of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. It has now an even greater role to play in verifying States’ fulfilment of their obligations as further arms control and disarmament measures identified at the Conference are pursued. In this context, I welcome the Agency’s continuing efforts to strengthen and improve the nuclear safeguards system. And I would like once again to urge all Member States to accept the Additional Protocols to existing safeguards agreements as a means of further strengthening this system.

“Although the 2000 NPT Review Conference marks a significant step forward, much remains to be done to free the world of nuclear dangers. The number of ratifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has increased during the past year, but the challenges that confront its entry into force persist, especially after the United States Senate’s rejection of ratification in October 1999. I reiterate my call to all States to ratify the Treaty, particularly those whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force.

“We are facing yet another danger now, namely, the growing pressure to deploy national missile defences. Let me stress that within the scientific community, there is widespread scepticism that such systems could ever work effectively. There is however real concern that their deployment could lead to a new arms race, set back nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation policies, and create new incentives for missile proliferation. I trust that States will weigh these factors very carefully before embarking on a path that could jeopardize the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and that may reduce, rather than enhance, global security.

“Nuclear safety is another area where concern is growing. One aspect which is particularly worrisome for the long term is radioactive waste management. I am

pleased that the International Conference held last March in Spain on this matter has identified safe and publicly acceptable solutions for the management of radioactive waste. I expect that the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management - which is now close to entering into force - will help to promote higher levels of nuclear safety worldwide.

“I would also like to commend the efficiency of the Agency in responding rapidly to requests for emergency assistance, and to pay tribute to those Member States which repeatedly offer assistance - in the form of experts and material - in cases of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency. These are examples of international co-operation for the common good. But there is another area where greater international co-operation is needed: the fight against illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive substances. The IAEA and the international community must urgently address this very real threat to global security and public health.

“Safety is also very important when it comes to the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries for peaceful purposes and sustainable development. Given the substantial contribution of nuclear techniques in areas as varied as food production and agriculture, human health, the management of fresh water resources and the control of industrial pollution, the Agency’s technical co-operation programme should be strengthened and given all the support it needs.

“Finally, let me stress that in today’s world, we cannot rely only on governments and international organizations for solving national and international problems, and achieving our common objectives of peace and prosperity. We must work in partnership with non States actors. I encourage the IAEA to continue its efforts to increase public awareness and strengthen its relationship with civil society and the public sector.

“I wish you a very successful conference and I look forward to co-operating closely with the IAEA on the important issues you are going to examine during this session.”

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL

26. The DIRECTOR GENERAL said that the Millennium Summit of the United Nations had identified a number of major challenges facing humanity, including the efforts of the international community to achieve “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. The Agency’s three major functions - as a catalyst for the development and transfer of nuclear technology; as a recognized authority on nuclear safety; and as an instrument for the verification of nuclear non-proliferation - were closely linked with such efforts.

27. Nuclear technologies, in both power and non-power applications, provided the preferred, and sometimes only, solutions to many economic and social dilemmas and they held great promise for the future.

28. Although the nuclear share of electricity was 25% or more in 17 countries, recent developments clearly showed that there was currently no consensus on the future role of

nuclear power. While some countries were closing or phasing out nuclear plants, others were engaged in new construction or innovative research and development. In that context, he wished to mention an important conclusion from a report issued earlier in the year, by the World Energy Council (WEC Statement 2000), which related to the role of nuclear power in sustainable energy development.

29. The report stated that until 2020, global reliance on fossil fuels and large hydro projects would remain strong; however, total reliance on those energy sources to meet the world's growing electricity demand was not sustainable, especially in view of a projected population increase of two billion by 2020. The report concluded that the role of nuclear power must therefore be stabilized and that, in parallel, efforts to develop intrinsically safe and affordable nuclear technology needed to be encouraged.

30. Significant progress was being reported with respect to the performance of nuclear power plants in operation. For some new plants, shorter construction periods and reduced operating costs were reported and, in many countries, utilities and regulators were co-operating on regimes for extending the operating life of existing nuclear plants.

31. The future of nuclear energy might well depend heavily on the success in developing new, innovative reactors and fuel cycle designs with enhanced safety features, proliferation resistance, and economic competitiveness. Innovative small and medium-sized reactors were already under development in Argentina, China, Japan, South Africa and the Republic of Korea. Subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, the Agency planned to establish a task force the following year to assess future energy and technology demands and to identify suitable reactor and fuel cycle features.

32. In that connection, he noted with interest the initiative of President Putin at the Millennium Summit, in which he called upon all countries to join an international project, under the auspices of the Agency, to develop new technology that could generate nuclear power, without requiring or producing weapons grade material and, in parallel, to focus on emerging technology to burn long-lived wastes from spent fuel and weapons stockpiles. The Agency was ready to offer its support in co-ordinating the project.

33. The Agency had also continued to assist Member States in their energy assessment planning, as energy market liberalization was taking place in many developing Member States. The Agency's previous emphasis on broad comparative assessments of energy options had been shifted to country-specific energy demand and supply analyses. In all its comparative assessment work, the objective was to provide information that was complete, accurate and unbiased.

34. Probably no issue was more critical to the future of nuclear energy than the safe disposal of high-level radioactive waste. While experts believed geological disposal to be safe, technologically feasible, and environmentally responsible, the public at large remained sceptical, and the volume of high-level waste continued to accumulate. Some progress, however, was being made. Research was progressing in areas such as the transmutation of long-lived waste and the feasibility of retrieving wastes placed in geological repositories. A

number of countries were engaged in deep disposal studies, and some were developing underground research facilities.

35. The recent International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, held in Córdoba, Spain, had emphasized that effective national strategies for waste disposal would require a detailed, transparent approach, which would enable all parties to participate in the decision-making progress. The current year's Scientific Forum was designed to build on the conclusions of the Córdoba Conference and to further the debate. There was also growing support for a global forum on nuclear waste that would invite scientists, policy-makers, civil society and the media to work towards forging international consensus on that important issue. It was his intention to establish such a forum and he would welcome Member States' views on the subject.

36. Qualified, highly-trained personnel were essential to the safety of all activities related to nuclear technology. However, a substantial portion of the knowledge base in the nuclear industry was departing with retiring employees and was not being replaced. Most countries with advanced nuclear programmes reported a decrease in the number of new graduates in the nuclear field. Several countries had taken action to address the problem, including better funding for university programmes and co-operative efforts among industry and academia on research and development training, and personnel exchanges. The Agency would continue to focus Member States' attention on the issue.

37. A major part of the Agency's work in the technology area was in the field of nuclear science and applications. Some noteworthy achievements in the area included the successful introduction of a new palliative treatment for painful skeletal metastases of cancers, as well as advances in applying radioimmunoassay and isotopes to improve the diagnosis of hepatitis, malaria and drug-resistant tuberculosis strains.

38. After the notable success of the project supported by the Agency in Zanzibar to eradicate the tsetse fly, which was widely considered to be one of the most difficult barriers to reducing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, the Pan African Sterile Insect Technique Forum had been established to mobilize resources for an integrated, continent-wide campaign. At the African Summit held in July 2000, in Togo, the heads of African Member States had expressed their full support for the campaign, with the Agency as a principal partner.

39. Turning to the second of the Agency's three pillars, he noted that the Agency was a recognized, objective authority on nuclear, radiation, and waste safety and that nuclear safety would continue to be vital to the future of nuclear technology.

40. In 1999, he had reported on the positive outcome of the International Conference on Strengthening Nuclear Safety in Eastern Europe, and was pleased to announce further progress with the upgrades at the nuclear power plants and fuel cycle facilities concerned.

41. However, during the forty-third session of the General Conference, a serious criticality accident had occurred at Tokaimura in Japan, in which two workers had died. Since the accident, the Japanese Government had introduced measures to improve both operational safety and regulatory oversight of the entire fuel cycle.

42. There were three major components of the international safety regime: international conventions, a body of internationally agreed safety standards, and mechanisms for the application of those standards.

43. The Early Notification and Assistance Conventions were long established. The Agency received a few requests each year under the Assistance Convention. Regrettably, five people had died in the past year as a result of accidents involving radiation sources in Egypt and Thailand. Those accidents emphasized the need for decisive national and international action. The Agency's Action Plan for the Safety of Radiation Sources and the Security of Radioactive Materials was making progress on strengthening the response capabilities of the Agency and Member States and improving education and information exchange. A group of experts from Member States had also prepared a Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, which the Board of Governors had requested should be circulated to all States and relevant international organizations. As to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, only three more instruments of ratification were needed for it to enter into force, which he hoped would happen soon. As for the Convention on Nuclear Safety, the number of Contracting Parties now stood at 53, including all but two of the States with nuclear power reactors. He urged all States that had not already done so to become party to the Convention.

44. The second component of the international safety regime was the body of safety standards. To be effective, the standards had to be comprehensive, internationally agreed upon and subject to regular peer review. As in the aviation field, under the auspices of the International Civil Aviation Organization, once agreed upon such standards should be uniformly applied by all States. The Secretariat was making progress on a major effort to update the standards, so as to ensure they represented a consensus among Member States. While many gaps in coverage had been identified and eliminated during the effort, some gaps still remained.

45. Naturally, the desired effect on safety would be achieved only if safety standards were applied in practice. To assist in the application of its standards, the Agency provided technical assistance and co-operation, fostered information exchange, and co-ordinated research and development to close any remaining gaps in the system.

46. Perhaps the best-known services were those in operational safety - in particular the OSART service, which continued to be in demand. Since its initiation, 107 OSART missions had been performed in 31 States, including in all but two States where nuclear power plants were in operation. As had been demonstrated by OSART follow-up missions, the rate of resolving operational problems and identifying inadequacies had improved in the last five years from 80% to 92%.

47. Other services had been equally effective. The Agency had performed five reviews of plant upgrades in Ukraine, Armenia and Bulgaria in the past year, to help both the utility and the regulatory authorities in making technical and safety decisions. There was also still considerable demand for the International Regulatory Review Team service, with typical

IRRT findings relating to the need for the greater independence of regulators, for adequate staffing with suitably qualified personnel, and for the requisite financial resources.

48. More than half of all research reactors worldwide were over 35 years old, and two-thirds of them had been shut down without being decommissioned. Limited regulatory supervision, inadequate maintenance and fuel storage, and degraded or obsolete equipment were some of the safety issues being encountered. In the past year, the Agency had conducted a number of INSARR missions. However, given the global scale of the problem, more had to be done to achieve an adequate safety regime for research reactors. Member States were therefore encouraged to consider positively INSAG's proposal for the elaboration of binding norms covering the safety of research reactors.

49. The safety implications resulting from decisions to close a number of reactors of Soviet design early were another cause of concern to INSAG. Operational safety from the time of the closure decision up to the beginning of decommissioning required specific programmes in order to compensate for the organizational and technical changes which occurred during that period. A decision for early closure could also reduce incentives for making the safety upgrades required at the facilities. The Secretariat would be requested to work more closely with the European Commission to ensure that relevant Agency safety experience, information, and services were made available to decision-makers.

50. One area requiring particular attention was the decommissioning of nuclear power plants, research reactors, and other fuel cycle facilities. To meet the growing needs of Member States, the Agency needed to expand its activities in that area so as to ensure that it had the requisite technical expertise and was able to establish appropriate safety standards and assist in their implementation.

51. The Safeguards Implementation Report for 1999 pointed to significant progress in some areas of the Agency's safeguards implementation and a lack of progress in others. For States with safeguards agreements in force, it concluded that all nuclear material placed under safeguards had remained in peaceful nuclear activities or had been otherwise adequately accounted for. For the first time, it also drew conclusions about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in the State "as a whole" for two States with Additional Protocols in force.

52. The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference noted that 51 States Party to the Treaty had not yet brought into force comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency. Those unfulfilled legal obligations were a matter of long-standing concern.

53. Since the last session of the General Conference, a further nine Additional Protocols had been approved by the Board of Governors; nevertheless, the total number of Additional Protocols approved was still only 54 - far short of expectations. Without the conclusion of the required safeguards agreement, the Agency could not provide any assurance about compliance by States with their non-proliferation obligations; and without the Additional Protocol, the Agency could provide only limited assurances that did not adequately cover the absence of undeclared material or activities.

54. An important measure to strengthen and maximize the effectiveness of the safeguards system was the current development of new “integrated safeguards” - the optimum combination of traditional safeguards measures with the measures of the Additional Protocol to ensure a system that was cost-effective, while achieving the maximum degree of assurance both of the non-diversion of declared nuclear material and of the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. Much preparatory work had been done already, and the conceptual framework for integrated safeguards should be completed by the end of 2001.

55. Since December 1998, the Agency had not been in a position to implement its United Nations Security Council mandate in Iraq and was unable at present to provide any assurance that Iraq was complying with its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. Nonetheless, pursuant to Iraq’s safeguards agreement, the Agency had carried out an inspection in January 2000. With the co-operation of the Iraqi authorities, the inspectors had been able to verify the presence of the nuclear material subject to safeguards still in Iraq. The inspection was not designed to be and could not serve as a substitute for Agency activities under the Security Council resolutions. The Agency would have to return to Iraq in order to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it under those resolutions and to provide the enhanced assurances sought by the Council.

56. Since the previous session of the General Conference, there had been no significant change to the assessment made at that time with respect to the implementation of safeguards in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The Agency was still unable to verify that the DPRK had in fact declared all nuclear material which should be subject to safeguards. With the construction phase of the light-water reactor project now under way, the time was approaching when the key nuclear components of the LWRs were due to be delivered. However, before that could happen under the Agreed Framework, the DPRK would have to comply fully with its safeguards agreement. There were many steps that the Secretariat had to take before assessing the correctness and completeness of the DPRK’s initial declaration. The entire verification process might take between three and four years to complete. The Agency therefore needed to start immediately with full co-operation on the part of the DPRK. Given the recent positive developments in the Korean Peninsula, it was to be hoped that the DPRK would soon be ready to commence active co-operation with the Agency, as well as to make use of Agency expertise under normalized relations on important safety aspects of the LWR project.

57. In keeping with the General Conference mandate, he had continued consultations with the States of the Middle East region regarding the application of full scope safeguards to all nuclear activities and the drawing up of model agreements which would contribute to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Regrettably, little progress had been achieved so far. Notwithstanding, he would continue to use all means within his authority, and with the concurrence of the States concerned, to make progress. He would be ready to organize a forum in which participants from the Middle East could learn from the experience of other regions with respect to comprehensive verification arrangements and confidence-building measures that contributed to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

58. The Agency's Secretariat continued to make progress, in consultation with the Russian Federation and the United States of America, on arrangements for verifying nuclear materials excess to their military programmes. One important objective of the consultations was the ability to assure the international community that the material was irreversibly removed from military programmes.

59. In addition to those consultations, in September the United States and Russia had signed a bilateral agreement on plutonium management and disposition, which committed each party to the withdrawal of 34 tonnes of weapons grade plutonium from its nuclear weapons programme. The agreement provided that each party would conclude appropriate agreements with the IAEA to allow the Agency to implement verification measures. The new agreement was a welcome step towards nuclear arms control and the Agency would naturally stand ready to discuss the arrangements for implementing the verification measures.

60. With regard to the security of material, a comprehensive report had been submitted to the General Conference on activities undertaken since the previous year to strengthen the security of nuclear and other radioactive materials. The fact that the Agency's database on illicit trafficking now contained some 330 confirmed cases, including the seizure in April 2000 of almost one kilogram of high-enriched uranium, showed the urgent need to strengthen national and international frameworks for the protection of nuclear and radioactive material.

61. Turning to the technical co-operation programme - a programme supported by all Agency pillars - he said that 1999 had been a productive year in which the Agency had purchased more than \$30 million worth of equipment for projects, had delivered 162 training courses and had fielded 2650 experts. Technical co-operation programmes had resulted in the training of more than 1000 fellows and 2300 participants in specialized courses. However, more important were the outcomes actually achieved, many of which were highlighted in the Technical Co-operation Report for 1999.

62. Extensive discussions over the past two years had helped to focus programming on achieving tangible socio-economic impact in areas of priority for Member States. The discussions had been guided by the following lessons: first, technology transfer had greater impact when a strong partnership existed with the end user - frequently a water authority, health ministry, or livestock or plant protection service; second, to be effective, Agency technology had to be combined, in the recipient country, with political will, committed resources, and sustained effort; and third, those partnerships, resource commitments, and avenues of support were more likely to occur when Agency projects were linked to national development programmes.

63. On the subject of the financing of technical co-operation, he noted that in 1999, only 40 Member States had pledged and paid their full target share of the Technical Co-operation Fund, while 65 had paid nothing at all. If the Agency was to continue responding to demands for technical assistance from an increasing membership, it was essential that all Member States pledged and paid their target share in full and on time.

64. Throughout the past year, the Secretariat had continued to re-engineer its management outlook on the basis of a “one house” concept to ensure better co-ordination and alignment of programmes, a more streamlined Secretariat structure and a more effective outreach policy. The increasing application of results-based principles had also helped to ensure better targeted and more efficient management.

65. One of the most important changes to which the Agency had responded was the new emphasis on reaching out to its many constituencies - both traditional and non-traditional partners. The Scientific Forum held during the forty-third session of the General Conference had seen a large number of non-governmental participants. Since then, two very useful meetings had been held with senior managers from nuclear research centres and with nuclear industry representatives. Four widely attended regional public information seminars had also ensured useful dialogue on nuclear issues among technical experts, the media, and civil society.

66. The Secretariat was already engaged in the preparation of the draft programme and budget for 2002-2003, using the new results-based programming and budgeting approach, which focused more on what was to be accomplished by the activities being funded and on the changes they would bring about in Member States than on the inputs and outputs. The results-based approach would enable the Secretariat to assess and address better the needs and priorities of Member States and would provide greater transparency.

67. The Agency’s programme and budget estimates for the year 2001 once again reflected a policy of zero real growth. That policy, pursued for well over a decade, had forced the Agency into an increasing and excessive reliance on extrabudgetary resources. That reliance - to the amount of over \$20 million - meant that the Agency’s Regular Budget was underfunded to the same degree. The situation made strategic planning more difficult and less efficient and restricted the Secretariat’s ability to use its human resources effectively. It was therefore imperative that corrective action be initiated without further delay.

68. His review of achievements and challenges illustrated the important role the Agency played in achieving the global objectives of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. In that context, it was heartening to note the explicit vote of confidence in the Agency expressed in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference. Clearly much had been achieved, but more remained to be done. He was confident that, with the commitment and support of Member States, the Agency would continue to make an important contribution towards making the world safer and more humane.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FUND FOR 2001
(GC(44)/19)

69. The PRESIDENT said that since 1982 the Agency's policy-making organs had observed a practice of recommending Indicative Planning Figures to serve in fixing annual targets for contributions to the TCF. Following the agreement reached by the Board of Governors at its meetings immediately prior to the General Conference, a target figure of US \$73 million had been recommended for 2001. The early pledging and payment of contributions to the TCF greatly helped the Secretariat in planning the Agency's technical co-operation programmes, and he therefore urged delegations in a position to do so to notify the Secretariat during the Conference of contributions which their governments would be making to the Fund for 2001. He would report at the end of the session, under a later agenda item, on the contributions which had been pledged so far.

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1999
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70. The PRESIDENT, pointing out that more than 80 delegates had already inscribed their names on the speakers' list, took it that, in order to avoid too many prolonged afternoon meetings, or even a night meeting - the total cost of the latter being more than \$16 000 - the Conference authorized him, under Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure, to limit the duration of speeches to 15 minutes.

71. It was so agreed. _

72. Mr. COLOMBANI (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union and of its associated States, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, welcomed the applications for membership of the Agency by Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and the Central African Republic.

73. The NPT was and should remain the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, of which the Agency safeguards system was the essential instrument. The success achieved at the 2000 NPT Review Conference meant that the entire international community could now continue to advance towards full implementation of all the Treaty's objectives, namely nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the development of the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

74. The European Union welcomed the Final Document adopted by the Conference, calling for the immediate launch of negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty covering nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. It urged members of the Conference on Disarmament to overcome their differences and to engage as soon as possible in negotiations for a universal, non-discriminatory and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty. The EU would continue to work towards consensus on the matter.

75. The EU also urged all States which had not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to do so promptly and unconditionally, since the Treaty's entry into force would make a substantial contribution to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and to nuclear disarmament.

76. The 2000 NPT Review Conference had confirmed the Agency's role as guardian of non-proliferation and had expressed support for its efforts to ensure, through the safeguards system, that nuclear materials were not diverted from uses authorized by the Treaty. That mission called for unequivocal commitment from all Member States. If those safeguards were to be implemented, there should be full co-operation from all parties to the Treaty, and the EU regretted that more than 50 of those States Party had not yet entered into safeguards agreements. It called on those States to fulfil the obligation they had assumed under Article III of the Treaty to conclude such agreements.

77. The States Parties to the NPT had been unanimous in recognizing the importance of the Additional Protocols to the safeguards agreements: the Member States of the European Union had signed Additional Protocols on 22 September 1998 and hoped they would be implemented as soon as possible. The European Union attached great importance to the achievement of a universal system of strengthened safeguards and urged all States with existing agreements to conclude an Additional Protocol without delay.

78. The EU supported the Agency's efforts to develop a system of integrated safeguards pursuant to the resolution adopted at the forty-second session of the General Conference, and welcomed the Director General's stated intention to complete the necessary conceptual framework in 2001. The new system was designed to avoid unnecessary overlaps between measures provided for under traditional safeguards and those envisaged under the strengthened system, thereby making safeguards more efficient and effective, while reducing the costs to the Agency arising from the gradual introduction of strengthening measures in Member States. He commended the Secretariat's efforts to achieve cost-effectiveness within a neutral budget, as well as the proposed reduction in routine inspections, which should in the long run benefit States which had signed and successfully implemented an Additional Protocol.

79. The EU considered that it was very important to ensure that there was strict compliance with agreements entered into under the NPT. It continued to be concerned that, despite the Agency's efforts, practically no progress had been made since 1994 in the implementation of the safeguards agreement with the DPRK, notably in regard to verification of the initial declaration. It again called on the DPRK to comply fully with its agreement. It was to be hoped that recent developments in relations between the two countries of the Korean Peninsula would contribute positively to the solution of the issue.

80. The situation in Iraq was another subject for concern, in that more than nine months after the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1284 there was still no resumption of verification activities in that country. The EU urged Iraq to comply fully with all Security Council resolutions concerning it, to give the Agency the necessary access to fulfil its mandate, and to co-operate with it unreservedly by providing a technically coherent picture of

its clandestine nuclear programme. Although there had been a verification of the physical inventory of nuclear material under a routine inspection early that year, that verification could not serve as a substitute for the activities the Agency should be carrying out under the relevant Security Council resolutions.

81. There was a need for continued vigilance in regard to illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. The prevention of such trafficking required an effective system of physical protection on the part of the State concerned. However, the Agency's activities in that area were also important, notably the recent revision of the recommendations on the protection of nuclear materials and nuclear facilities, training, and advisory services such as the IPPAS. The EU supported the Agency's co-operation with other organizations such as the World Customs Organization, Interpol and the European Commission.

82. Safety should be a permanent concern and should continue to be improved. It could not be overemphasized that States engaged in any kind of nuclear activity bore the primary responsibility to their own people, to their neighbours, and to the international community for ensuring the safety of such activities. The EU therefore wished to stress the importance of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Regular meetings between the parties to those conventions would help to foster the extension of the safety culture throughout the world. He urged all States to take early steps to ratify those conventions and to expedite the entry into force of the Joint Convention. He hoped that the second review meeting of the parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety would result in the introduction of safety improvements.

83. Further co-operative efforts were needed if safety was to achieve internationally accepted levels in all nuclear facilities, and the EU welcomed the essential role played by the Agency in assisting States to enforce their own national regulations. The Safety Series documents, as well as the OSART, IRRT and INSARR services were also making a significant contribution in that area. In the field of the safety of radiation sources and security of radioactive materials, a code of practice would seem an appropriate way of remedying the significant defects in the management of such sources.

84. Since its establishment, the Agency's mission had been to assist its Member States in developing the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. The 2000 NPT Review Conference had recognized the importance of its work as the main international body responsible for technology transfer. The Agency's assistance was affected by the economic situation and consequent budgetary restrictions. It should always be guided by concern for maximum efficiency and regarded more as an incentive or catalyst than as a permanent subsidy. The EU supported the Director General's efforts to ensure sound technical co-operation management, but it believed that the Agency could not act alone: corresponding efforts by Member States both in financing and in programme monitoring were vital. The EU strongly supported the Model Project concept and its implementation and appreciated the emphasis laid on a strict regulatory framework, especially in the field of radiation protection and security, and on proper enforcement in recipient countries. The EU also attached importance to measures

taken to integrate technical co-operation into the economic activities of the country concerned and to ensure its consistency with national policies; regular reviews of project implementation and evaluation; enhanced co-operation between countries, especially within the framework of the Agency's regional assistance programme; and proper co-ordination between the Agency's technical co-operation activities and those of other organizations, with a view to avoiding duplication.

85. The high level of voluntary contributions to the TCF on the part of member countries of the EU bore witness to its strong support for the technical co-operation programme. For their part, recipient States should demonstrate the importance they attached to such projects by making a significant contribution to them. He noted with regret that there had been considerable underpayment of assessed programme costs the previous year and called on all recipient States to comply with their obligations in that respect.

86. The wide range of the Agency's activities and the ever increasing responsibilities imposed on it had led to an increase in its financial burden. The Director General and his staff should be encouraged to continue their efforts to cut operating costs, to identify priorities, and to eliminate duplication in order to reduce dependence on extrabudgetary funding. It would be preferable if the strengthening of safeguards could be funded through the Regular Budget, and if each State were to contribute on an equitable basis, to the extent of their capabilities, to those measures, which were in the common interest.

87. The EU attached great importance to the Agency's programmes and the contributions of its member countries accounted for some 34% of the Agency's Regular Budget. It welcomed the new approach proposed for the preparation of activities in the 2002-2003 biennium. In that regard, the recommendations of the Senior Expert Group, the various standing advisory groups and Member States should help in defining guidelines for the Agency's missions and ensuring that the Agency's programmes remained relevant and that priorities were defined with due regard to budgetary constraints. The Agency's activities and those of other international bodies, in particular, the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency, should complement but not duplicate each other.

88. The Agency had shown that it deserved the trust of the international community as a competent authority for the verification of safeguards agreements linked to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the same time, it played an essential part in promoting the safe use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. The EU and its associated States therefore reiterated their support for the Agency and their resolve to continue to play a full part in its activities.

89. Mr. OSHIMA (Japan), having welcomed Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and the Central African Republic as new members, said he hoped that the amendments to Article VI of the Statute approved at the previous session of the General Conference would soon enter into force so that the Agency could fulfil its role vis-à-vis those new members.

90. Japan was very grateful for the co-operation extended by the international community in helping it to cope with the criticality accident which had occurred at a uranium processing plant in Japan on 30 September 1999. It had been the worst nuclear accident since Japan began the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and the Government had been doing its utmost to regain the public's trust by taking all possible measures to prevent the recurrence of such an accident. It had been improving its risk management structure and its emergency preparedness measures, strengthening the safety regulations that applied to nuclear operators, and encouraging the nuclear industry to re-establish a safety culture. It was aiming to draw up a long-term programme for research, development and utilization of nuclear energy in the twenty-first century by the end of 2000. Japan intended to continue promoting nuclear power generation and the establishment of a nuclear fuel cycle, while ensuring that nuclear energy was used for exclusively peaceful purposes and that it was used safely. Japan intended to explain its new long-term programme fully to the international community, including the Agency, and to continue making its use of plutonium transparent and accountable to the rest of the world.

91. The Final Document of the recent NPT Review Conference had succeeded in forging international consensus on many issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan had particularly appreciated the fact that with regard to the relationship between the safeguards agreement and the Additional Protocol, it had been stated that, once concluded, the two agreements had to be read and interpreted as one agreement. Japan also considered important the affirmation by the parties that credible assurance of the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activity in a State that had concluded an Additional Protocol could permit a corresponding reduction in the level of traditional verification efforts with respect to declared nuclear material in that State. Thirdly, given the importance of the Additional Protocol, the States Party had recommended that a plan of action towards its universalization be formulated.

92. Efforts to promote the Additional Protocol's universalization should be intensified as a matter of extreme urgency, and Japan intended to take the initiative in drawing up a plan of action to that end. It was important that the collective resolve of Member States to conclude Additional Protocols promptly should be reaffirmed; that those countries which had not yet concluded such a protocol should be urged to do so through bilateral and multilateral consultations and by supporting the efforts of the Secretariat in its Medium Term Strategy; and that a proper forum should be established for discussion in order to create an environment conducive to accelerating the conclusion of Additional Protocols. In order to support the promotion of the conclusion of Additional Protocols, Japan intended to make extrabudgetary contributions to the Secretariat, and was ready to host a workshop on its universalization for the Asia-Pacific region in 2001, together with the Agency.

93. Japan was following with great interest the way in which the DPRK was responding to international concern about its suspected nuclear arms development and urged the DPRK to fulfil its obligations under the safeguards agreement it had concluded with the Agency in accordance with the provisions of the NPT. Japan intended to continue its active support of the light-water reactor project being carried out by the Korean Energy Development Organization provided the DPRK fulfilled its obligations.

94. As an Asian nation with an advanced nuclear programme, Japan could play an important role in co-operation towards the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the Asia-Pacific region, and he was pleased to announce that, despite its serious fiscal situation, his country would be able to resume its contribution to the RCA, which it had suspended the year before. He also announced that Japan's Atomic Energy Commission would be jointly sponsoring with Thailand the first session of the Forum for Nuclear Co-operation in Asia in November 2000.

95. Japan greatly appreciated the efforts of the Director General and his staff to manage the Agency efficiently and soundly, and believed that the Agency could continue to meet the needs of the international community, even with a budget below zero nominal growth, by achieving further cost reductions in all operations, as well as by increasing the efficiency of safeguards. Japan greatly welcomed the fact that integrated safeguards had been identified as priority tasks for the Agency in the Final Document adopted at the NPT Review Conference and Japan was ready to assist the Secretariat in its efforts to ensure the prompt implementation of integrated safeguards.

96. Mr. RICHARDSON (United States of America) read out the following message from Mr. Bill Clinton, President of the United States:

“On behalf of the American people, I extend greetings and best wishes for a successful General Conference. I am struck by the extraordinary developments and demands faced by this Agency in the seven years since I first addressed this gathering. But look how far we have come. New inspection capabilities were given to the IAEA after the crisis in Iraq and a potentially devastating confrontation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was avoided. With regret we witnessed new nuclear tests in 1998, but rejoiced in the successful review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty earlier this year.

“These events make clear our collective and unwavering interest in curbing the awesome destructive power of nuclear technology and directing it to peaceful ends. This is a task in which - with the IAEA's help - we must succeed to avoid the terrible devastation that would result if nuclear weapons were ever used again. If the IAEA did not exist, we would have to create it. The IAEA needs strong and consistent support from all of its Member States. Let's devote our best talent and the full resources we can to allow the IAEA to continue its work. For a small investment, the IAEA returns incalculable contributions to peace and security.”

97. Although much had changed in the past eight years, many things still remained the same. It had been more than sixty years since Albert Einstein had alerted President Roosevelt to new research involving uranium that offered tantalizing prospects for the betterment of mankind but also called for vigilance. It was true that although nuclear energy promised to light the world and ease the miseries of poverty, it also harboured the power to destroy.

98. The 1990s had witnessed unprecedented progress in the reduction of nuclear risks. For example, the United States had reduced its stockpile of nuclear weapons to 60% below its Cold War level. Further cuts were envisaged under START II and III. Nuclear weapons tests were no longer a fact of life. The United States firmly supported the CTBT and would

continue to work for its worldwide ratification. The United States had also ceased its work on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. The time had come to end the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and to complete work on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

99. Controls on existing materials should also be improved. Universal acceptance of the strengthened safeguards system of Additional Protocols remained a top priority. It was important to continue to curb nuclear materials that posed special risks, for example those in the DPRK, where United States and local specialists had prepared many tonnes of plutonium-bearing spent fuel for international safeguards. It was also necessary to monitor materials freed by recent cuts in nuclear arms, thereby preventing a return to the arms race.

100. Work on the verification agreement for the Trilateral Initiative was nearing completion. The agreement would enable the Agency to verify that hundreds of tonnes of fissile materials removed from United States and Russian military stockpiles were never again used for nuclear weapons purposes. The aim of the United States Government was to submit an agreement to the Board of Governors at its December 2000 meeting. In similar vein, a plutonium management and disposition agreement had recently been signed by the United States Vice President and the Russian Prime Minister. That agreement would result in the destruction of 68 tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium, enough for thousands of nuclear weapons, and the Agency was expected to play a role in monitoring the agreement.

101. The partnership between the United States and Russia had moved from a narrow focus on formal treaties to a broadly based and highly effective system. For example, in co-operation with Russia and the Newly Independent States, the physical security of more than 450 tonnes of plutonium and highly enriched uranium had been improved, just as civilian employment had been provided for more than 8000 former Soviet weapons scientists and engineers. Three hundred tonnes of spent fuel had been secured at the BN-350 breeder reactor in Kazakhstan, three years ahead of schedule. Similarly, purchases of Russian weapons uranium had been accelerated, thereby converting 80 tonnes of the material, much more than anticipated in the United States-Russia HEU purchase agreement.

102. Furthermore, the new Sarov Technopark had recently been established under the Nuclear Cities Initiative and would unite former nuclear weapons workers with private industry, thereby speeding the conversion of facilities in Russia's nuclear weapons complex towards peaceful production. The United States had also increased its co-operation with the Russian Navy by signing an agreement with its Commander in Chief, so as to provide better protection from theft or diversion for Russian naval nuclear fuel.

103. The promotion of a framework for the peaceful use of nuclear energy throughout the world was an important priority. Research and development were being revitalized so as to ensure that nuclear energy was competitive and viable. It was necessary to establish a situation whereby communities and consumers worldwide were confident that nuclear power reactors could be operated safely and cheaply, and with due regard for non-proliferation and the long-term disposal of spent fuel and waste. In that connection, progress had been made on the Nuclear Energy Research Initiative and Generation IV Nuclear Power Systems

Initiative to develop new reactor designs. Such work required the participation of more than one country and the Agency could also play a supporting role.

104. In general terms, the Agency's activities should be strengthened, inter alia through its Technical Co-operation Fund. The United States would pay more than \$18 million to the Fund in the current year and urged all other Member States to follow its lead. However, vigilance was a necessary principle in preparing for the future of nuclear energy, while safely managing the consequences of the nuclear past. The decisions taken by Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Lithuania and Ukraine to close down unsafe nuclear power reactors were to be applauded. The United States would continue to support the Agency's nuclear safety programme and had been proud to host an OSART mission to the North Anna nuclear power plant, the fourth such visit since 1982.

105. Safe decommissioning of older reactors was another priority. In that regard, the United States was working to assist Kazakhstan in decommissioning its BN-350 reactor and, in Ukraine, it was paving the way to allow early decommissioning of the reactors at Chernobyl.

106. Finally, it was necessary to provide for the safe and secure management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel, waste and separated stocks of civil plutonium. In that vein, the United States had hosted an international conference on geological repositories, where it had been agreed that geological disposal was a preferred option worldwide, irrespective of the choices made by countries with respect to the nuclear fuel cycle. In order to accelerate co-operation, research, technology and procedures for geological disposal used in the United States would be made available to all Agency Member States.

107. In conclusion, he said that all Member States should support the Agency, which embodied the principle of vigilance so well, the ultimate goal of which was a better and safer world.

108. Mr. ZHANG Huazhu (China), having extended a warm welcome to the delegations of Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and the Central African Republic, noted that during the four decades of its existence, the Agency had met with great acclaim from the international community for its role and work. Nevertheless, he noted that it overemphasized its non-proliferation activities, while failing to pay due attention to the justifiable requirements of its developing Member States in the area of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. The Agency could obtain general support from Member States only by faithfully adhering to the objectives and principles set forth in the Statute and by maintaining a balance between its two major functions. He therefore hoped that the Agency would make new contributions to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy worldwide.

109. Noting the importance of nuclear energy and nuclear technology to sustainable development in the world, he said that the Agency had a crucial role to play. The twentieth century had witnessed rapid advances in science and technology, but also excessive exploitation of resources causing severe deterioration of the environment. More than 40 years of experience had proved that nuclear energy was clean, safe and economical; it should therefore play an important role in the future energy mix around the world. The Agency, as the only intergovernmental organization in the nuclear field, should not shirk its responsibility in that matter. The Agency could, inter alia: scientifically assess and objectively popularize the role of nuclear energy in global sustainable development; organize the exchange of information and resolve technological problems in response to public concerns about nuclear safety and radioactive waste disposal; co-ordinate the research and development work carried out in the Member States in preparing technologically for the new-generation nuclear power plants; and strengthen training and help developing countries to establish and improve their nuclear infrastructure. China was willing to provide experts for in-depth discussions of those matters with other Member States and the Secretariat.

110. The Agency should do more to meet the developing Member States' requirements in the area of nuclear applications in industry, agriculture, human health, water resource development and environmental protection, which were closely related to sustainable development. The developed countries should make greater efforts to transfer technology and provide expert services to the developing countries, while increasing their contribution to the TCF.

111. Turning to the safety of nuclear facilities and nuclear waste disposal, which was a major cause of the public's doubts about nuclear energy, he pointed out that it was an issue requiring urgent resolution. The Agency had done a lot of useful work in that area. Since the accident at Three Mile Island and, in particular, that at Chernobyl, the Agency had played an indispensable role by drafting international conventions and safety standards, and by helping countries in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to improve nuclear safety. Recently, the Agency, together with the relevant United Nations specialized agencies, had held a conference, which had drawn scientific conclusions on the aftermath of the Chernobyl accident. Those conclusions were of importance in clarifying facts. In the area of nuclear waste disposal, the Agency had also made great efforts, including the holding of a scientific forum during the present session of the General Conference. The Agency, as an authoritative international organization, could accomplish much in that field, especially by giving objective publicity to the issue of nuclear safety and nuclear waste disposal to correct the public's misguided opinions, by improving international conventions and standards on nuclear safety, and by strengthening technological exchange to help Member States to improve their nuclear safety levels.

112. The safety and security of radiation sources had attracted the attention of all Member States in recent years. Relevant resolutions had been adopted at the forty-second and forty-third sessions of the Conference and an action plan initiated. Technical and legal experts from Member States had participated in a meeting held in Vienna in the preceding July where a Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources had been

drafted. Member States should be encouraged to use the Code as a guiding document in drafting related domestic regulations.

113. Turning to the area of non-proliferation, he recalled that at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the States Party had fully affirmed the Agency's significant role in preventing nuclear proliferation. In the preceding 40 years, the safeguards operation had evolved from item-specific to comprehensive and then to strengthened safeguards. Many Member States, including China, had concluded Additional Protocols to their safeguards agreements with the Agency. The establishment of a stable global security environment based on mutual confidence was crucial to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, non-proliferation activities should supplement promotional activities and not hinder the legitimate rights of Member States to develop the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

114. There had been significant progress since the end of the Cold War in bilateral nuclear disarmament between the United States and Russia. He looked forward to the Secretariat's report to the Board on the technical, legal and financial aspects of the verification of the dismantled nuclear material in those two countries. The Agency's verification activities should strictly follow the provisions of its Statute and those of international legal instruments such as the NPT and the Agency's role in nuclear disarmament verification should be decided only through negotiations involving all sides on the basis of the related international legal instruments.

115. The prevention of illicit trafficking in nuclear material and effective physical protection of such material was another matter of concern to the international community. China had faithfully fulfilled its obligations as a signatory of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. Recalling that, at the urging of some Member States, the Board had authorized the Director General to invite experts from Member States to discuss the need to modify the Convention, he pointed out that physical protection was mainly the responsibility of governments. China considered it inappropriate to lay down binding regulations on the physical protection of nuclear materials within a country in the form of an international legal instrument, in view of the differences between the specific situations in each country. The conditions for modifying the Convention did not yet exist.

116. With regard to the development of co-operation with other organizations, it was natural for the Agency to develop co-operative relations with other international organizations belonging to the United Nations family and to establish mutually beneficial co-operation with other international or regional or non-governmental bodies. However, in doing so, the procedures laid down in the Statute should be strictly adhered to; co-operation with any other organization should not hinder the Agency's functions or jeopardize the interests of its Member States, or affect the Agency's independence and the integrity of its work; and all Member States of the Agency should be able equally to enjoy all the benefits arising out of such co-operation, given the difference in the membership of the different organizations.

117. In conclusion, noting that the new century offered new hopes and challenges, he expressed his conviction that the Agency would continue to make new contributions to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for mankind.

118. Mr. EL SAIEDI (Egypt) said that Egypt had recognized the potential of nuclear energy and its applications for economic, social and human development over 40 years previously and had co-operated closely with the Agency in spreading the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Egypt through the development of scientific and practical resources and manpower, and through active involvement in all the Agency's activities.

119. In a spirit of regional co-operation, Egypt had opened up its installations and laboratories and placed its expertise at the service of the States of the Arab and African region. It was a strong supporter of the Arab Atomic Energy Agency, especially its training programme in the areas of nuclear safety and seawater desalination using nuclear energy, and of AFRA, particularly Agency-backed economic and social development projects in areas such as surface and groundwater development and management, diagnostic and therapeutic healthcare, and the processing and storage of radioactive waste.

120. It was essential to focus on technical co-operation projects that met countries' real needs and produced tangible results. Such projects enhanced the credibility of the technical co-operation programme and assured it of the political and financial support of Member States. Egypt's co-operation programme with the Agency had concentrated from the outset on such key areas as radioisotope production, boosting of agricultural yields, improvement of the quality of livestock, expansion of arable land, and the processing and storage of radioactive waste.

121. In view of the need for new freshwater resources in areas at some distance from the Nile, Egypt was collaborating with the Agency in the development and management of surface and groundwater resources and in the desalination of sea water. The radioisotope hydrological measurement laboratories developed in co-operation with the Agency were playing an important role in that regard, both for Egypt and for the States of the region. A study of the feasibility of using nuclear energy for seawater desalination and electricity production in Egypt was being undertaken with Agency assistance. The future use of small and medium-sized reactors for such purposes would be discussed at an Agency conference to be hosted by Egypt in May 2001.

122. As the sterile insect technique had proved a highly effective means of fruit fly and tsetse fly eradication in many countries, Egypt had submitted a request for Agency co-operation in a regional project to eradicate the Mediterranean fruit fly, an ambitious project that would take many years to implement but promised to yield major economic benefits to Egypt and neighbouring countries, especially in terms of exports of citrus and other fruit.

123. Egypt viewed nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, especially in the Middle East region, as issues of the greatest urgency. Those who clung to the obsolete doctrine of deterrence were posing a threat to the security and stability of the entire region. Egypt had been working since 1974 for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, a project unanimously endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1980. On 8 April 1990, President Mubarak of Egypt had called for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Egypt had furthermore drawn the attention of the Agency and other international forums to the need to apply the

Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime to all nuclear facilities in the Middle East region without exception. The Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference noted that all States of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, were parties to the Treaty and reaffirmed the importance of Israel's accession thereto and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. The international community thus attached special importance to disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East region. It followed that Israel had to cease its policy of impeding the general application of the Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime in the Middle East and of undermining the credibility of the non-proliferation regime in general. In addition, the international community as a whole had to take vigorous action to remedy shortcomings in the implementation of the safeguards regime in the Middle East. Egypt would continue to pursue that goal through dialogue and to encourage the Agency to take steps to establish the appropriate regional structures. It trusted that Israel would prove equally keen to clear the region of the hazard of nuclear weapons and to embark on consultations concerning ways and means of achieving that aim, thereby responding to the many initiatives undertaken in the Agency and the United Nations General Assembly to create a climate conducive to serious dialogue on the subject and on other regional security issues.

124. Egypt viewed technical co-operation as a key component of the Agency's action to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and hence also of the international community's efforts to prevent the spread of non-peaceful uses of such energy. It appreciated the efforts by the Director General and the Department of Technical Co-operation to enhance the effectiveness of the technical co-operation programme, especially on behalf of developing countries - particularly in Africa. Egypt fully supported the Agency's strategy in that area, based on the "partnership for development" principle. At the same time, it wished to stress the need to make available the financial resources needed to implement such activities. To that end, Egypt had played an active part in the consultations conducted by the Chairman of the Board of Governors on the financing of technical co-operation and safeguards. While cautiously welcoming the outcome of the consultations, Egypt intended to keep a close eye on the implementation of the resolution on the financing of technical co-operation with a view to making any additional proposals it deemed necessary in consultation with other Member States. The developing countries had made a substantial concession when they had agreed to the new arrangements for the financing of safeguards. Being deeply convinced of the importance of the Agency's role in that area, they were prepared to share the resulting responsibilities equally with other Member States. One could not help being struck, on the other hand, by the different approach adopted by Member States to the honouring of their financial obligations. The insistence by some States on maintaining the status quo provided strong evidence of the existence of double standards and constituted a breach of the principle of equality. While there were States that were genuinely unable to pay their contributions to the TCF owing to economic and political circumstances, there were also States that viewed the use of the term "voluntary" in the Agency's Statute to describe contributions to the Fund as according them sufficient flexibility to opt out of the payment of such contributions. It was inappropriate to use the term "voluntary contributions" as a pretext for reneging on one's obligations. Contributions to the TCF had acquired mandatory status, at least in political terms, since all States participated in the negotiations to fix a target figure for the technical co-operation programme. Moreover, the adoption by the Conference of a resolution

concerning the financing of technical co-operation should be viewed, in the interests of credibility, as a political obligation binding on all Member States.

125. In that context, Egypt wished to commend donor and recipient States that systematically paid their contributions to the TCF in full, demonstrating the importance they attached to the Agency's strategic goal of supporting peaceful uses and applications of nuclear energy. Egypt urged all Member States to follow their example in order to ensure the continued success of the Agency's technical co-operation activities and to prevent the development of an impasse that could result in a crisis for the Agency as a whole.

126. Mr. Jung-uck SEO (Republic of Korea), having welcomed Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and the Central African Republic, said that while recognizing the limitations of the world's natural resources, it was important to direct the development of science and technology in such a way as to preserve the global environment.

127. Nuclear technology was expected to be subject to more intense public scrutiny owing to its potentially negative impact. Accordingly, the most important task for the world nuclear community was to step up its efforts to improve the acceptability of nuclear energy in terms of society and the environment, so as to meet a substantial portion of global energy demands.

128. In that connection, a clear vision should be established satisfying public demands for safety and economic viability, and encouraging talented young people to pursue their careers in the nuclear field. Similarly, governments and non-governmental organizations had to work together to educate the public and promote a better understanding of nuclear energy.

129. In the twenty-first century, the Agency would have to play a leading role in enhancing nuclear technology further and in assisting Member States to meet a variety of needs pertaining to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. For its part, the Republic of Korea had endeavoured to achieve self-reliance in nuclear technology with the development of various reactor designs. The Government of the Republic of Korea was also planning to take part in international efforts to develop technologies for a safer, more economical and proliferation resistant reactor and fuel cycle. Korea had also made significant efforts to develop relevant technologies for the use of radiation and radioisotopes designed to improve the quality of life of its citizens and, in that connection, had prepared a technical exhibition that was being shown during the General Conference.

130. Following the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding with the Agency in 1998, the Republic of Korea had expanded its nuclear education and training programmes for developing countries. In addition, it had offered to host the office of the RCA.

131. Korea continued to make every effort to incorporate the recommendations of the first Review Conference of the parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety into domestic law and was gradually implementing the recommendations of ICRP Publication 60. It also looked forward to the early entry into force of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management and to the swift conclusion of the current international discussions on the safety of radioactive sources and safe transport of radioactive materials. The Republic of Korea was developing an information

system on integrated radiation safety which was capable of tracing and monitoring all the processes involved in the use of radioactive sources. Furthermore, in September each year the country celebrated Nuclear Safety Day to promote safety awareness among nuclear professionals.

132. He welcomed the adoption of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which contained an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Korea fully supported international efforts to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and looked forward to the early entry into force of the CTBT and an early conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. For its part, Korea had been implementing its own national inspection system since 1997, in addition to that of the Agency, in order to enhance nuclear transparency. As a result, inspection goal attainment in Korea had been improved to 90% the previous year.

133. With regard to the DPRK, he said that the fact that the DPRK failed to fulfil its obligations constituted a major challenge, not only to the Agency's overall safeguards system, but also to the basic framework of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Although the Republic of Korea remained concerned about the lack of progress achieved, it believed it was important to recognize the new developments that had taken place in the region. The summit held between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea in June 2000 represented a significant turning point. It was therefore hoped that a similar improvement could be achieved in relations between the Agency and the DPRK, and that the latter would rejoin the Agency as quickly as possible.

134. As part of the effort to promote an interest in and understanding of nuclear energy among young people, the Republic of Korea would host the second Youth Nuclear Congress in 2002, which would serve as a forum for an exchange of views and understanding of the importance of nuclear energy. The Agency, for its part, should increase its role in establishing an international nuclear network among nuclear education and research institutes and professional training centres.

135. Following the resolution adopted at the previous session of the General Conference regarding the amendment of Article VI of the Agency's Statute, all Member States and the Secretariat were urged to make efforts towards ensuring its early entry into force.

136. In conclusion, he said that in order to meet the challenges ahead, it was necessary to combine the wisdom and capacity of all Member States and to place even greater emphasis on the role played by the Agency. In that regard, the Republic of Korea pledged to perform its share of responsibility and to take part in the global effort to ensure the peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE

137. The PRESIDENT drew the attention of delegates to document GC(44)/INF/14 entitled “Statement of Financial Contributions to the Agency as at 15 September 2000”, which included a table indicating those Member States that had lost their voting rights by virtue of the application of Article XIX.A of the Statute. Communications had been received from Iraq and Belarus, which were among those Member States, requesting that their voting rights be restored. The Iraqi communication was contained in document GC(44)/INF/15; the communication from Belarus would be issued as a document in due course. Following past practice, such requests would be referred to the General Committee for initial consideration and report, and he proposed that such requests be dealt with by the General Committee at its second meeting.

138. It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.