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RECORD OF THE EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna  
on Thursday, 21 September 2000, at 3.10 p.m.

President: Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic)

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(44)/INF/18/Rev.2.

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Abbreviations used in this record

AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
LDC	Least developed country
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
OAU	Organization of African Unity
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
SIT	Sterile insect technique
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1999 (continued)  
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1. Mr. PAIS (Portugal) after welcoming Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and the Central African Republic as new members of the Agency, said that the recent NPT Review Conference had been an important event which had highlighted the efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament, the strengthening of the verification regime and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Portugal fully endorsed the view that the Agency was the sole authority competent to verify the compliance of Member States with their commitments under Article III of the NPT.
2. Despite some unfair assessments of past events, the implementation of the safeguards system was recognized as a success that had benefited all. To enhance the benefits, however, the system must be strengthened to remove the gaps that had motivated criticism. The number of countries signing additional protocols must be increased from the present low rate of nine a year. He appealed to Member States which had not yet done so to sign an additional protocol. Portugal, for its part, expected to complete the process of concluding its own additional protocol before the end of 2000.
3. Safeguards were an activity for which all States shared responsibility. A draft resolution to facilitate the more equitable sharing of the cost of that activity had been recommended by the Board of Governors for adoption by the Conference.
4. Portugal welcomed the ongoing efforts to draft a fissile material cut-off treaty; prompt adherence by Member States would avert the resolution of disputes by means other than dialogue. The increase in the amount of fissile material of military origin placed under Agency safeguards was an important development and it was to be hoped that in future all such material would be covered by safeguards.
5. Because of past nuclear accidents, the world had been paying increasing attention to co-operation in nuclear, radiation and radioactive-waste safety. Despite the Agency's efforts over the years to develop an effective worldwide safety regime and the adoption of its safety standards, which provided essential guidance for national authorities, the international community still had much more to do. Research reactors, illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials and radiation protection should be kept under review. Portugal endorsed the approach of countries like Ukraine, which had decided to shut down reactors whose standards of safety were doubtful. The legal framework for nuclear safety developed by the Agency provided a basis for the practices of States, although challenges still existed.
6. Portugal acknowledged with gratitude the technical co-operation from which it had benefited. Unfortunately, the gap between individual targets and contributions was still high, and it was to be hoped that the draft resolution on the financing of technical co-operation would meet the expectations of all Member States.
7. The quality of the work done by the Agency was the best guarantee of support from Member States in facing the challenges that lay ahead.

8. Mr. BULBULA (Ethiopia) noted that the recent Millennium Summit had reached consensus on the need to eradicate the scourge of poverty. Nuclear science and technology could make a significant contribution to that end. Ethiopia's nuclear-technology-based programmes were directed towards the economic sectors that demanded the highest priority. In its region of Africa, national economies were primarily based on agriculture. Livestock was extremely important, not only as a source of milk, meat and other products but also as a major power source in the form of traction.

9. The potential for livestock development was immense, but it was adversely affected by diseases, in the forefront of which was trypanosomiasis. The disease was transmitted by tsetse flies, which infested an area of over 10 million square kilometres in 36 African countries. It threatened some 44 million cattle and other livestock, as well as 55 million people who were in danger of contracting human sleeping sickness. In the infested areas, fertile lands could not be utilized to their full potential, and that created severe pressure on the limited land areas outside the tsetse-fly belt, particularly the highlands where the vast majority of people and livestock were concentrated and which had become increasingly less productive. If the obstacles created by tsetse-fly infestation were removed, people from the highlands would be more likely to move to the fertile lowlands.

10. Trypanosomiasis control measures dated back 100 years in Africa and had focused on administering drugs. Other measures had ranged from attempts to eliminate the tsetse fly's habitat and exterminate wild game to blanket application of insecticide and traps. Some of those measures had had grave environmental consequences without achieving tsetse-fly eradication even in small land areas.

11. The sterile insect technique (SIT) had been successfully employed elsewhere to eradicate Mediterranean fruit flies and screwworms and had more recently been used to eradicate tsetse flies from Zanzibar. For Ethiopia, existing control measures required constant and expensive imports of drugs and insecticides which had tried the patience of Government, farmers and donors alike. As an alternative measure, the Government had committed itself to building national capacity for the application of SIT technology. Given that the tsetse-fly problem affected countries throughout Africa, a continent-wide approach was only logical, and a good beginning had been made with the establishment of a pan-African SIT Forum. The SIT technology might also be made to work in malaria control. Ethiopia was indebted to the IAEA for its effective co-operation in the use of SIT technology.

12. After the SIT project, Ethiopia attached the second-highest priority to isotope hydrology, a scientific and technical tool that had been used for the past six years as a complement to conventional techniques for studying surface and groundwater resources. Isotope techniques were being applied near Addis Ababa to analyse a major groundwater field that was to contribute about 35% of the city's water supply and to determine its susceptibility to environmental pollution. The work had attracted the attention of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and of the French Government, which was participating through bilateral co-operation. Isotope techniques were also being used to manage a geothermal power plant developed with the assistance of UNDP and the European Union, and

had helped to explain a rise in the water level of Lake Beseka that had threatened to submerge a rail link to the port of Djibouti.

13. Having seen the effectiveness of isotope hydrology in water resources development, his Government was initiating a programme in co-operation with the IAEA aimed at mapping and assessing groundwater resources throughout the country. The multi-year programme was expected to attract funding from other countries, particularly the United States of America, which would be sending senior scientists to conduct a national workshop. The programme had important implications for the optimal utilization of water resources, poverty alleviation and development in Ethiopia.

14. Technical co-operation was well in place in various fields, including human health, agriculture, radiation protection and instrumentation. The Agency's support in human resources development, infrastructure building and technical management had been extremely valuable. Ethiopia had been involved in various AFRA projects which had provided opportunities for the sharing of experiences, expertise and resources on a regional basis.

15. His country shared the Agency's aims and goals and would continue to co-operate with it in every way, including through the technical co-operation programme. He expressed gratitude to the Agency Departments that had contributed to the realization of Ethiopia's objectives.

16. Mr. MCHUMO (United Republic of Tanzania) thanked the Agency for the technical assistance it had provided to his country in nuclear medicine and radiotherapy, which was having a positive impact on the population's living standards. Tangible results included the establishment of a viable radiation protection infrastructure, the eradication of the tsetse fly and trypanosomiasis on Zanzibar using the SIT, the introduction of nuclear medicine and the consolidation of radiotherapy. The economic gains being made on Zanzibar had generated hope and interest, not only in his own country but throughout sub-Saharan Africa and the world. The United Republic of Tanzania would be playing a leading role in the OAU's Africa-wide efforts to achieve tsetse-fly eradication using SIT, being itself involved in a continuing fight to reclaim its tsetse-fly-infested land for food and animal production and social development. He renewed Tanzania's call to SIT experts to continue to investigate how to make the technique more cost-effective and more widely applicable.

17. His country urgently needed the Agency's further assistance in acquiring and adapting nuclear techniques to fuel its socio-economic development in order to eradicate poverty. The delivery mechanisms for such techniques should also be improved. In particular, some of the fundamental procedures governing the provision of technical assistance, especially those relating to the least developed countries, should be reviewed to ensure sustainability and success. Arrangements should also be made to enable the LDCs to participate beneficially in regional co-operation ventures under AFRA, ARCAL or RCA.

18. Although the Annual Report for 1999 showed an increase in contributions to the TCF from Member States, it likewise indicted that some pledged amounts had been received only

in the final month of the year. The unpredictability of the amount and timing of contributions made project planning very difficult and effective implementation almost impossible. His country, for its part, would honour its pledges to the TCF for 2001.

19. Although his country subscribed to the goal of controlling both horizontal and vertical proliferation, it felt that in extending the NPT indefinitely, the NPT Review and Extension Conference had merely endorsed the monopoly of the few nuclear-weapon States to own, develop and by implication use stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Those States' reluctance to abandon nuclear weapons had also been seen clearly in the prevarication over the conclusion of a universal and effectively verifiable CTBT. That situation tormented the non-nuclear-weapon States and, if fuelled by regional conflict, could serve as an incentive to nuclear-weapon proliferation.

20. Nuclear technology had a pivotal role to play in economic and social development, and all States must be helped to benefit fully from its valuable applications. His Government renewed its appeal for an increase in scientific training, research, infrastructure and education, all of which were prerequisites for the cost-effective use of nuclear technology. In the hope of achieving those aims, the United Republic of Tanzania would continue to support the Agency in promoting the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

21. Mr. HALPHEN PÉREZ (Panama), summarizing the various activities being carried out in his country by the Department of Technical Co-operation, said that a pilot plan had been established for all of Central America, relating to the use of nuclear medicine for cancer diagnosis and he was pleased to report that the desired results had been achieved. Effective support had been provided in the eradication of the Mediterranean fruit fly, which had been jeopardizing the country's production of grain and other crops. Programmes had been carried out in food irradiation and mutation breeding with a view to preservation and improved yields. Effective steps had also been taken to curb the screwworm scourge which had been afflicting his country's cattle.

22. Thanks to the efforts of the President and the authorities concerned, Panama had managed to eliminate its arrears in the payment of its contributions and as a result its voting rights had been restored.

23. Small in size but of crucial importance in terms of its geographical location, Panama had cut itself wide open to create the waterway known as the Panama Canal. That marvel of engineering linked two oceans, obviating the need to circumnavigate all of South America and, thus benefiting international maritime commerce. Under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977, the Canal Zone had been returned to Panama's jurisdiction on 31 December 1999 and the country's territorial integrity had been restored with the withdrawal of the United States military. Panama was currently taking advantage of the Agency's expertise in the safe transport of nuclear material in seeking to protect itself and the entire region against the consequences of any accident that might occur during the transport of nuclear materials or radioactive waste through the Canal by duly authorized vessels.

24. In conclusion, he said that Panama endorsed the Agency's efforts to foster international peace and security and warmly welcomed the new members.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.