IAEA
Atoms for Peace and Development

General Conference

GC(64)/OR.5
Issued: December 2020

General Distribution
Original: English

Sixty-Fourth regular session

Plenary

Record of the Fifth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Tuesday, 22 September 2020, at 4 p.m.[1]

President: Mr FARHANE (Morocco)
Later: Mr ALASHI (Libya)

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[1] In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference decided that delegations so wishing could attend in a virtual manner using the Interprefy IT platform or make their statements by means of a pre-recorded video.
[2] GC(64)/19.

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(64)/INF/14.

Abbreviations used in this record

AAEA	Arab Atomic Energy Agency
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFCONE	African Commission on Nuclear Energy
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
G-77	Group of Seventy-Seven
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICRP	International Commission on Radiological Protection
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ITDB	Incident and Trafficking Database
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PET	positron emission tomography
R&D	research and development
RT-PCR	reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TEPCO	Tokyo Electric Power Company
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNODA	United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2019 (continued) (GC(64)/3)

1. Mr MPANDA KABANGU (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, in spite of the restrictions on day to day life due to COVID-19, the momentum of cooperation between Member States, which cemented the Agency's unity, must not subside.

2. Thanks to the Agency's support, for which it was grateful, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had made civil nuclear applications a critical link of its sustainable development policy, primarily in the fields of agriculture, health, energy, mining and education. As communicated to the Agency in February 2020, the Government intended to restart its TRICO II research reactor, for which it had submitted a strategic plan of action. Although implementation had been delayed owing to COVID-19, his country was fully committed to the project, which would make a valuable contribution to its development, and called on the Agency to provide support, including technical assistance, to ensure that it reached fruition.

3. Health care remained a national priority and required more resources, especially for cancer control. Hoping to receive an imPACT review mission, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would soon designate a National Liaison Officer for that purpose.

4. Ms VICTORIA-KRUSE (Dominican Republic) commended the Agency for continuing its essential work — in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic — to increase the contribution of atomic energy to world peace, health, prosperity and socioeconomic development.

5. Acknowledging the Agency's contribution to its national projects in different areas, the Dominican Republic highlighted the national project titled 'Strengthening National Infrastructure for Radiological Protection and Safety' (DOM9005), through which the Agency had provided equipment for the removal of contaminated waste from the Cibao Regional Oncology Institute and had helped strengthen the radiological protection programme at ten hospitals. She also expressed her country's appreciation for the Agency's donation of funds and diagnostic equipment to help it combat the spread of COVID-19.

6. According great importance to ARCAL**,** the Dominican Republic had promoted alliances with a view to developing joint projects and initiatives in the area of nuclear energy and introducing formal training in radiation protection. In addition, in cooperation with the Agency, the Government was strengthening its legal and regulatory framework in line with international guidelines, developing new framework legislation on the safe and peaceful use of ionizing radiation sources, and updating the national policy and strategy for radioactive waste management.

7. Already a party to the CPPNM and its Amendment and to the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident, the Dominican Republic was in the process of ratifying the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency.

8. Given the ever-growing relevance of nuclear technology and the Agency to the international community, she concluded by reiterating her country's commitment to achieving the Agency's objectives in support of peaceful coexistence and national development.

9. Mr JAYESINGHE (Sri Lanka), noting that, thanks to visionary political leadership and timely and robust measures, his country had successfully contained COVID-19, thanked the Agency for

providing diagnostic kits and equipment to repress the spread of the virus. Sri Lanka encouraged the Agency to continue offering assistance to countries that required it.

10. The current pandemic, which would not be the last, served as a stark reminder for Member States to take proactive measures to prevent and address such outbreaks. Sri Lanka therefore welcomed the Director General's ZODIAC initiative, to include a global network of national diagnostic laboratories for the monitoring, tracing, early detection and control of zoonotic diseases using nuclear or nuclear-derived techniques.

11. The Agency played a pivotal role in facilitating the use of nuclear techniques for peaceful purposes. As safeguards were central to the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, it was important to continue their implementation despite the pandemic to ensure that nuclear material was not diverted from peaceful purposes.

12. Under the TC programme, Sri Lanka had benefited from technical support, R&D, capacity building and expertise in adopting cleaner technologies and making improvements in health and agriculture. Cognizant of emerging trends and challenges in the nuclear field, Sri Lanka looked to expand the use of nuclear and other technologies so as to boost economic growth and social development within its national policy framework. Given that nuclear safety and security would be crucial to implementation, Sri Lanka would be working closely with the Agency and other partners. In particular, his country looked forward to strengthening its regulatory infrastructure for radiation protection and the safety of radiation sources as part of the TC programme.

13. Mr DAGOH (Republic of Togo), noting that the COVID-19 pandemic continued to adversely affect people and economic, social and cultural activities worldwide, said that his country was deeply grateful for the generosity and solidarity shown by donors to the Agency's COVID-19 response. In addition, the Director General's ZODIAC initiative would be of doubtless importance in controlling future zoonotic epidemics.

14. With reference to the Annual Report for 2019, Togo welcomed the Agency's promotion of nuclear applications for peaceful uses, enhancement of nuclear safety and security, and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. Acknowledging the Agency's crucial enabling role, Togo supported the inalienable right of States to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in accordance with Article IV of the NPT.

15. With financial and technical support from the Agency, his country had revised its INSSP in February 2020 with a view to strengthening its nuclear security regime. On 11 March 2020, his Government had signed its first CPF, for 2020–2025, following the approval of three national projects in the 2020–2021 cycle during an official ministerial visit to the Agency. On 4 June 2020, the national assembly had enacted legislation on the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

16. Member States should step up efforts to strengthen the Agency's capacity, so that it could fulfil its mandate effectively and ensure that its motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' remained practicable and sustainable.

17. Mr DILEITA (Djibouti) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected all countries, including his own, jeopardizing socioeconomic progress, exposing the fragilities of States of all sizes and reaffirming the need to combine efforts to make the world safer. Djibouti was grateful to the Agency for its effective response through the provision of testing equipment using nuclear-derived techniques to rapidly detect SARS-CoV-2.

18. From 17 to 20 February 2020, a high-level national delegation had visited Vienna to discuss draft legislation on nuclear and radiological safety, nuclear security and safeguards application. Thanks to joint work by the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security and the Department of Technical Cooperation, coordinated by the Office of Legal Affairs, Djibouti had been able to refine the provisions

concerning the creation of a national authority for nuclear security and nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological safety.

19. In view of Djibouti's plans to accede to a number of international conventions, from 15 to 19 December 2019 an advisory and assistance mission had been conducted upon request by Agency experts under the TC programme to revise the draft legislation. Djibouti was grateful to the Agency, in particular its Division for Africa, for the expertise it had provided so that the legislation could be finalized.

20. Lastly, having officially deposited its instrument of acceptance on 19 August 2020, Djibouti noted with satisfaction the entry into force of the revised AFRA agreement.

21. Mr KACOU (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his country had benefited from the Agency's technical assistance, including equipment, expert missions and human resource training in the fields of agriculture, environment, scientific research, energy planning, animal production, animal health and, in particular, human health. In the field of radiotherapy, a national priority, Côte d'Ivoire had received support through capacity building, state-of-the-art radiotherapy equipment and training for physicians and radiotherapists.

22. Thanks to cooperation with the Agency, on 25 January 2018 Côte d'Ivoire had inaugurated the Alassane Ouattara National Radiotherapy Centre, which applied nuclear technologies in treating cancer with the aim of improving patients' disease management. As at 30 June 2020, 913 computed tomography scans had been conducted, including 805 for radiotherapy treatment purposes. Grateful to the Agency for the technical support it had provided, Côte d'Ivoire called for further assistance in setting up a second regional radiotherapy centre, in Grand-Bassam, in 2023, to focus on human resource training.

23. In its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Agency had supported all Member States, including his country, by donating equipment. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire was grateful for the personal protective and laboratory equipment and diagnostic kits it had received — worth some €78 000 — thanks to which it had managed to contain the virus. In the long term, global efforts should be aimed at developing a viable vaccine.

24. He concluded by commending the Agency on its efforts to continue TC activities in spite of the pandemic. Côte d'Ivoire had participated in 30 or so interregional, regional and national TC projects by means of conference calls and virtual workshops. For example, the 31st AFRA Technical Working Group Meeting had been successfully convened on 23 and 24 July 2020.

25. Ms TSIKHELASHVILI (Georgia) commended the Director General and the Secretariat on their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had allowed the Agency to continue most of its nuclear security activities. Stressing that the Agency's safeguards system was vital in ensuring the implementation of the NPT, Georgia called for the immediate universalization of CSAs and additional protocols, the current verification standard.

26. Georgia appreciated the Agency's prompt support for Member States in strengthening their preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid preparation of the ZODIAC initiative. Upon request, her country was receiving RT–PCR equipment and other materials to enhance its capacity to rapidly detect SARS-CoV-2, which was critical for preventing a widespread outbreak of the virus. In that context, Georgia appreciated the provision of generous extrabudgetary contributions by Norway and the USA, thanks to which the Agency had extended its assistance to Georgia and other requesting countries.

27. Preventing and responding to nuclear and radioactive threats were vital for countries' security. The continued Russian occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia presented a complex security challenge. For several years, Georgia had recorded attempts to smuggle nuclear and radioactive materials through occupied regions, which had been prevented thanks to the effective measures taken

by Georgia's law enforcement agencies. In the absence of an international presence in Georgia's occupied territories, however, it had become virtually impossible to conduct any type of verification activities on the ground.

28. Georgia continued to strengthen its nuclear and radiation safety and security framework, by improving its regulatory system. The Agency of Nuclear and Radiation Safety, the country's independent regulatory body, had been operational since 2016.

29. To step up its technical cooperation with the Agency, Georgia had signed its CPF for 2020–2025, which covered nuclear and radiation safety and security, health and nutrition, food and agriculture, water and the environment, and energy and industry.

30. Georgia was receiving technical and financial assistance from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to develop national regulations and systems for nuclear and radiation safety and security. Thanks to that increasingly successful partnership, her country had reinforced its national regulatory framework for nuclear and radiological emergencies. In that connection, a decree had been issued to establish a management centre within the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to ensure the coordinated and integrated implementation of emergency preparedness and response measures.

31. Georgia attached great importance to the work done by the EU and Swedish Radiation Safety Authority on strengthening its nuclear and radiation safety. It highly appreciated the valuable support it was receiving to establish a radioactive waste management system.

32. Mr DJUNDEV (North Macedonia) noted with satisfaction that the assistance provided by the Agency under the TC programme had been tailored to his country's development priorities and were in line with the requirements for EU membership and other international development frameworks, including the SDGs.

33. North Macedonia had developed and implemented a wide range of measures to strengthen its nuclear regulatory framework and infrastructure. It was continuously improving its capabilities to combat illicit trafficking and stepping up measures to ensure the physical protection of nuclear and radioactive material.

34. With the Agency's support, the Radiation Safety Directorate had continued to build national capacity for effective radiation protection and nuclear safety. It had exported a disused sealed category 1 source from a cobalt-60 teletherapy unit, a crucial achievement in radioactive waste management.

35. With regard to the 2020–2021 TC cycle, he said that four national project designs had been approved by the Board of Governors for implementation: two projects relating to medicine, one to food safety and one to air pollution.

36. Agency assistance had enabled North Macedonia to improve radiation protection for oncological and non-oncological patients by raising the quality of PET diagnostics. That had been achieved by introducing new PET radiopharmaceuticals and establishing a dose tracking system for medical imaging at the country's Institute of Physics. The institute had also benefited from an online system to monitor patient doses and remotely control mammography. That had made it possible to set national diagnostic reference levels and ultimately reduce the burden on the country's health care system, protect patients and staff from unintended radiation exposure and improve the national health and safety culture in medical settings.

37. In addition, the country's public health institute had upgraded its environmental and emergency radioactivity monitoring and reporting capacity. It had, moreover, improved its ability to assess potential public exposure to isotopes and had introduced regular monitoring and an early warning network for nuclear medicine departments and industries working with naturally occurring radioactive materials.

38. Looking ahead to the 2022–2023 TC cycle, he noted with satisfaction that three projects had been approved by the Secretariat and recommended for further development, in accordance with the CPF for 2019–2023 signed in December 2019.

39. He concluded by expressing North Macedonia's gratitude for the Agency's invaluable assistance in providing diagnostic kits and equipment based on nuclear-derived techniques for the rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2 and to the Government of the Netherlands for its financial contribution.

40. Mr ISRAFILOV (Azerbaijan) said that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had underlined the importance of strengthening multilateralism and cooperation based on international law. The Agency's near-universal membership, advanced scientific approaches and practical assistance were proof of the key role it played in addressing global challenges. Azerbaijan was grateful to the Director General and the Secretariat for providing critical assistance to States affected by the pandemic.

41. The Director General's timely ZODIAC initiative would help Member States, together with the Agency, in reducing the risk of human exposure to dangerous viruses and pathogens. Azerbaijan looked forward to learning more details of the initiative and the development and application of nuclear techniques to enhance the capacity and resilience of Member States in dealing with zoonotic diseases.

42. Azerbaijan commended the Agency's ongoing efforts to strengthen and implement TC projects aimed at promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology. The TC programme was extremely important for achieving the SDGs in priority areas — human health, water resources management, nuclear physics, environment and climate-smart agriculture.

43. Azerbaijan had repeatedly expressed serious concern about the security risks posed to the region by the Metsamor NPP in Armenia. That country failed to provide safety and security information on the plant, including its procedure for assessing environmental impact, which could have significant transboundary implications.

44. A number of cases of smuggling of nuclear and radioactive material by Armenian nationals had been recorded at the country's border crossing points. In the light of Armenia's continued occupation of Azerbaijan's territory and its inability to ensure proper border control along the occupied territories, Azerbaijan was seriously concerned by the lack of a mechanism to control dangerous materials and the increased risks of trafficking of nuclear material intended for use in radiological weapons. Armenia's irresponsible behaviour in its pursuit of an aggressive regional policy — and its failure to respond to UN Security Council demands to ensure the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of its forces from occupied territories — called for strong condemnation and an appropriate response from the international community.

45. Azerbaijan would continue to support the Agency as it strengthened the security and safety of civilian nuclear facilities. For its part, Armenia must address its neighbours' concerns about transparency, safety and security with regard to the Metsamor NPP and fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolutions.

46. Mr AMOUSSOU-GUENOU (Benin) said that his country was grateful to the Director General and the Secretariat for the urgent and valuable assistance provided to 120 countries with over 1000 consignments of equipment to detect SARS-CoV-2 and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Thanks to that assistance, Benin had further strengthened its unwavering efforts to ensure an effective response to the highly disruptive pandemic.

47. On 23 and 24 July 2020, Benin had hosted the 31st AFRA Technical Working Group Meeting, held in a virtual manner, during which his Government had demonstrated its unreserved commitment to the Agreement. Benin was currently making preparations for its presidency of AFRA.

48. The pandemic notwithstanding, Benin was committed to the use of the atom for peace and development. On 22 August 2020, two bodies within its National Authority for Radiological Safety and Radiation Protection had been inaugurated: the seven-member supervisory board, the authority's decision-making body, and the permanent secretariat, responsible for its day to day functioning. The authority had begun establishing an efficient regulatory framework, to ensure the safe and secure use of ionizing radiation sources.

49. Following its accession to all legal instruments relating to safeguards, nuclear safety and nuclear security, including the NPT and an SQP, Benin had been setting up the necessary infrastructure. The establishment of the country's first radiotherapy and nuclear medicine service, at the Lagoon University Hospital of the Mother and Child, where construction work had begun in September 2020, remained a high priority.

50. To ensure the provision of integrated cancer care services, Benin called on the Agency and other partners for assistance. His country was grateful to the Agency and the USA in particular for pledging equipment to launch its nuclear medicine service.

51. As it cooperated further with the Agency to ensure the peaceful use of ionizing radiation and implement civil nuclear applications, Benin would continue to work with the Agency on formulating its CPF for 2022–2026.

52. Mr MNISI (Eswatini) commended the Agency for its leadership and support to countries, including his own, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak through the provision of training, guidance and detection equipment based on nuclear-derived techniques. Crucially, the situation had reaffirmed the need to prevent future pandemics. As Member States reflected on the gains and losses of the previous year, his country called for enhanced efforts to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies, which contributed to international peace, security and sustainable development in the context of the SDGs.

53. Having become a Member State on 15 February 2013, Eswatini had been actively engaged with the Agency since 2015. It was expanding the use of nuclear science and technology under its CPF for 2019–2023, signed on 6 May 2019. Eswatini was implementing six projects under the TC programme: to develop an integrated resource plan for evidence-based decision-making in the energy and electricity sector to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; to reduce the incidence and impact of transboundary animal or zoonotic diseases by building capacity at its veterinary laboratory to diagnose diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, African swine fever, avian influenza, Newcastle disease, goat plague, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, lumpy skin disease, rabies, African Horse sickness, dourine and bovine brucellosis; to improve the cowpea's adaptability to climate change through mutation breeding by enhancing the use of mutant lines in selected germplasms; to build capacity in the use of stable isotope techniques in the evaluation of interventions to improve infant and young child feeding practices as a response to increased chronic malnutrition in children aged under five, which had been compounded by the triple threat of poverty, HIV and recurrent droughts; to plan for Eswatini's first radiotherapy facility to address the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, including cancer; and to assess the rates of exclusive breastfeeding in children up to four months through the use of stable isotope techniques.

54. At a regional level, Eswatini was participating in a regional project to increase access to affordable, equitable, effective and sustainable radiation medicine services as part of a comprehensive cancer control system. Eswatini was proposing new projects for the 2020–2022 TC cycle, all of which were at the design stage.

55. With regard to nuclear and radiation safety, Eswatini adhered to all Agency agreements and other international legal obligations. As yet it had no specific legislation on radiation safety and security, but

was developing an effective legislative framework for the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. In that connection, the establishment of an independent regulatory body was a high priority. Lastly, Eswatini vowed to work with the Agency to achieve its national development goals in a cost-effective, safe and secure manner through the application of nuclear technology.

56. Mr NYIRISHEMA (Rwanda) said that his country would continue to cooperate with the Agency via all platforms to promote the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology. Since becoming a Member State almost a decade previously, Rwanda had diversified its applications of nuclear science and technology in sectors such as food and agriculture, health care, water resources management, industry and sustainable energy. To support the safe use of nuclear technology, Rwanda had strengthened its legal and regulatory infrastructure. Setting great store by the international instruments on nuclear safety and security, Rwanda was grateful for the excellent assistance provided by the Agency. Moreover, he noted with satisfaction that Rwanda had acceded to the sixth extension of AFRA, to run from 2020–2025.

57. Turning to health, he said that Rwanda had opened its first cancer treatment centre in 2019. Furthermore, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, his country was grateful to the Agency for its provision of equipment to its national reference laboratory in July 2020. Rwanda was especially grateful for the biosafety cabinets, which had offered protection during the daily performance of thousands of SARS-CoV-2 tests.

58. In line with its Vision 2050, aimed at improving the quality of life in the country, Rwanda had set a target of achieving upper-middle income status by 2035 and high-income status by 2050. As States embarked on economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic, nuclear science and technology would play an important role in the future growth of many economic sectors, while international cooperation would be of crucial importance.

59. Mr SIMON PETRO BUSAGALA (United Republic of Tanzania) commended the Director General on his resolve to ensure business as usual during the COVID-19 pandemic. Assuring the Agency of its full backing, he expressed Tanzania's hopes that it would continue supporting not only national development objectives regarding health, energy and nuclear security but also strategies and programmes aimed at advancing the peaceful applications of nuclear technology and ensuring nuclear non-proliferation. Tanzania was grateful to the Agency and its partners for providing emergency diagnostic kits for the rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2, which would be instrumental in the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

60. He noted with appreciation that, thanks to the Agency's long-standing TC programme, Tanzania had strengthened its activities in agriculture, water resources management and human health.

61. Noting with satisfaction that the theme for the 2020 Scientific Forum was 'Nuclear Power and the Clean Energy Transition', Tanzania recognized the importance of clean energy and climate change mitigation in the context of sustainable economic development. In that connection, his Government would continue collaborating with the Agency with a view to achieving the SDGs.

62. Mr APOSTOL (Republic of Moldova), commending the Director General on his leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, said that his country appreciated the Agency's resolve to continue assisting Member States in such difficult circumstances, among other things by enhancing national capacities for the rapid detection of SARS-CoV-2.

63. The Agency played a key role in strengthening capacity for the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology. Its safeguards system was fundamental for international security and achieving the NPT goals. Committed to strengthening the international, regional and national nuclear security and

non-proliferation regimes, Moldova strongly supported the preservation of the JCPOA as a fundamental instrument of non-proliferation and security.

64. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, Moldova had inherited a RADON-type disposal facility containing legacy radioactive waste. Under the action plan to implement its ten-year national strategy on radioactive waste management, Moldova was decommissioning the facility with the support of the Department of Technical Cooperation, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

65. He concluded by announcing that Moldova was implementing the recommendations and suggestions of the IRRS mission it had received in 2018 under the auspices of the Agency and Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

66. Ms ORINA (Kenya) said that, faced with the serious and unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, her country stood with all affected Member States. Enhanced multilateralism was needed to address the far-reaching consequences of the ongoing pandemic and other global challenges. Kenya commended the Agency for the support it had given Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing diagnostic equipment based on nuclear techniques, which had enhanced detection capabilities and mitigated the pandemic's impact. In addition, Kenya was grateful to Member States for their generous contributions.

67. Kenya welcomed the Director General's ZODIAC initiative, aimed at increasing Member States' preparedness and strengthening their capabilities to detect and prevent future zoonotic disease outbreaks by providing support and coordinating R&D.

68. Attaching great importance to the Agency's work, Kenya appreciated its role in supporting Member States in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology for meeting development priorities and achieving the SDGs. Her country hoped to forge a strong partnership with the Agency to meet its goals under the TC programme, the Agency's primary mechanism for transferring nuclear technology.

69. As the third leading cause of mortality nationwide, cancer was responsible for an estimated 33 000 deaths and 47 000 new cases a year. Committed to expanding its radiotherapy services, her country had established a second cancer hub at one of its largest referral hospitals, which had dispensed training in cancer management with the Agency's support. Kenya welcomed further support from the Agency in expanding cancer centres nationwide and building human capacity in nuclear and radiation medicine.

70. In view of the importance of the SIT in eradicating invasive pests affecting plants, animals and human health, Kenya looked forward to working with the Agency in applying the technique to the management of mosquito-transmitted diseases, such as malaria, and that of fruit flies, which damaged crops such as mango and banana and led to over €500 million in lost income for Kenyan farmers. Furthermore, continual drought had adversely affected agriculture and food security, one of Kenya's key priorities. The Agency and the FAO should strengthen the use of nuclear technology to improve agricultural productivity.

71. Kenya prioritized capacity building in nuclear science and technology, looking forward to working with the Agency to develop young people's nuclear science skills and knowledge. Her country hoped to work closely with the Agency and other partners to develop human resources through various training programmes, including the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, the Sandwich Training Educational Programme and the Safeguards Traineeship Programme.

72. Having enacted national legislation to set up the Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority for maintaining nuclear safety and security, her country looked forward to collaborating with the Agency to strengthen its nuclear security regime.

73. Mr ABDEL SHAFI (Palestine), noting that the Agency had been one of the first organizations to provide the Palestinian Ministry of Health with the materials needed to tackle COVID-19, said that his country looked forward to further support. In addition, national TC projects relating to radiation protection, agriculture, medicine and the environment continued to be implemented in his country.

74. Having acceded to the NPT in 2015, Palestine had participated in that year's NPT Review Conference and in the first Preparatory Committee for the Tenth NPT Review Conference. Pursuant to its obligations under the NPT, Palestine had signed a CSA in June 2019, demonstrating its commitment to the universalization of the NPT.

75. Palestine hoped that the Director General would make progress in implementing resolution GC(63)/RES/13 on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, including consultations with all Member States, and that he would spare no effort to advance the early application of the CSA.

76. Palestine continued to be occupied by a State with nuclear facilities that were not subject to a CSA, posing a direct threat to the safety and security of the people of Palestine and the region. The denial of Israel's military nuclear capabilities by certain States was unacceptable and inconsistent with the reality of its hostile behaviour in Palestine and elsewhere. Nevertheless, Palestine had been among the first States to sign and ratify the TPNW , a qualitative addition to the global nuclear disarmament regime.

77. It had been a disappointment that, despite the efforts and flexibility of the Arab Group, the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East had not been held in 2012. Palestine therefore applauded the outcomes of the first conference, held in New York in November 2019 under the presidency of Jordan pursuant to UN General Assembly decision 73/546 (2018). Palestine looked forward to the second conference, to be presided over by Kuwait.

78. Mr GARRIBBA (European Atomic Energy Community) said that Euratom had enjoyed long-standing cooperation with the Agency, which played a comprehensive role in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and other radiation technologies. The application of the highest levels of safety and continuous improvements remained guiding principles in nuclear energy and radiation safety.

79. Euratom continued to assist neighbouring countries through the stress test process of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group. With the support of the Agency and other partners, Euratom was supporting environmental remediation in Central Asia.

80. Productive cooperation with the Agency on the commissioning and long term safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel continued to develop in several areas, including through ARTEMIS.

81. Cooperation between Euratom and the Agency had ensured the full and effective implementation of safeguards in the EU in challenging times. Euratom continued to support the full implementation of the JCPOA through cooperation with Iran on nuclear safety and regulatory affairs under Annex III of the Plan, having provided €15 million to civil nuclear cooperation.

82. Euratom would continue to work with the Agency in nuclear science applications, including nuclear medicine. For 2021–2025, the scope of the Euratom research and training programme would include research on applications of nuclear science and ionizing radiation technology in the medical, industrial and research fields.

83. Euratom was allocating €5.6 billion in funding to nuclear fusion for 2021–2027. Given the progress achieved in that area, Euratom called for the creation of a comprehensive regulatory framework on the construction and operation of fusion facilities.

84. Mr WANG (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization), noting the unprecedented backdrop to the current session, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the most severe global health crises in human history, and complexities in international politics, said that peace and security must not be neglected. Moreover, multilateral cooperation was the key to effectively addressing international challenges, such as nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and to managing global commons. As the world was increasingly divided over defining issues, greater reliance would have to be placed on science-based evidence to restore trust and build stronger worldwide coalitions.

85. The CTBTO had been working diligently and creatively to keep the International Monitoring System in operation, despite the restrictions imposed in most countries hosting monitoring stations. Continuous and close interaction with station operators had been maintained at all times, while the daily functioning of monitoring facilities had been ensured.

86. The Agency and the CTBTO shared the same goal — the safe and peaceful use of the atom — and similar tools — multilateralism and science-backed technology. That made them natural partners in addressing some of the most pressing issues facing the international community.

87. The CTBTO reaffirmed its readiness to make its expertise, technology and monitoring assets available to any international process aimed at strengthening international peace and security. Equally, it was prepared, under its mandate and with the approval of its member States, to assist the international community in its efforts towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

88. Mr ANDERSON MACHADO (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) recalled that Latin America and the Caribbean had been the first region to commit to using nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes and the first to establish a juridical standard for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

89. Close cooperation and coordination between OPANAL and the Agency, formalized in an agreement signed in October 1972, was essential to the functioning of the Tlatelolco Treaty. The treaty stipulated that OPANAL and the Agency were responsible for verifying States' compliance with their commitments under the treaty, which included the mandatory conclusion of a safeguards agreement with the Agency. All 33 Contracting Parties had signed comprehensive safeguards agreements and SQPs. The Agency was authorized, with the involvement of OPANAL's Secretary-General and the approval of its Council, to carry out special inspections at the request of any Contracting Party.

90. OPANAL remained committed to strengthening the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and hoped to continue its strong relationship with the Agency.

91. Mr HAMDI (Arab Atomic Energy Agency) praised the Agency for keeping up its momentum of activity during the unprecedented global health crisis caused by COVID-19, to fulfil its humanitarian mission and help to reduce the burden of the pandemic.

92. The AAEA was preparing for the second phase of the Arab Strategy for the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, for the period from 2021 to 2030, which focused on the triad of food, water and energy security through activities in the areas of water resources and food security, human health, the environment, energy, manufacturing and mining.

93. A group of 12 Arab States located in Africa and Asia had submitted a project concept under the Agency's TC programme for 2020–2021 for an Arab environmental radiation monitoring and early warning network. The first project coordination meeting had produced a declaration on the network and was an exemplary model for cooperation between the AAEA and the Agency.

94. Noting that some Arab States had started planning to build NPPs to generate electricity, he congratulated the United Arab Emirates on operating the first nuclear power reactor in the Arab region.

95. Mr MARZO (Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) recalled that Argentina and Brazil had signed the Agreement for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy in July 1991 and, six months later, a bilateral agreement had entered into force creating ABACC, to apply a comprehensive safeguards system in the two countries and verify that all their nuclear materials in all nuclear activities were used for exclusively peaceful purposes.

96. In nearly 30 years of activity, ABACC had carried out some 3000 safeguards inspections at nuclear facilities in Argentina and Brazil. It had verified nuclear materials in 77 nuclear facilities with an inspection effort of some 1000 inspector-days. Despite all the logistical problems associated with the pandemic, ABACC had continued performing its safeguards inspections thanks to the commitment and dedication of its officers and inspectors and to the support given by the national authorities. The successful implementation of the safeguards system served to promote cooperation and strengthen ties of friendship and mutual confidence. The trust it generated between the two nations played a key role in improving national, regional and international security.

Mr Farhane (Morocco), President, took the Chair.

97. Mr BAALIOUAMER (African Commission on Nuclear Energy) congratulated the Director General on all the efforts he had made while in office — in particular, his support for Africa in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

98. Despite the exceptional situation, some important activities had been carried out in Africa. For example, in February 2020, with the support of two partners from Canada and the UK, AFCONE had organized a conference at which pathways had been identified for expanding and strengthening the contribution of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy to support Africa's development goals. On 10 September 2020, together with the African Union Commission's Trade and Industry Department and the International Science and Technology Centre, AFCONE had organized a webinar on uranium in Africa, focusing on exploration, exploitation and cooperation opportunities. In the area of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, AFCONE was in the process of selecting African Collaborating Centres. With regard to health, it was collaborating closely with the African Union Commission's Science and Technology and Special Affairs Departments to organize a regional meeting on fighting cancer in Africa.

99. Turning to regional and international cooperation, he was pleased to announce the signature of a collaboration agreement between AFCONE and AFRA on 7 September 2020, along with two MOUs signed during the week of the General Conference — one between the Global Cooperation Nuclear Energy Partnership and India's Department of Atomic Energy, and the other between AFCONE and the Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation "ROSATOM" — to strengthen the development of capacity-building and the safe and secure implementation of peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Africa. A further MOU was due to be signed with the Central Asian NWFZ in November 2020.

100. In July 2020, AFCONE had participated in a UNODA workshop on good practices and lessons learned with respect to the existing NWFZs and called for efforts to be made worldwide in order to implement UN Security Council resolution 984 (1995). He expressed the African Union's sincere thanks to the Agency for its continuous support to the continent.

101. Mr GRANSER (Sovereign Order of Malta) said that, as the oldest humanitarian entity in the world and a recognized subject of international law headquartered in Rome, the Sovereign Order of Malta maintained bilateral and multilateral diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with over 100 countries, most of which were Member States of the Agency, and with the EU and the United Nations,

where it held permanent observer status pursuant to a General Assembly resolution supported by all Member States. In that connection, the Order requested that the incorrect designation of its NGO status with the Agency be amended to reflect its entity status with all other UN international organizations.

102. Turning to cancer control, he said that nuclear science and technology, in combination with cancer prevention and treatment measures, could significantly curb the increased incidence of the disease. For several years, the Order had supported the Agency's concerted efforts in that area. In that context, the Order had signed a Practical Arrangement under PACT, which would contribute to enhanced cancer control in low and middle income countries, particularly in Albania.

103. With regard to the ZODIAC initiative, he noted with satisfaction that nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques could help scientists to investigate, prevent and contain outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. The COVID-19 pandemic had reaffirmed the need for an integrated global approach involving governments, international organizations and stakeholders in the fields of science, research, technology and innovation to reduce the risk of human exposure to dangerous pathogens.

104. The Sovereign Order of Malta supported the Agency's increasingly effective efforts in ensuring international peace and security and in promoting human development and well-being.

105. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan), exercising his right of reply, said that his country's policy relating to the Fukushima Daiichi NPP, including ALPS-treated water, had already been described in the statement made by his delegation the day before. Nevertheless, following the Republic of Korea's reference to the issue, he wished to offer further clarification.

106. It went without saying that international law must be respected. The water currently stored in tanks at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi NPP was not contaminated water — it was treated by ALPS and other related facilities. His Government properly cooperated and shared relevant information with the international community and organizations such as the Agency. Japan would never approve the discharge of ALPS-treated water into the environment before it met ICRP regulatory standards, in order to protect human and environmental health and safety.

107. Regarding transparent communication, he recalled that his Government had thoroughly explained its response to the Fukushima Daiichi accident in a timely and appropriate manner through various channels, including over 100 briefing sessions for diplomatic missions in Tokyo with question and answer sessions.

108. As a responsible Member State, Japan had been cooperating with the Agency fully and would continue to do so, having received 15 review missions since the Fukushima Daiichi accident. Japan's decommissioning efforts were positively acknowledged in Agency reports, including the report of the subcommittee on the handling of ALPS-treated water at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi NPP, issued in April 2020.

109. Mr SHIN Chae-hyun (Republic of Korea) said that the issues regarding the Fukushima Daiichi NPP, including the storage of contaminated water, were an important nuclear safety matter. Such an unprecedented challenge required an unprecedented response. Given the potential impact on human health and the environment, safety should be the upmost priority when the challenge was addressed.

110. Recalling that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy could be promoted effectively only with strong public confidence in nuclear safety, he stressed the need, repeatedly recommended by the Agency in its reports, for the promotion of more meaningful engagement with all stakeholders, including neighbouring countries, through substantial information sharing. Proper understanding would be advanced and public confidence built, in the country concerned and beyond. The Republic of Korea looked forward to the Agency's continued central role in leading cooperation among relevant parties on that matter.

111. Mr STICKER (France), replying on behalf of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to comments made by Member States concerning the TPNW, said that in the view of the five countries, which had been echoed by 36 other Member States in statements to the Board of Governors the previous week, the Agency was not the appropriate forum for discussion of that treaty. The five countries were disappointed to have to respond. Their views on the treaty were well known: they would not sign it and would not be bound by it, and they considered that the treaty would have a detrimental effect on the global non-proliferation regime under the NPT.

112. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), exercising his right of reply, said that Azerbaijan had once again abused the General Conference to make baseless accusations about the safety of his country's NPP, a topic about which, given its official threats to launch a missile attack on the plant, Azerbaijan had no moral right to speak. Its accusations were intended to draw international attention away from its own terrorist threats and total disrespect for international law, which put the whole region at risk. Azerbaijan's allegations regarding incidents involving radioactive material had been fabricated and no proper research had been carried out beforehand.

113. According to the Director General's Nuclear Security Report 2020 set out in document GC(64)/6, it appeared that, between the inception of the ITDB and 30 June 2020, States had reported — or otherwise confirmed to the ITDB — a total of 3768 incidents. Reports of 208 incidents had been added to the database during the reporting period. Incidents involving radioactive material and sources were, therefore, stable overall and occurred worldwide, not only in his country's region. He condemned Azerbaijan's attempts to present the 13 incidents relating to Armenia, which had occurred over a period of two decades, as something extraordinary and requiring special attention.

114. Moreover, the information provided by Azerbaijan was inaccurate and inconsistent with official information, clearly being taken from public — and in some cases even tabloid — sources without proper verification. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, there had been at least two incidents involving radioactive materials being smuggled from Azerbaijan and five incidents of trafficking of radioactive materials involving Azerbaijani nationals. If Azerbaijan was so concerned about incidents involving radioactive materials, why was it silent about its own cases?

115. It was clear that Azerbaijan's accusations were simply a poor and manipulative attempt to divert international attention away from its threats to Armenia's NPP, tantamount to nuclear terrorism. Its threat should be swiftly condemned by the international community in the strongest terms, so as to ensure the integrity of the national, regional and global nuclear security regime, which was vital for international peace and security.

116. Ms MAMMADOVA (Azerbaijan) said in reply that her country rejected Armenia's speculation and lecturing on the purposes of international agreements. It was yet another obvious attempt to divert international attention from its continued, unlawful military occupation of Azerbaijani territories and systematic attacks on Azerbaijani citizens and infrastructure, as condemned by the UN Security Council.

117. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan), further exercising his right of reply, said that his country had referred to ALPS-treated water, not contaminated water. Nuclear safety could be discussed in an objective manner based on scientific data. Japan would enthusiastically welcome information sharing and constructive exchange in that vein, continuing its full cooperation with the Agency.

118. Mr SHIN Chae-hyun (Republic of Korea) replied that his country sincerely hoped that the commitments repeatedly mentioned would be translated into concrete and meaningful actions and cooperation.

119. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), further exercising his right of reply, said that Azerbaijan had made repeated deplorable attempts to mislead the Agency and its Member States with groundless allegations

against Armenia in relation to a threatened missile attack on the Metsamor NPP, as it had done for decades at all international platforms.

120. Armenia had never officially threatened to target civilian infrastructure in Azerbaijan, as had been confirmed several times by the Armenian authorities. Not only had Azerbaijan yet to withdraw its threat to launch a missile attack on the Metsamor NPP, but moreover it was trying to downplay the seriousness of the incident or even attempting to justify it. The international community should stay vigilant and condemn Azerbaijan's threat to carry out an act of nuclear terrorism.

8. The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic
(GC(64)/INF/4, 5 and 6; GC(64)/L.2)

121. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the three reports contained in documents GC(64)/INF/4, 5 and 6, and the draft resolution contained in document GC(64)/L.2, submitted by the Philippines on behalf of the G-77 and China.

122. Mr OKO (Nigeria), introducing the draft resolution entitled 'The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic' on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that it expressed solidarity with and condolences for Member States, and acknowledged the Agency's efforts to maintain its operations across all domains of its mandate during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the height of the crisis, the Agency had quickly provided support to over 120 Member States through the flagship TC project INT0098, 'Strengthening Capabilities of Member States in Building, Strengthening and Restoring Capacities and Services in Case of Outbreaks, Emergencies and Disasters'.

123. The draft resolution reflected the utility of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques in assisting Member States as they addressed COVID-19 and other diseases and stressed the importance of the support given by other Member States. Among other things, the text expressed appreciation for the work done by the Director General and the Secretariat, calling on the Agency to continue carrying out its functions despite the challenges of the pandemic.

124. The draft resolution went on to express support for the Director General's initiative of resource mobilization and partnerships with new players and institutions, noting long-standing Agency collaboration with other international organizations with complementary mandates and expertise.

125. Lastly, the Agency was encouraged to maintain its institutional resilience so as to cope effectively with similar challenges in the future, taking into account the lessons learned and experience gained during the current situation.

126. The draft resolution had undergone a two-step process of consensus building: first agreement had been reached within the Group, followed by extensive negotiations with other delegations. Lastly, it had been agreed upon *ad referendum*. It had been tabled by the Philippines on behalf of the Group only once as there appeared to be a basis for consensus across the Agency's broader membership. The Group had already submitted the list of co-sponsors to the Secretariat.

127. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(64)/L.2.

128. It was so decided.

129. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), expressing his pleasure at the Board's adoption of the resolution, said that his delegation thanked the Agency for deploying nuclear technology to support the capacities of

Member States, including Egypt, to fight COVID-19, in particular through the provision of RT-PCR devices for early diagnosis. The efforts made by the Secretariat, especially the Department of Technical Cooperation, to deliver such equipment were appreciated.

130. The highly valued financial and in-kind contributions of Member States towards the purchase of equipment and other support represented a milestone in the long history of cooperation with the Agency to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Secretariat had striven to ensure that the Agency's activities continued despite the ongoing disruption of the pandemic. He was confident in the Agency's ability to overcome all the challenges that lay ahead.

131. Reiterating its support for ZODIAC, Egypt stressed that the initiative should take account of Member States' priorities and views and that developing States must be the primary beneficiaries in accordance with the principles and practices governing the Agency's work.

132. Ms FERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA (Argentina), welcoming the adoption of the resolution, said that her country appreciated the professionalism shown by the Director General and the Secretariat during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reports before the General Conference clearly showed that the Agency could adapt to changing circumstances while continuing to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, nuclear safety and security, and to apply safeguards.

133. Argentina was one of more than 120 States that had requested and received Agency support in combatting the pandemic via equipment and RT–PCR diagnostic kits. She thanked the Agency not only for the equipment but also for ensuring that it reached Argentina — no mean task in the current situation.

134. The Agency's collaboration with the FAO and WHO reflected the Director General's commitment to strengthening ties with other UN organizations. She reaffirmed her country's support for ZODIAC as a response to future zoonotic diseases, an area where nuclear technology and applications had much to offer.

135. Argentina congratulated the Secretariat and in particular the Agency's inspectors for implementing safeguards despite the strict limitations on international and domestic travel imposed by Member States. Reaffirming her country's commitment to implement safeguards effectively and efficiently on its territory, she also congratulated ABACC on doing its utmost to carry out inspections.

136. Mr BULYCHEV (Russian Federation), welcoming the resolution's adoption by consensus, said that his country acknowledged the Agency's achievements, and those of the Director General in particular, in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Those Member States requesting it had received support and the Agency itself had continued to function. Noting that the Russian Federation had made a voluntary contribution of €500 000, he said that specialized international organizations, the WHO in particular, should be leading the fight against COVID-19.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.