

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the Tenth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Thursday, 23 September 2021, at 10.25 a.m.¹

President: Mr MARAFI (Kuwait)

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(65)/INF/14.

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(65)/25

Abbreviations used in this record

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
G-77	Group of Seventy-Seven
IT	information technology
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
TC	technical cooperation
UN	United Nations
WHO	World Health Organization
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

– **Restoration of voting rights**
(GC(65)/INF/15)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day to consider the request from Libya, contained in document GC(65)/INF/15, for the restoration of voting rights under Article XIX.A of the Statute. The Committee had recommended that Libya's voting rights be restored during the current session of the General Conference for a period of one year, ending before the commencement of the following regular session of the Conference.
2. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference accepted the recommendation by the General Committee.
3. It was so decided.

28. Examination of delegates' credentials
(GC(65)/30)

4. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a Credentials Committee to examine the credentials of all delegates, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. Since that meeting of the General Committee the Secretariat had received credentials in due form for the delegates of Burundi. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 7 of its report contained in document GC(65)/30, with the reservations and positions expressed in the report.
5. Ms ABIDA (Jordan) stressed that under no circumstances did the acceptance of Israel's credentials constitute any change in her country's position of considering all territories occupied by Israel on 4 June 1967 to be occupied territories. Israel must withdraw from those territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, in accordance with international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. All Israeli measures against those territories were null and void. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the Jordanian–Israeli peace agreement of 1994. Furthermore, Jordan's joining of the consensus on the report and resolution on the examination of delegates' credentials in no way signified any agreement on its part that Israel's credentials applied to the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, or to the Syrian Golan Heights.
6. Mr HASSAN ZADEH (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee should under no circumstances be construed as recognition by his Government of the Israeli regime.
7. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that his country's acceptance of Israel's credentials by no means constituted recognition of the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Shebaa Farms. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.
8. The PRESIDENT took it that, with the positions and reservations expressed, the General Conference was prepared to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 7 of document GC(65)/30.

9. It was so decided.

9. Election of Members to the Board of Governors

(GC(65)/20 and GC(65)/23)

10. The PRESIDENT drew attention to document GC(65)/20, containing the designations of members to serve on the Board from the end of the sixty-fifth (2021) regular session until the end of the sixty-sixth (2022) regular session of the General Conference.

11. Recalling that, under Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure, the presiding officer must indicate to the General Conference those elective places on the Board which must be filled, he referred to paragraph 2 of document GC(65)/23, which indicated, for each geographical area, the number of Member States that must be elected so as to ensure that the Board would be constituted in accordance with Article VI.A of the Statute.

12. There were 11 seats to be filled: 2 for Latin America; 2 for Western Europe; 2 for Eastern Europe; 2 for Africa; 1 for the Middle East and South Asia; 1 for the Far East; and 1 additional seat — the so-called floating seat under Article VI.A.2.(b) of the Statute — which in the current year was to be filled by a Member State from the Far East.

13. Paragraph 3 of document GC(65)/23 listed the 24 Member States which had been either elected by the General Conference in 2020 in accordance with Article VI.A.2 of the Statute, and which would therefore continue to serve on the Board until 2022, or had been designated by the Board the previous June for membership of the Board pursuant to Article VI.A.1 of the Statute for the one-year period from the end of the current session until the end of the regular session of the Conference in 2022.

14. In order to facilitate the election, delegates had been furnished with an informal note showing the results of consultations within the area groups regarding their candidates for the elective places. He stressed that the note was purely informal in character and provided information in so far as it had been made available to him and to the Secretariat.

15. He recalled that in 1989 the Conference had approved a procedure whereby no secret ballot would be held when there was agreement regarding the candidate or candidates from a particular area. Balloting would take place only in respect of those areas for which there was no agreed slate. That procedure considerably facilitated the efficient use of the Conference's time. Therefore, Rule 79 of the Conference's Rules of Procedure, which stipulated that elections to the Board were to be by secret ballot, must be suspended in respect of the areas for which no secret ballot would be held.

16. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Burundi and Libya to the two vacant seats for Africa.

17. Burundi and Libya were duly elected.

18. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Viet Nam to the one vacant seat for the Far East.

19. Viet Nam was duly elected.

20. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Pakistan to the one vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.

21. Pakistan was duly elected.

22. The PRESIDENT said that Colombia and Guatemala had submitted their candidatures for the two elective places to be filled for Latin America. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Colombia and Guatemala to the two vacant seats for Latin America.

23. Colombia and Guatemala were duly elected.

24. The PRESIDENT said that Finland and Ireland had submitted their candidatures for the two elective places to be filled for Western Europe. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Finland and Ireland to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.

25. Finland and Ireland were duly elected.

26. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect the Republic of Korea to the one so-called floating seat.

27. The Republic of Korea was duly elected.

28. The PRESIDENT said that, with regard to the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe, he had been informed that there was no consensus in the group but that the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia had presented their candidatures.

29. Rules 81 and 83 to 85 of the Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 84, applied in an election to fill vacant seats to the Board.

30. In accordance with Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure, election of members to the Board would be by secret ballot and there must be no nominations.

31. Under Rule 74 of the Rules of Procedure, explanations of vote would not be allowed before or after the vote.

32. The relevant provisions set out in Article XIX.A of the Statute governing voting rights of Member States applied.

33. Ms ŽVOKELJ (Slovenia) said that, in line with its commitment to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, non-proliferation and sustainable development, her country had presented its candidature to serve on the Board. It was unfortunate that the Conference had once again been asked to vote in order to decide on Board membership. Slovenia had been actively seeking a resolution with the two other candidates but had been unable to do so. She encouraged Member States to vote for her country.

34. Mr ŠRÁMEK (Czech Republic) said that, while the need for an election was positive — all three States were keen to contribute actively to the Agency's mission — it was regrettable that a decision within the Group could not have been reached.

35. The Czech Republic was strongly committed to strengthening the contribution of nuclear technologies to peace, health and prosperity and ensuring their safe and secure use, while guaranteeing non-proliferation. The country had not served on the Board for over a decade, despite its close cooperation with the Agency, its sizeable annual contribution and its civilian nuclear programme. His country believed that it was time for it to join the Board and hoped for, and appreciated, the support of other Member States.

36. Ms ŠUBRTOVÁ (Slovakia) thanked the Czech Republic and Slovenia for their open and transparent election campaigns. Although it was regrettable that an agreement had not been reached, her country hoped that the election result would further strengthen the Board's work.

37. Slovakia was committed to and actively supported the Agency's mandate to increase the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity worldwide. Moreover, it had a relatively large nuclear power programme and was involved in all programmatic areas of the Agency. The successful fulfilment of the Agency's statutory tasks remained at the core of the country's multilateral interests. Slovakia had therefore aspired to be part of the Agency's PMOs since 2013, and hoped for the support of Member States in the election.

38. The PRESIDENT, thanking the delegates of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia, reminded all delegates that there would be no nominations and that Member States were free to vote for any eligible State.

39. In accordance with Rule 84 of the Rules of Procedure, there would be a single ballot for all elective places to be filled. The ballot paper would specify the vacant places to be filled. Accordingly, each Member State that was entitled and eligible to vote would receive one ballot paper specifying the two vacant seats for the area of Eastern Europe in accordance with Article VI.A.2(a) of the Statute.

40. Delegates were requested to indicate on the ballot paper their preference for two candidates, each for one of the two fixed seats from among the eligible States of Eastern Europe. The candidates were the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia.

41. A vote was taken by secret ballot.

42. At the invitation of the President, Mr Powell (Australia) and Ms Maurer-Neuman (Uruguay) acted as tellers.

43. The PRESIDENT proposed that the General Conference take up item 8 while the votes were being counted.

8. The IAEA and the COVID-19 Pandemic (GC(65)/INF/7, GC(65)/INF/8 and GC(65)/INF/9)

44. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the three reports contained in documents GC(65)/INF/7, 8 and 9, and the draft resolution contained in document GC(65)/L.2, submitted by Costa Rica on behalf of the G-77 and China.

45. Mr SAEED (Pakistan), introducing the draft resolution entitled 'The IAEA and COVID-19 Pandemic' on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and noting that his country and Nigeria were the co-penholders of the resolution, said that it was a technical update of the resolution contained in document GC(64)/RES/3. The latter resolution had been intended as a one-time resolution following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its objective, inter alia, had been to express appreciation for the Agency's efforts in ensuring not only its own business continuity across all domains of its work, but also in providing assistance to Member States and non-Member States in their national efforts to combat the pandemic through provision of detection equipment, as well as its support of Member States in the safe and secure operation of their nuclear and radiation facilities.

46. As the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet been fully defeated and the associated challenges remained, the Group believed that it would be valuable for the General Conference to adopt a technically updated version of the resolution.

47. The draft resolution welcomed the reports by the Director General on various aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic issued since the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference and requested the Secretariat to report to the Board in March 2022 and the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference on all matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

48. The Group expressed its sincere appreciation to all Member States for engaging constructively on the resolution during informal consultations and thanked States that had co-sponsored the resolution.

49. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(65)/L.2.

50. It was so decided.

51. Mr HUSSEN (Iraq) expressed gratitude to the Director General and his team for their continued constructive efforts to build the capacities of Member States for dealing with the exceptional situation presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Iraq was among the numerous countries that had benefited from Agency support provided in a professional and systemic manner, despite the difficulties of that situation, through TC project INT008³ to aid their rapid detection of COVID-19. He thanked the Agency's technical staff for their extraordinary delivery of such assistance and those countries that had made donations in support of the Agency's work to address the challenges and consequences associated with the pandemic.

52. International cooperation and joint diplomatic action were the fundamental principles around which all must unite in order to confront such challenges. Iraq appreciated the Agency's conduct of robust follow-up and inspection activities, the pandemic notwithstanding, a further demonstration of the need to unite in supporting the Agency and the application of the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the service of humankind.

– **Report on the Scientific Forum**

53. The PRESIDENT, recalling that the theme of the Scientific Forum 2021 had been "Preparing for Zoonotic Outbreaks: the Role of Nuclear Science", invited the Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2021, Ms Samantha Letsholo, to report to the General Conference.

54. Ms LETSHOLO (Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2021) read out the report (annexed hereto).

55. The PRESIDENT thanked Ms Letsholo for the report and commended her and the Secretariat on the success of the Scientific Forum 2021.

³ Strengthening Capabilities of Member States in Building, Strengthening and Restoring Capacities and Services in Case of Outbreaks, Emergencies and Disasters

19. Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards (resumed)

56. Ms TEWARI (India) said that her country, a founding member of the Agency, had consistently supported all Agency activities conducted within the framework of the Statute. India attached great importance to the Agency's safeguards work and had contributed to improving its effectiveness and efficiency. In joining the consensus on the resolution, India's understanding of operative paragraph 7 was that Agency safeguards should apply universally to all Member States and other relevant partners in accordance with their respective legal obligations.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.45 a.m. and resumed at 12.40 p.m.

9. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (resumed)

57. The PRESIDENT announced the result of the ballot for the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe.

58. In the election of two members for the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe, the result of the vote was as follows:

Ballot papers returned: 125

Invalid votes: 0

Abstentions: 5

Valid votes: 120

Required majority: 61

Votes obtained

Slovakia 60

Slovenia 78

Czech Republic 93

59. Having obtained the required majority, the Czech Republic and Slovenia were duly elected for the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe.

60. The PRESIDENT congratulated the 11 Member States elected to the Board of Governors and recalled that, under Article VI.D of the Statute, they would hold office from the end of the current regular session of the General Conference until the end of its sixty-seventh (2023) regular session.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

IAEA Scientific Forum 2021

Preparing for Zoonotic Outbreaks: the Role of Nuclear Science

Report to the sixty-fifth regular session of the General Conference

Ms Samantha Letsholo

**(Principal Veterinary Officer and Head of Virology Section
at the Botswana National Veterinary Laboratory)**

Mr President, Director General, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to present to the General Conference the report on the IAEA Scientific Forum 2021 organized parallel to the General Conference with this year's theme "Preparing for Zoonotic Outbreaks: the Role of Nuclear Science".

This year, Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi decided to focus on the role of nuclear and nuclear-related techniques in the emergence of research, early detection and monitoring of zoonotic diseases. Such diseases currently make up between 60 and 75% of all emerging infectious diseases.

The current and past devastating impact of pandemics and epidemics around the world have made it necessary to address future outbreaks. Discussions at the Forum centred around the role of nuclear science in detecting zoonotic diseases, partnerships and the support for countries in strengthening preparedness capabilities and timely response methods. An example highlighted throughout the Forum to support these efforts is ZODIAC, which helps national laboratories to expand the technical and scientific capacities to deliver equipment and know-how to countries quickly.

The Forum, held during the past two days, was structured into five thematic sessions and attracted the registration of more than 1000 experts and representatives of Member States, both physically and virtually. It was opened by Director General Grossi, who emphasized the importance of such events to serve as a platform to exchange views with a robust scientific content — connecting experts who know the science, know the challenges and know how to deal with zoonotic outbreaks. Director General Grossi stressed that capacity building and assistance for Member States through nuclear techniques are essential in the preparation for, and response to, future outbreaks. He highlighted the necessity of continuous collaboration with experts and other international organizations.

Mr Qu Dongyu, Director-General of FAO referred to the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undernourishment and global hunger in his video message. He highlighted a need for strengthening multilateral cooperation and working collectively through the "One Health" approach. He mentioned successful examples of FAO-IAEA collaboration such as through VETLAB.

Next, in his video message, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the WHO, recognized the Agency's contribution in improving capacities of global veterinary laboratories and strengthening health systems and pandemic preparedness and response. This complements the frameworks and mechanisms put in place by the WHO and other partners. He pointed to the areas of possible IAEA-WHO collaboration in addressing zoonotic diseases.

The need for closer collaboration to combat zoonotic diseases effectively was also echoed by Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of the OIE, in her live virtual statement. She stressed the sustainable and coordinated approach — taking into account "One Health", a multisectoral approach recognizing that the health of people — is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.

Ms Jane Goodall, Founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and the UN Messenger of Peace, highlighted in a video statement the interlinkage of animals and humans, which she said led to the

ongoing COVID-19 and other past pandemics. She called for joint action to fight zoonotic diseases aiming at protecting human health and the natural environment. She concluded by saying “we must take action together and we must take action now”.

In his keynote address, Mr Christian Happi, Director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases, pointed to the lessons learned from the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. He emphasized the need for unified actions. He recognized ZODIAC as one of initiatives building on knowledge, technology, capacity building and training with which we can overcome any risks.

The opening session closed with three video statements and one in-person statement from high-level representatives of Member States: His Excellency Mr Khalid Ait Taleb, Minister of Health of Morocco; Her Excellency Ms Ermira Gjeci, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania; Her Excellency Ms Karen Najarro, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras and Dr Amadou Alpha Sall, Director of the Institut Pasteur de Dakar in Senegal.

The first session entitled “Techniques for Detecting Pathogens and Monitoring Zoonoses” highlighted the key role of scientific research and development in understanding and controlling zoonotic diseases and in detecting them at an early stage before they culminate in an outbreak or a pandemic.

The second session entitled “Understanding the Emergence of Infectious Diseases at the Animal–Human Interface” focused on animal–human interactions in the context of infectious diseases, highlighting the pathways through which emerging or re-emerging infections can lead to pandemics, together with the role of science in mitigating potential outbreaks of zoonoses.

The third session entitled “The Role of Radiation Techniques in Dealing with the Impact of Zoonoses on Human Health” showcased the role of radiation techniques, such as medical imaging, for disease characterization in humans affected by zoonotic diseases, and the importance of advanced data analysis to support disease management.

The fourth session entitled “From Avian Flu to COVID-19 – the IAEA’s Support to Countries” looked at the Agency’s active involvement in supporting disease detection and the experience of countries in detecting, identifying and managing zoonoses such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 1(SARS-CoV-1), Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Ebola, and currently SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19.

The fifth and closing session entitled “Enhancing Global Preparedness to Control Zoonotic Diseases: ZODIAC” featured a high-level panel on the importance of partnerships and collaborations with national and international initiatives such as ZODIAC to strengthen the preparedness and capabilities of Member States to respond to the threats of zoonotic diseases. During this session, Director General Grossi joined the panel comprising: His Excellency Mr Ghislain D’hoop, Resident Representative of Belgium; His Excellency Mr Xavier Sticker, Resident Representative of France; His Excellency Mr Takeshi Hikihara, Resident Representative of Japan; His Excellency Mr Louis Bono, Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim, of the United States of America; Professor Christian Happi, Director of the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases; Dr Serge Morand, Expert in the Knowledge Management Body of Eklipse, an initiative led by the European Commission; Professor Thomas Mettenleiter, Co-Chair of the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP); and Dr Pierre Dussort, Operational Manager of the PREventing ZOonotic Diseases Emergence (PREZODE).

The Forum recognized ZODIAC as one of the important and timely global initiatives for enhancing response preparedness using nuclear and related techniques. Currently more than 140 countries are participating in the project. The Agency has already initiated capacity building activities including the procurement of equipment for ZODIAC National Laboratories in several countries. The session highlighted the strong support of Member States for ZODIAC and its approach of effectively complementing other global initiatives. The Forum concluded that closer coordination, collaboration,

and communication towards scientific advancements in research, early detection and monitoring of zoonotic diseases are key in preventing or containing the next epidemic or pandemic, such as COVID-19. OHHLEP, PREZODE and Eklipse mentioned the importance of the continued ongoing dialogue and how they envision working together with ZODIAC, highlighting the Letter of Intent signed by the Agency and PREZODE on the sidelines of the Forum. It was mentioned by all panellists that there is a global need to further strengthen information and data exchange, build strong global and national surveillance systems, and integrate innovative technologies into national and global infrastructures.

Director General Grossi concluded that the discussions at the Scientific Forum offered new insights into how we can maximize action working closely together and that ZODIAC would be consolidating on that feedback.