

General Conference

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Sixty-fifth regular session

Plenary

Record of the Second Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Monday, 20 September 2021, at 2 p.m.¹

President: Mr MARAFI (Kuwait)

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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.

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CRP	coordinated research project
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CSC	Collective Security Council
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IEA	International Energy Agency
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
IWAVE Project	IAEA Water Availability Enhancement Project
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
Joint Protocol	Joint Protocol Relating to the Application of the Vienna Convention and the Paris Convention
LEU	low enriched uranium
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPP	nuclear power plant

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
ORPAS	Occupational Radiation Protection Appraisal Service
Pre-OSART	Pre-Operational Safety Review Team
RT-PCR	reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction
R&D	research and development
RANET	Response and Assistance Network
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SESAME	Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
SMART	system-integrated modular advanced reactor
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action—

5. Arrangements for the Conference (resumed) (GC(65)/17)

(a) Adoption of the agenda and the allocation of items for initial discussion

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had recommended that the agenda for the sixty-fifth regular session should consist of all items listed in document GC(65)/1 and of all supplementary items set forth in documents GC(65)/1/Add.1 to 3. With regard to the allocation of items for initial discussion, it had recommended that all items be taken up for discussion as indicated in documents GC(65)/1, Add.1 to 3. With regard to the order of items contained in documents GC(65)/1, Add.1 to 3, the General Committee had recommended that the order should be as set out in those documents.

2. It was so decided.

(b) Closing date of the session and opening date of the next session

3. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had recommended that the Conference should set Friday, 24 September 2021 as the closing date of the sixty-fifth regular session, and Monday, 19 September 2022³ as the opening date of the sixty-sixth regular session.

4. It was so decided.

25. Examination of delegates' credentials (GC(65)/29)

5. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a Credentials Committee to examine the credentials of the delegation of Myanmar, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 4 of its report contained in document GC(65)/29.

6. It was so decided.

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2020 (resumed) (GC(65)/5 and additional information)

7. Mr DÖNMEZ (Turkey), noting the priority afforded in the 21st century to sustainable energy policies for global socioeconomic development, said that nuclear energy played an integral role in

³ Member States subsequently agreed to change the opening date of the 66th regular session to 26 September 2022 (Note by the Secretariat 2021/Note89).

low-carbon energy transitions and was therefore set to constitute an important component of his country's national energy and mining policy.

8. In Turkey, an embarking country working to establish its nuclear energy infrastructure, three units were under construction at its Akkuyu NPP and a fourth unit had received a limited work permit in 2021.

9. Turkey was committed to cooperating closely with the Agency to support the highest standards in nuclear safety, security and safeguards so as to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. It was accordingly looking forward to engaging actively in the upcoming review processes of the CNS and the A/CPPNM and to continuing to contribute to the Tenth NPT Review Conference.

10. Noting the Agency's central role in international nuclear cooperation, his country recognized that the vital peer reviews and advisory services provided by the Agency, upon request, would ensure that the Akkuyu NPP was commissioned in a responsible and timely manner. Turkey, furthermore, strongly supported the Agency's TC activities and efforts to further address challenges such as those associated with new zoonotic diseases, climate change and plastic pollution.

11. The Agency's safeguards system was under growing pressure as a result of rapidly developing technologies, wider use of nuclear applications, and increased nuclear power production worldwide. It was important to keep pace with such developments and adapt the safeguards system to changing conditions and requirements. On that understanding, in 2020 Turkey had continued its collaboration with the Agency in the pilot phase of the IAEA Comprehensive Capacity Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs (COMPASS).

12. In view of the crucial need to preserve the JCPOA, Turkey had consistently supported diplomatic solutions and would continue to do so in the hope that the Vienna talks would resume in the near future.

13. Ms LINDE (Sweden) said that her country strongly believed in the rules-based international order of which the Agency formed a crucial part. Moreover, the Agency contributed through its unique expertise to global peace, security and development, and nuclear and radiation safety. The Secretariat had demonstrated impressive flexibility and creativity in continuing its work almost without exception, the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding.

14. The international community was faced with many obstacles. Despite progress achieved, thanks to Agency assistance in the rapid detection and management of COVID-19, the pandemic was far from over. The climate crisis must be tackled resolutely and challenges to the global non-proliferation regime remained.

15. It should never be forgotten that nuclear weapons posed an enormous threat to humanity. The NPT Review Conference must therefore take place in the foreseeable future and produce a constructive outcome.

16. Including the additional protocol, Agency safeguards were crucial to the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Sweden called on Iran to abide by its safeguards obligations, engage in full and timely cooperation with the Agency to resolve all outstanding issues, and resume compliance with the additional protocol. The JCPOA remained an essential part of the global non-proliferation architecture. While pleased that all participants in the proximity talks facilitated by the European External Action Service had endeavoured to preserve the agreement, Sweden was highly concerned at Iran's contravention of the plan. Iran should return to implementing its commitments in full.

17. In the light of the worrying indications of renewed activity at a nuclear reactor in the DPRK that might in the past have produced plutonium for nuclear weapons, her country urged the DPRK to fulfil its international commitments and undertake complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament of its nuclear weapons and missiles in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

18. Sweden supported the Agency's work on technology, safety and security — closely connected in many cases to the 2030 Agenda — and welcomed the Director General's deep commitment to tackling such global issues as zoonotic diseases and pollution. It also welcomed the Agency's assistance to Member States in monitoring and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to new climate realities. In 2021, Sweden would again make extrabudgetary contributions to the Agency's work to combat marine plastic pollution and to promote early diagnosis and effective treatment of cervical cancer in low- and middle-income countries. Sweden reiterated the importance of gender mainstreaming in all programmes and activities.

19. In the 10 years since the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, extensive modifications and safety enhancements had been introduced on the basis of inputs such as the late Director General's analytical report⁴ on the subject and EU stress tests. In 2020, a multiyear programme of safety improvements at her country's NPPs had concluded, with robust independent core cooling systems brought into service at all reactors.

20. During the second year of its current term on the Board of Governors — which was nearing its end — Sweden had had the honour of serving as Chair. In that capacity, it had assisted in the process of the Director General's appointment and in ensuring that the Board functioned without interruption in spite of the pandemic. Sweden took pride in its Governor and in her team's tireless work with all Board members while dealing with complex challenges and aiming always for the greatest transparency, inclusivity and trust.

21. Mr ALBUQUERQUE (Brazil) reiterated his country's continuing commitment to nuclear power, both for energy security and for energy transition to a low-carbon future, as it moved towards economic recovery and growth. Brazil's long term energy planning envisaged a four-fold expansion of nuclear generation in the coming 30 years. Its priorities included the completion of a third NPP, which would be operational by 2026, and the construction of the Brazilian Multipurpose Reactor. As in other parts of the world, the foremost challenges to the country's new nuclear power capacity related to the scale and complexity of projects and to security and safety requirements.

22. Brazil stood ready to cooperate with a number of partners to acquire expertise on SMRs — a promising option for new projects — to which end its Energy Research Office had signed an agreement with the Agency for an economic assessment of the potential of SMRs in his country.

23. By creating an independent national nuclear safety authority, his country was improving its regulatory governance and looked forward to working with the Agency in that process.

24. Further good news was that Brazil expected in the very near future to ratify the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, underscoring its commitment to nuclear safety.

25. In July 2021, the Director General had inspected the main facilities under the Brazilian nuclear programme in addition to celebrating, in Rio de Janeiro, the 30th anniversary of ABACC. A milestone in the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, ABACC was an example of good safeguards practices in which the highest technical and transparency standards were applied. Brazil was committed to further strengthening ABACC in close cooperation with the Agency.

26. His country commended the Agency's role in supporting the non-proliferation regime, in particular through its efforts to fulfil its verification and monitoring mandate in areas with destabilizing potential. Its remarkably successful promotion of access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in recent years was similarly laudable, as were its growing efforts to highlight the crucial contribution of nuclear energy to decarbonizing the global economy. Committed to that goal, Brazil had recently joined

⁴ GC(59)/14

the NICE Future initiative under the Clean Energy Ministerial and was ready to collaborate in the run-up to 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). For its part, Eletronuclear — the country's national nuclear power company — would engage fully with the Director General's noteworthy efforts to strengthen dialogue with the nuclear industry.

27. Brazil took note of the announcement by Australia, the UK and the USA concerning submarines with nuclear propulsion. CSAs allowed for the use of nuclear materials in such a non-proscribed activity.

28. In closing, he offered his country's assurances that, despite the challenging times, it remained committed to ensuring safety, transparency and sustainability in the nuclear sector.

29. Ms VERLINDEN (Belgium) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had continued to affect all lives in 2021, demanding greater flexibility and testing resilience in continuing to function, advance and innovate. Belgium paid tribute to the Director General and his staff, who had not only complied with their statutory commitments but had also developed new initiatives anticipating future challenges.

30. Belgium, too, had adapted to the new realities of life under COVID-19 to enhance its functioning, innovate and make advances in research — always with nuclear safety and security, human health and the environment foremost in mind. In that vein, the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK•CEN) and the Institute for Radioelements (IRE) were working on state-of-the-art projects to develop new radioisotopes and increase production while reducing waste. The IRE had begun to use LEU for medical radioisotope production in 2020, with full conversion to LEU expected as soon as the final licences were approved, and its SMART project for uranium-free industrial production of medical radioisotopes was further progress in that direction. Given the status of cancer as a leading cause of death worldwide, above all in low- and medium-income countries, cancer research, including in nuclear medicine, was crucial.

31. Belgium's state-of-the-art projects included MYRRHA, a multipurpose research infrastructure initiative. Begun in 2018 and open to international partnership, the project continued to make progress in constructing its particle accelerator. Officials in charge of the project were attending the General Conference to provide Member States with more information.

32. With respect to research on nuclear safety and protection, she had been proud, in May 2020, to unveil a new drone model, developed through a public-private partnership between SCK•CEN and the company Sabca, that would take radiological measurements as part of monitoring and dismantling activities. A global and innovative approach was also being applied in nuclear verification. In planning new projects and facilities, the Belgian Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC) made a particular point of taking into account from the very outset the important concept of safeguards by design. During the present session, she and her Finnish colleagues would be running a side event to present the outcomes of an international workshop organized in April 2021 by FANC, in conjunction with Finland, Agency teams and Euratom, on that innovative approach.

33. As part of its ambitious climate policy, Belgium had opted to phase out nuclear energy on a gradual basis, in compliance with current safety and security standards, and would share with its partners the dismantling expertise acquired. She had worked with the country's Minister of Energy and Minister of the Economy and Employment to set up a task force, in early July 2021, for overseeing the dismantling operations.

34. Nuclear safety and security were an absolute priority in all Belgian projects. Having learned the lessons of the Chornobyl and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accidents, her country had tightened its safety requirements and subjected its nuclear facilities to additional resistance tests. The dramatic floods experienced in Belgium in 2020 had driven home the importance of that exercise in verifying the resilience of all such facilities to extreme weather events. In its equal focus on nuclear security, Belgium

was working actively with the USA to raise awareness of the problem of insider threats and their mitigation.

35. As a country committed to the establishment of a robust safeguards regime combining general safeguards agreements with the signing of an additional protocol, Belgium applauded the Agency's continued work towards the highest safeguards standards, despite frequent difficulties in the field. In addition to the concern aroused by the DPRK's pursuit and development of nuclear activities in flagrant violation of UN Security Council resolutions, Iran's disengagement from JCPOA commitments was deeply worrying, as was its decision to reduce Agency access and halt the implementation of its additional protocol. Belgium fervently hoped for a swift resumption of negotiations in Vienna and a subsequent agreement among all JCPOA participants that would allow the USA to return to the JCPOA and ensure that Iran respected its commitments thereunder.

36. Lastly, she commended the Director General's work to promote a more gender-balanced human resources policy and his ambitious forward-looking goals for projects to develop state-of-the-art infrastructure and nuclear technology for the well-being of humanity and the environment. Belgium encouraged those innovative initiatives while requesting the Agency to focus on its priorities and ensure good project management as well as the efficient use of its human and financial resources.

37. Mr KOFOD (Denmark) said that 2021 had once again very clearly demonstrated the need for multilateralism and strong effective multilateral organizations such as the Agency. As a strong supporter of the Agency's work across the spectrum of its mandate, his country had welcomed the Agency's engagement in the 17th Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in Copenhagen earlier in September 2021.

38. The Agency played a decisive role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and upholding the NPT regime. Denmark fully supported the safeguards system, along with its further development, and was pleased to contribute to funding the Agency's essential work on Iran's nuclear commitments. Iran's decision to stop implementing those commitments was deeply regrettable. With the international community reliant on the Agency to oversee Iran's nuclear activities, that decision put the non-proliferation benefits of the JCPOA severely at risk.

39. Deeply concerned at the fact that Iranian nuclear activities lacked plausible civilian justification, Denmark strongly urged Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and supported all efforts to verify the implementation of the JCPOA and Iran's safeguards obligations.

40. Denmark appreciated the Agency's continuing efforts to observe and report on the development of the DPRK's nuclear programme. It condemned that country's clear failure to comply with its international obligations and called for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization required by the UN Security Council.

41. His country actively supported the Agency's important work to enhance nuclear safety and nuclear security. In 2020, through RANET, it had provided technical experts to Lebanon in the aftermath of the terrible explosion in Beirut.

42. Denmark was grateful for the IRRS mission to the country in September 2021 and looked forward to the ARTEMIS mission in 2022. Having gladly provided voluntary funding in support of the Agency's crucial role in strengthening national and international nuclear safety and security, Denmark aimed to make a further contribution in 2021.

43. He thanked the Director General and the Agency's dedicated staff for their invaluable contribution to building a safer and more prosperous world. Denmark would continue its cooperation with them and with Member States to advance the Agency's mandate.

44. Ms ŽIAKOVÁ (Slovakia) said that the Agency's efforts to ensure the implementation of its mandatory tasks during the COVID-19 pandemic were a great example of its professionalism. Her country highly appreciated the Director General's leadership of his staff in discharging their duties and continuing to provide comprehensive assistance.

45. The pandemic had shown the need for a coordinated multilateral approach. Slovakia therefore welcomed the ZODIAC initiative, to which it would actively contribute through its experts at the Veterinary Institute in Zvolen.

46. Nuclear power was a pillar of her country's energy policy and an important tool in climate change mitigation. As a reliable, large-scale and low-carbon technology, it remained a stable source for meeting the country's ever-increasing energy demands and, as the Director General had said, it should have a seat at the table in the transition to a clean energy future.

47. Nuclear safety and security were a core prerequisite for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Agency's indispensable role in that regard included developing safety standards and providing assistance to Member States through its peer review and advisory services. In the coming months, Slovakia would host IRRS and ARTEMIS missions back to back in addition to its first ORPAS mission.

48. Her country was pleased by the recent successful conclusion of the Pre-OSART follow-up mission at Mochovce 3 and by the significant progress in addressing — for the most part — the findings of the previous mission.

49. The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the need for the safe and secure operation of nuclear facilities. Slovakia had swiftly reacted to developments by amending its legislation so as to recognize NPPs as part of the critical infrastructure and, in turn, reduce infection risk and ensure business continuity.

50. Slovakia was fully committed to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament with the NPT as a cornerstone, unwaveringly supporting safeguards and the Agency's irreplaceable role in independent and impartial verification of nuclear material and activities.

51. Her country staunchly supported the benefits of nuclear energy for socioeconomic development and attainment of the SDGs. The TC programme was an essential part of the Agency's mandate. As one of the beneficiaries of TC assistance, Slovakia attached great importance to the mechanism, especially in the areas of capacity building and knowledge management.

52. Slovakia would continue to follow with particular interest the NUTEC Plastics initiative, an excellent and welcome opportunity for all countries seeking sustainable plastic waste solutions. Her country supported the modernization of the Agency's Nuclear Applications Laboratories at Seibersdorf and the launch of the final phase under ReNuAL 2.

53. Slovakia called once again for effective management and cross-departmental cooperation in the Agency's activities, welcoming in that respect the systematic implementation of gender aspects and the Director General's commitment to gender parity by 2025.

54. Mr MAHAMADOU (Niger) said that, in its belief that the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology could provide solutions to socioeconomic challenges, his country — one of the world's largest uranium producers — had been a Member State of the Agency since 1968. The technical cooperation and assistance it had since received had been very useful in many areas, including health, energy, food safety, and nuclear safety and security. The Niger was grateful for that constant and wide-ranging support provided in particular by the Department of Technical Cooperation, the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, and the Department of Nuclear Energy.

55. Noting that the frequent COVID-19 mutations required special attention from the international community, his country saluted the Agency's efforts to prevent and combat the ongoing pandemic. As part of those efforts, the Agency had provided many States, including the Niger, with COVID-19 detection equipment.

56. The Niger was poised to sign a new CPF for 2022–2027 that would bolster priority areas in its national nuclear energy development strategy and perfectly complement those in which it hoped to receive strong Agency support.

57. Thanks to its strategy for self-sufficiency in food, the country had experienced no food crises — previously a regular occurrence — for over a decade. It planned to develop a number of food and agriculture projects with Agency assistance, especially in the areas of food conservation and improved food production.

58. The Niger hoped to expand high-quality health care coverage while building capacities to prevent, diagnose and treat such diseases as malaria and cancer. One of its priorities was to improve services at its National Cancer Centre by acquiring a linear accelerator for the centre's radiotherapy units and strengthening the centre's technical facilities.

59. Developed by the Agency to promote responsible and sustainable management of groundwater resources in the Sahel, the IWAVE Project had substantially enhanced his country's knowledge of water resources, undoubtedly contributing towards its attainment of the SDGs.

60. To ensure its energy independence and sustainable economic development, the Niger had resolutely engaged in implementing a nuclear power programme in all its development policy programmes. The Niger also firmly supported the establishment of a subregional nuclear power programme guaranteeing access to electricity for ECOWAS member States. It remained convinced that nuclear power was a clean energy source that could combine economic development with environmental protection.

61. The Niger carried out its nuclear activities in compliance with international requirements and had created an independent nuclear regulatory and safety authority in 2016. It had also put in place an institutional, administrative and legal mechanism to regulate all practices involving sources of radiation and radioactive materials.

62. Against a national security backdrop dominated by the threat of terrorism, the Niger had made every effort to improve its national security with nuclear security in mind. To that end, it had requested and received significant technical support from the Agency in securing several large public events, including the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in 2019.

63. As a country especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and concerned to protect the environment, the Niger strongly supported the NUTEC Plastics initiative and called on all Member States to do likewise. It also called on them to contribute to the ZODIAC project to preserve human and animal health.

64. Mr SHANGULA (Namibia) said that the TC programme remained a vital contributor to national development goals and the SDGs. It was indispensable in building capacity through the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge in nuclear science and technology and thereby facilitating technology transfer. Namibia reiterated the importance of the development and transfer of affordable nuclear technology to sustain and enhance scientific and technological capabilities in developing countries for expanding and promoting the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

65. Sufficient water resources were essential for sustainable development. As a semi-arid country continually challenged by lack of suitable water for socioeconomic development, especially in times of

drought, Namibia welcomed the current collaboration between its Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Land Reform, the Agency and the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources to map water resources and groundwater vulnerability through the use of isotope and nuclear techniques in the Karas and Erongo regions.

66. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to devastate all sectors, livelihoods and economies around the world. Namibia was profoundly grateful for the Agency's swift response to its request for assistance in procuring additional diagnostic kits to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, which would be controlled only through global solidarity and equitable access to essential health services. That being so, Namibia welcomed the 2021 Scientific Forum, which would focus in its discussions on the role of nuclear science in preparing for zoonotic outbreaks, and looked forward to its outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations that would strengthen the global response to COVID-19 and other zoonotic outbreaks.

67. Marine plastic pollution was an enormous threat to marine life and ecosystems, food safety, and human health and ultimately jeopardized progress towards the SDGs. His country therefore welcomed the NUTEC Plastics initiative, which would be a complement to nuclear solutions offering Member States an appropriate platform for cross-learning, using radiation technology in recycling, and marine monitoring through isotopic tracing.

68. Cancer remained a leading cause of health problems and death, primarily as a result of limited access to diagnosis and treatment. In order to cope with the growing number of cancer patients, Namibia urgently needed to upgrade and expand its radiotherapy services. Currently, it relied on aging equipment and had a shortage of health professionals and radiotherapists. Namibia therefore reiterated its call for the Agency to increase TC support for radiotherapy capacity building and resource mobilization for large-scale cancer projects.

69. Namibia had, in recent years, ratified key instruments that promoted the Agency's mandate in safeguards, verification, safety and security, and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology. It would continue to be bound by such instruments and called on the Agency to provide regular training, in consultation with Member States, to strengthen their regulatory effectiveness in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, and in nuclear safety and security at radiological and nuclear facilities.

70. Mr ANNE (Senegal), thanking the Director General and his staff for their assistance to Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirmed his country's commitment to continued collaboration with the Agency in matters of nuclear safety and security standards. Since 2011, the Senegalese Radiation Protection and Nuclear Security Authority had benefited from Agency assistance in laying the foundations for a functional infrastructure and in assessing the country's legal and regulatory framework. Progress achieved on that score had been signalled by the adoption of a nuclear bill on safety, security, safeguards and civil liability for nuclear damage, in early September 2021, following its approval by a technical committee.

71. In the area of health, Senegal had undertaken to strengthen its cancer management with the construction of a national oncology centre, a paediatric cancer centre and five regional cancerology hubs. Bearing in mind that some 40% of African countries had no cancer treatment units, his country called on the Agency to launch an appeal in favour of an African initiative for saving lives in those countries by supplying each of them with a radiotherapy unit. In relation to the pandemic, it was important to overcome development inequalities by building the capacities of healthcare personnel, procuring suitable medical equipment, and pooling efforts. Currently, only 2% of the population in Africa had been vaccinated against COVID-19.

72. With Agency support and in partnership with other countries, Senegal planned to complete the installation of a nuclear research reactor in 2021 for use in such areas as health, agriculture, R&D,

training and education. Another positive outcome of the cooperation between Senegal and the Agency was the success achieved in eradicating the tsetse fly in Niayes and the Dakar region — a success that, it was hoped, would be replicated nationwide.

73. His country wished to address plastic waste management as part of the NUTEC Plastics initiative and also welcomed the ZODIAC project aimed at fostering a global, multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to zoonotic disease detection and prevention.

74. Human capacity building — a vital complement in technology transfer — should remain one of the Agency's main priorities. In that context, Senegal would welcome not only the Agency's assistance in developing and implementing a national nuclear education and training policy but also its support for the establishment of an African centre of excellence for nuclear science and technology training.

75. Fully committed to the Agency's ideals of peace and development, Senegal would actively engage in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in strengthening the Agency's verification and non-proliferation regime.

76. Mr BARTOLO (Malta) said that 2021 had been another year of challenges but also of opportunities. His country commended the Agency's resiliency in successfully continuing its important safeguards work, despite continued COVID-19 restrictions, at the same time as working on innovative programmes, such as the NUTEC Plastics, ZODIAC and ReNuAL 2 initiatives, to address current and future challenges. Proud to have contributed personal protective equipment in aid of the Agency's fight against the pandemic, Malta looked forward to further collaboration on those new initiatives.

77. As the main sponsor of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, his country firmly supported the Agency's action to create a more inclusive workforce in the peaceful applications of nuclear technology. Malta had welcomed the launch of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme with the first group of 100 female scientists as a practical step towards improving gender-balance in the nuclear field.

78. His country was grateful to the Agency — especially the Department of Technical Cooperation — for its support throughout the years. Thanks to the TC programme, Malta had continued to build logistical and technical knowledge in such areas as conservation of cultural heritage, water treatment, radiation therapy techniques for medical purposes, and cancer treatment. Malta greatly appreciated the TC programme, which remained one of the Agency's most direct ways of assisting Member States in addressing key development goals.

79. It was deplorable that, in 2020, nine countries had spent more than \$72 billion on modernizing their nuclear arsenal, while the international community had been unable to find \$50 billion to vaccinate the populations in low-income countries and prevent so many from starvation, unemployment, poverty and death.

80. A world that ensured the safety, security and peaceful use of nuclear technology was one that included an effective JCPOA, a full return to which was essential not only for stakeholders but also for the world. Although welcoming the discussions held in Vienna, Malta urged those stakeholders to refrain from steps that could further harm the JCPOA and commended the Secretariat for its continued safeguards verification and monitoring in Iran, even during the previous 12 months.

81. Malta called on Syria and the DPRK to return to full cooperation and compliance with their international obligations.

82. A peaceful and safe world required unequivocal and universal support for the NPT. Having signed and ratified that instrument, Malta was proud to have promoted its entry into force and called on those still considering such steps to be on the right side of history by joining the process.

83. Since the sovereign equality of all Member States was a fundamental principle of multilateralism, as entrenched in the Agency's Statute, Malta echoed the calls of other Member States for that principle to be respected within the regional groups. It supported the amendment to the Statute, with a view to enlarging the Board of Governors, to reflect the Agency's distinctive and ever-growing membership. Malta therefore called on Member States that had yet to do so to consider accepting the amendment to Article VI.

84. Mr HAAVISTO (Finland), assuring the Agency of his country's full support for its crucial work, expressed the hope that in-person meetings would resume as the pandemic receded and that the focus on the global non-proliferation agenda would be strengthened by the Tenth NPT Review Conference in particular. Maintaining the integrity of NPT safeguards was essential.

85. Finland appreciated the dedicated efforts of the Agency and the Director General to ensure that Iran implemented its safeguards agreement. It called on Iran to cooperate fully and immediately with the Agency. His country remained fully committed to the JCPOA — a milestone in nuclear non-proliferation — and had provided substantial annual financial contributions towards the Agency's work of verifying Iran's nuclear-related JCPOA commitments. Finland strongly supported the intensive diplomatic efforts within the Joint Commission. It was crucial to resume negotiations with a view to the USA's possible return to the JCPOA and Iran's return to full JCPOA implementation, including transparency measures.

86. Finland was committed to the highest possible standards for nuclear safety, security and safeguards while also underlining sustainability. In that respect, it aimed to meet the challenge of achieving carbon neutrality in 2035 using new technologies such as SMRs in power production.

87. Sustainability was also relevant in the context of nuclear waste. Finland was making good progress in building a geological repository for spent nuclear fuel and expected it to be ready in 2024. Trusting that the repository would exemplify a safe end solution for high-level waste, his country would be sharing its experiences at a side event during the current session. The international attention devoted to the issue of high-level radioactive waste in the Arctic seas was encouraging. Having recently raised that issue in the Arctic Council, he hoped that it would be addressed as a result by the appropriate bodies.

88. Finland was pleased to note that the Agency and the Director General had been championing gender equality by seeking gender parity within the Secretariat.

89. To conclude, Finland had presented its candidature for membership of the Board of Governors. If elected, it would endeavour to assist the Agency's fulfilment of its core mandate, including by way of new technologies, and support its independent expert role in the area of safeguards and the promotion of radiation and nuclear safety and security.

90. Mr PLACHKOV (Ukraine), noting that the Director General's tenure coincided with an unprecedented historical period in terms of both internal and external challenges, said that his country wished him to continue leading the Agency with his inherent focus, drive and inclusivity.

91. The year 2021 had been the 35th anniversary of the Chornobyl accident. For half of its lifetime, the Agency had assisted Ukraine in overcoming the consequences of that disaster. Ukraine had recently completed installation of the New Safe Confinement over Chornobyl 4 and commissioned the Interim Spent Nuclear Fuel Dry Storage Facility in the Chornobyl zone, continuing through those and other actions to ensure the highest level of nuclear safety at Chornobyl and to make the affected areas environmentally safe.

92. The Director General's participation in the high-level events in Ukraine to commemorate the Chornobyl accident in April 2021 was a clear and welcome signal that the Agency remained united with Ukraine in respect of Chornobyl issues.

93. Recognizing its leading role in non-proliferation, Ukraine would continue to support the Agency in strengthening safeguards and preventing the diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to military purposes. Ukraine remained committed to the NPT and fulfilled its obligations under its CSA and additional protocol.

94. The Russian Federation had, for the eighth successive year, continued its armed aggression against Ukraine. Specific nuclear material remained uncontrolled and uninspected at the Ukrainian territories temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation — Crimea and Sevastopol along with parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The aggressor had made even minimal implementation of safeguards in those territories impossible. It was exceptional for one Member State to prevent the Agency from fulfilling its statutory mandate on the territory of another but especially alarming when that State was a nuclear-weapon State.

95. His country appreciated the Agency's continuous assistance to Member States in maintaining and improving their national standards of nuclear safety, which was a top priority for Ukraine.

96. The CNS, the Joint Convention and other legal instruments provided a good basis for enhancing the safety of peaceful uses of nuclear energy worldwide.

97. Ukraine recognized the TC programme as the fundamental mechanism through which the Agency helped States to build, strengthen and maintain their capacities in the safe, peaceful and secure use of nuclear technology in support of sustainable development.

98. Ukraine appreciated the Agency's support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including the technical assistance provided to many countries, including Ukraine, from the outset. His country also welcomed the ZODIAC project and its systematic and integrated approach to supporting the early detection of zoonotic disease outbreaks and to controlling such outbreaks.

99. His country also appreciated the Secretariat's continued strengthening of communication and cooperation with Member States using modern information technologies. It was an excellent example of adaptation to emerging and unpredictable circumstances in terms of both reorganizing the work of personnel and continuing mandatory functions.

100. Mr KREIVYS (Lithuania) expressed his country's appreciation of the professional and organizational skills demonstrated by the Agency in the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, as in the case of the successful IRRS follow-up mission conducted remotely in late 2020. The mission had concluded that Lithuanian institutions, having already implemented the vast majority of its recommendations, had shown a strong commitment to nuclear and radiation safety. While it was important to invite Agency missions in due time, it was even more important to implement all recommendations carefully and without delay.

101. Lithuania was continuing to decommission its Ignalina NPP as part of an immediate dismantling strategy while maintaining the highest level of nuclear safety. In 2020, all undamaged spent fuel assemblies from that NPP's two units had been safely moved to the interim storage facility to prepare for the pioneering dismantling of the country's RBMKs, a huge technological challenge.

102. Noting that it was 35 years since Chernobyl and 10 years since the Fukushima Daiichi accident, his country welcomed the Agency's progress in updating all safety standards for NPP design and operation. It was crucial for Member States — especially embarking countries — to apply those standards as customary rather than as additional nonbinding recommendations.

103. The commissioning of the Belarusian NPP in Ostrovets without full implementation of the recommended stress testing was unjustifiably hasty. Belarus had failed to comply with Article 17 of the CNS concerning the evaluation of all relevant site-related factors and coordination with neighbouring

countries. Maintaining that the Belarusian NPP had been constructed in violation of international nuclear safety standards and should not be operational, Lithuania encouraged the international community to call resolutely for the implementation of all international environmental, nuclear safety and radiation protection standards for that and other similar projects around the world.

104. All Agency Member States had committed to sustaining and strengthening effective and comprehensive nuclear security for all nuclear and other radioactive material and facilities. His country, therefore, was very concerned about the public statements recently made by Belarus about a possible end of cooperation against cross-border nuclear smuggling.

105. Lithuania strongly supported international efforts towards the full denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Until it took place, sanctions must remain in place and be fully implemented. Lithuania also called on Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and to return to undisputable compliance with the NPT and other relevant agreements.

106. In the light of the discussions on the role of nuclear power in combating climate change, his country's experience of decommissioning the Ignalina NPP convincingly demonstrated the need for meticulous evaluation of all the implications involved in embarking on new nuclear power programmes before doing so. The expansion or introduction of nuclear power was a substantial long term commitment of financial, technical and human resources. Careful consideration should be given not only to construction and operational matters but also to the decommissioning and management of all types of radioactive waste and spent fuel. Lithuania thus called on the Agency and Member States to work continuously on safe decommissioning and radioactive waste management.

107. Mr ELMARKABI (Egypt) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had clearly highlighted both the importance of multilateralism in overcoming growing international challenges and the pivotal role of the UN and other international organizations in that respect. The Agency was a pillar of that system in view of the key part it played in harnessing nuclear energy to achieve many of the SDGs and tackle numerous other challenges, above all climate change.

108. With Agency support, many developing States were following the global trend of introducing SMRs, which would assist the peaceful spread of nuclear energy and the implementation of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. Egypt appreciated the Director General's preparations for the Agency's strong and active participation at COP26 to promote the role of nuclear energy in combating climate change.

109. The NPT affirmed the fundamental right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the spread and promotion of which was the ultimate purpose for which the Agency was founded. Egypt endeavoured to support the Agency in every way to that end, especially through the TC programme — an essential tool in helping States to achieve socioeconomic development — and through the efforts of the Nuclear Energy Department and the Department of Nuclear Applications. Wholly committed to paying its voluntary TCF contributions, Egypt stressed the need to address the issue of the limited resources available to the TCF, which prevented many projects and activities from being carried out.

110. His country fully supported the current preparations for the 2023 Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology, which would be an important channel for promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and disseminating them worldwide.

111. Egypt supported the three fundamental pillars of the Agency's work, namely the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, safeguards — one of the Agency's most important basic responsibilities — and nuclear safety, and it emphasized the need for balance among them. Egypt was fully committed to its obligations under the NPT and reiterated the importance of universalizing the Treaty and striving for full disarmament pursuant to Article VI thereof, under close and effective international oversight.

112. The universalization of the comprehensive safeguards system was an essential step towards establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East. To that end, Egypt would again propose a draft resolution on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East in a continued effort to rid the region of nuclear weapons. Egypt looked forward to a proposal from the Director General setting out a new vision for progress on the implementation of the resolution in the light of regional and international developments. In that context, Egypt hoped that all concerned parties would participate in the second Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. The conference was not intended to isolate any State in the region but was a sincere attempt to negotiate a treaty on ridding the Middle East of WMDs that would address the concerns of all parties while observing the principle of consensus and the free will of all States.

113. Egypt accorded great importance to promoting nuclear security, noting that such security was the responsibility of States and should not be used to influence their fundamental right to peaceful uses. Nuclear security projects, moreover, should be funded through voluntary resources.

114. Pursuing transparency and in fulfilment of its international responsibilities regarding its peaceful nuclear project, Egypt had submitted the necessary technical documentation for the El Dabaa NPP to the country's regulator in order to obtain planning and construction permission for the first and second units, which would be built during the second half of 2022. Egypt appreciated the Secretariat's continual support of the project from the outset and the Agency's involvement in human resources training for countries that had decided to build their first NPP.

115. Expressing its sincere gratitude for the Secretariat's efforts to serve Member States and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, Egypt would remain supportive of Arab and African visions and all developing Member States.

116. Mr AFRIYIE (Ghana), applauding the Director General's exceptional leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent minimal disruption to Agency activities, expressed his country's great appreciation for the Agency's assistance to Member States — including his own — in fighting the pandemic. For its part, Ghana had demonstrated resilience throughout in progressing with its CPF, which was due to be signed on the margins of the General Conference, and welcomed the invaluable support of Agency staff, in particular the Deputy Director General for Technical Cooperation, in helping it to achieve that milestone.

117. Ghana had been approached by a number of vendor countries in response to its request for interest in establishing the technology for its nuclear power programme. Having integrated into its national network the seismic equipment procured through cost sharing with the Agency, it was working assiduously to obtain the social licence required in connection with the candidate sites in particular and, through the Ghana Nuclear Power Programme Organization, was providing all relevant information to the media for dissemination to the public. As part of the preparations for the programme, the Ghana Nuclear Regulatory Authority was also developing its regulatory structures with technical support from the EU's Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation.

118. In order to sustain the advances in that programme and the country's increasing use of nuclear applications in medical practice, agriculture, research and education, and in its extractive industries, the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission had been equipped with a national dosimetry laboratory to detect and measure contamination, and with a functional physical/biological dosimetry laboratory for cytogenetic and gene expression analysis in dose estimation.

119. Ghana was grateful for the real-time RT-PCR equipment that it had received from the Agency and for the assistance provided to it by the IAEA-FAO Animal Production and Health Laboratory for detecting animal-to-human diseases and also for COVID-19 testing as part of the ZODIAC project. His

country had joined 33 others in 5 continents in assessing international variations in CT utilization protocols and radiation doses in patients with COVID-19 pneumonia.

120. In Ghana, the School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences continued to train young nuclear scientists, producing 24 Master's and 6 PhD graduates in 2020, and had additionally hosted 20 individuals from 13 African countries, including 11 women, who had attended the 9th Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources, from November 2020 to February 2021.

121. Ghana was participating in a TC project, known as the Sahel project, which was working to investigate transboundary aquifers for groundwater quality, identify sources of pollution, and quantify recharge to aquifers and the impact of climate change on water resources. Ghana's focus was on the north-eastern and north-western parts of the country, where an IAEA Water Availability Enhancement Methodology was being piloted.

122. The Agency was assisting Ghana in the area of plastics management through NUTEC Plastics, which combined irradiation and isotopic techniques to combat plastic pollution through designated modules such as the TC and the CRP. The aim of the project — to which Ghana was committed as a means of boosting its efforts to control plastic waste — was to accelerate the transition towards a circular plastic economy by way of nuclear solutions and to increase the use of nuclear technology in monitoring marine plastic pollution and plastic recycling practices. Ghana commended the Agency's hosting of the NUTEC Plastics roundtable for Africa on 2 September 2021 and looked forward to similar engagements in future.

123. In a demonstration of its support for the Agency, especially in connection with the peaceful uses of nuclear science, technology and applications, Ghana had contributed to ReNuAL2 in 2021 and urged Member States in a position to do so to follow suit.

124. Mr HEITOR (Portugal) thanked the Director General for keeping the Agency at the leading edge of nuclear science and nuclear energy issues, above all in order to create security and, in addition, to improve facilities and enhance understanding of aging populations so as to provide new and universally accessible diagnostics and treatment.

125. His country was especially interested in nuclear medicine and the application of nuclear technology, given their increasingly critical role in treating cancer and other diseases, and was fully engaged in working for the shared European goal of achieving, by 2030, the long-term survival of three out of every four cancer patients. Portugal welcomed the ZODIAC project, together with the requirement for security alert systems, and wished to collaborate actively in the modernization of the Agency's laboratories at Seibersdorf. It attached special importance to NUTEC Plastics, notably in relation to the Clean Oceans Initiative, which it believed that all should share as a common value.

126. Noting in conclusion that inclusivity and gender equality were key factors in addressing critical technologies for future generations, Portugal welcomed the Maria Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and its goal of attracting women to nuclear science.

127. Mr KURTYKA (Poland) said that nuclear power was vital to transforming his country's energy sector so as to meet the Paris Agreement objectives and reach climate neutrality. Since the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference, the Polish Council of Ministers had approved two crucial documents. The first was the country's energy policy to 2040, which presented a vision for reconstructing and transforming the entire energy sector and reaffirmed the plans for bringing into operation 6–9 GW of nuclear power capacity, representing some 15% of the future generation capacity in the national system, by 2043. The second document was the recently updated Polish nuclear power programme, which provided a roadmap for implementing those ambitious but feasible plans.

128. In carrying out its nuclear power programme, Poland fully recognized the importance of ensuring its regulatory readiness to oversee the safety and security of new nuclear builds. It therefore wished to invite the IRRS, which had completed its first successful peer review mission to Poland in 2013 and a follow-up mission in 2017, to conduct a further review and thereby assist in promoting the country's continuous improvement of its nuclear safety and regulatory framework. Poland also looked forward in 2021 to the approval of its newly developed policy and strategy for nuclear safety and radiological protection, which would mark another major step forward. Formulated on the basis of the Agency safety standards, the strategy clearly identified the fundamental safety principles and directions for further strengthening the nuclear safety and radiological protection in Poland.

129. Poland greatly valued the TC programme, which visibly supported its development of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

130. The NPT remained the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. At the upcoming NPT Review Conference, postponed to 2022 as a result of the pandemic, Poland would chair Main Committee II, which was crucial for the Agency, as it related to the NPT's second pillar of disarmament.

131. As part of Agency's indispensable and irreplaceable role in non-proliferation, its verification activities were critical to the entire non-proliferation system and to the NPT in particular. In that regard, its impartial verification and monitoring in Iran in light of UN Security resolution 2231 (2015) were commendable, as were its continued efforts to monitor nuclear activities in the DPRK, using accessible technologies, until such time as the DPRK returned to cooperating with the Agency in full implementation of its safeguards agreement.

132. Nuclear power was vital to the future low-carbon global energy mix, as clearly confirmed by many studies from reputable organizations such as the IPCC and the IEA. Poland therefore welcomed the Agency's ongoing efforts to highlight the discussion of nuclear power in the run-up to COP26. Poland continued firmly to support the Agency's impressive activities, including through financial assistance to new initiatives such as ZODIAC and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

133. Ms BRATIĆ (Montenegro), noting the Agency's immeasurable contribution to global peace, security and overall development over the years, underlined the great significance of the Agency's promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology, its assistance to Member States and its strengthening of the nuclear safety and security regime.

134. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 had unequivocally demonstrated the importance of the mandate assigned to the Agency, which had fully mobilized its resources to protect global health and promptly provided valuable assistance to Member States. In her country, that assistance had been critical in controlling the first wave of the pandemic. Preparedness to respond to any zoonotic disease would furthermore be strengthened by ZODIAC, an initiative strongly supported by Montenegro, which commended the dedicated leadership, work and engagement of the Agency during such unprecedented times.

135. Albeit a non-nuclear State, Montenegro vigorously supported the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and the need for nuclear safety and security, and had benefited substantively from fruitful cooperation with the Agency through wide-ranging technical assistance. Montenegro was currently developing its CPF for 2021–2027 on the basis of defined priorities that were compatible with the EU accession negotiating framework, especially in the area of science and research.

136. In that context, the South East European International Institute for Sustainable Technologies was an important regional initiative established to demonstrate the contribution of science to development. Although the initiative was progressing significantly on the political and scientific fronts, Montenegro

would highly appreciate further Agency support, similar to that provided to SESAME, for its training programme for scientists, engineers and technicians.

137. As a constitutionally ecological State, Montenegro fully supported the Agency's contributions towards meeting the SDGs and was a member of the Friends of ReNuAL. The Agency's valuable technical and expert assistance to Montenegro in environmental protection and sustainable development had greatly contributed to the country's goal of dynamic and inclusive sustainable development. In that context, Montenegro welcomed the NUTEC Plastics initiative and remained committed to contributing actively to its implementation.

138. Her country firmly supported the NPT as the global cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, remaining a strong advocate of the Treaty's universalization and of the Agency's role and safeguards system. Montenegro was also unwaveringly committed to the successful outcome of the Tenth NPT Review Conference, which should be aimed at strengthening and affirming the NPT as a key multilateral instrument for preserving international peace, security and stability.

139. A State party to all major Agency conventions and other relevant international instruments, Montenegro strived to meet the highest international standards of nuclear safety and security. It had also worked significantly to ensure protection from the harmful effects of ionizing radiation and radioactive waste management, constantly seeking to upgrade its capacities in that domain in its determination to prevent any illegal use or mismanagement of radioactive materials and related knowledge and technologies.

140. In closing, she recalled that Montenegro was a State party to the CSC and had ratified the Joint Protocol, reaffirming its commitment to the establishment of the global nuclear liability regime.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.