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President: Mr DINESEN (Denmark)

Later: Mr JOHNSON (Ghana)

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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
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ASEANTOM	ASEAN Network of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy
AU-PATTEC	African Union's Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomosis Eradication Campaign
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
ConvEx	Convention Exercise
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
GNSSN	Global Nuclear Safety and Security Network
HEU	high enriched uranium
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
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
LEU	low enriched uranium
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
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
NSF	Nuclear Security Fund
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SESAME	Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
Vienna Convention	Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

7 General debate and Annual Report for 2020 (continued) **(GC(65)/5)**

1. Mr TOUKAN (Jordan) commended the Agency's exceptional efforts and determination to achieve sustainable global development through the peaceful uses of atomic energy. The valued support provided to Member States, including Jordan, to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic had shown how nuclear technologies could be used to respond to emerging needs in public health and other areas. Moreover, the launch of ZODIAC demonstrated the Agency's pioneering role in supporting national and regional capacities to detect and prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases.
2. As part of its increasingly close cooperation with the Agency, Jordan would be hosting a postgraduate educational course in radiation protection and the safety of radiation sources in Arabic. The syllabus would be aligned with developments in the workflow used in Jordan's nuclear power programme, which involved two of the region's advanced scientific centres, the Jordan Research and Training Reactor and SESAME. In that connection, Jordan commended the Agency's NUTEC Plastics programme. SESAME could help to achieve practical outcomes and solutions in that area, as the materials science beamline was operating in addition to the X-ray and infrared beamlines already in service.
3. The Jordan Research and Training Reactor had produced medical radioisotopes such as iodine-131, used in cancer diagnosis and treatment. Nuclear medicine centres in the country had been provided with 3125 samples, including 172 Ci of iodine-131. The industrial radioisotopes unit had achieved ISO 9001 certification for the production of iridium-192 for use in non-destructive testing for pipeline and equipment welding. In addition, neutron activation analysis systems compatible with the Agency's measuring models had been successfully operated. Jordan looked forward to its industrial scientific research institution becoming a hub for regional centres, under the Agency's auspices.
4. With regard to Jordan's uranium extraction project, the Jordanian Uranium Mining Company had been operating a pioneering yellowcake extraction plant since the start of 2021. Preparations were under way for the necessary engineering works to make the plant fully operational ahead of the completion of detailed engineering designs for commercial production.
5. Jordan continued to benefit from technical cooperation with the Agency to support the development of the Jordanian nuclear power programme through national, regional and interregional programmes, in particular the vital Agency support provided to the Ministry of Water to equip the groundwater treatment unit used for drinking water production in Jordan.
6. Sustainable, concerted international efforts to bolster the comprehensive nuclear security regime through compliance with domestic and international commitments were essential. Jordan emphasized its commitment to supporting the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes and restricting the use of nuclear energy to peaceful applications beneficial to all, in the spirit of the NPT. Jordan would continue to make positive contributions to nuclear disarmament efforts, especially in relation to creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.
7. Mr LAUNSKY-TIEFFENTHAL (Austria) said that his country was privileged to host the Agency and its expanding facilities, including the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre in Seibersdorf, which would help to further strengthen countries' abilities to tackle nuclear terrorism.

8. The Agency's initiatives and programmes, such as NUTEC Plastics and PACT, and its work in isotope hydrology, facilitated impressive continuous development and innovation. Austria gladly supported the Agency's efforts, including through its assessed contributions to the Regular Budget and the TCF, and its current Board membership.

9. The return to full participation in, and compliance with, the JCPOA was crucial for international security, non-proliferation and the credibility of the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Standing ready to facilitate the reinvigoration of the JCPOA, Austria looked forward to all parties returning to Vienna shortly to resume their negotiations and ensure the Plan's implementation.

10. The Agency's alarming report on the application of safeguards in the DPRK underscored the urgent need for dialogue and diplomacy to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Both the Agency and the CTBTO could contribute significantly to a solution.

11. Observing the renewed focus on energy and climate change, Austria reiterated that nuclear power was not a sustainable way to generate electricity or fight climate change. Countries should invest in renewable energy technologies, which were easy to implement and maintain and did not carry the safety, security and proliferation risks associated with nuclear power.

12. Noting that the Tenth NPT Review Conference would take place early in 2022, Austria highlighted the entry into force of the TPNW in January 2021 as a crucial, historic step towards the implementation of the disarmament obligation under the NPT. All countries were invited to join the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in Vienna from 22 to 24 March 2022, either as Parties or observers.

13. Mr SZTÁRAY (Hungary), commending the Agency's emergency response to the pandemic and the continuation of its important work despite COVID-19 restrictions, said that ZODIAC had strengthened Member States' preparedness and capabilities.

14. Every State had the right to choose an energy mix suitable for its needs and capabilities. Nuclear energy accounted for about 50% of Hungary's power production and remained a key component of a cost-effective, climate-friendly, safe and stable energy mix that would help it to meet its environmental goals, including the very ambitious target of 90% carbon-neutral power generation by 2030.

15. The construction of the two new units at the Paks NPP remained on schedule and applied the highest international standards. Both units were expected to be connected to the national electricity grid between 2029 and 2030, allowing the contribution of nuclear power to be maintained in the long run. The construction licence application had been submitted to the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority in June 2020. National and international experts, including the Agency, had been involved in the thorough examination process and the licence was expected to be issued shortly.

16. Hungary attached high priority to meeting the maximum safety and security requirements in its existing nuclear facilities. Safety was ensured through comprehensive regulation and multi-tiered, complex supporting systems and operating mechanisms. It was essential to maintain the Agency's central role on nuclear security and provide it with the required resources. Hungary looked forward to receiving new Agency advisory missions even under the current challenging conditions.

17. His country was proud that its Centre for Energy Research had recently been redesignated as a Collaborating Centre for nuclear forensics. In addition, Hungary continued to serve as the convener of the Nuclear Security Contact Group and would host the next Plenary Meeting of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

18. Hungary strongly supported international cooperation and the mutual sharing of experience, including through the TC Programme, and had actively participated in the Member State Support

Programme. His country provided in-field training opportunities, and equipment developed for domestic use had helped international safeguards inspectors during the verification of Hungarian and foreign facilities. Furthermore, Hungary was developing a series of memoranda of understanding on training and education in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy with interested Agency partners in order to intensify cooperation in that area.

19. It was important to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Fully aware of the complexity of the situation concerning the JCPOA, Hungary continued to support the Plan's implementation and the Agency's dedicated and impartial efforts towards the application of Iran's safeguards agreement and additional protocol. Iran should cooperate fully with the Agency to clarify all outstanding safeguards issues.

20. Hungary would remain a partner in the Agency's valuable work to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

21. Mr BACHIYSKI (Bulgaria), commending the Secretariat's diligent work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, thanked the Agency for continuing to support Member States with existing NPPs in ensuring their safe, secure, efficient and reliable long term operation.

22. Strongly committed to further nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Bulgaria supported the full, comprehensive and balanced implementation of all three pillars of the NPT and would actively engage in the upcoming NPT Review Conference. As the implementation of safeguards by all NPT States Parties was essential, Bulgaria appreciated the Director General's efforts to provide credible assurance of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

23. With a combination of high technology, production efficiency and competitive pricing, nuclear power remained a major component of Bulgaria's energy mix. His Government ensured high levels of radiation protection and nuclear safety and security and was participating actively in preparations for the Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the CPPNM in 2022. Bulgaria looked forward to engaging constructively in the review meetings of the Joint Convention and the CNS in 2022 and 2023, respectively, which had regrettably been postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

24. Commending the Agency's proactive role in the field of nuclear energy technology, including through the SMR Regulators' Forum, Bulgaria welcomed the launch of the Agency's SMR platform and the activities to review the applicability of Agency safety standards to novel advanced reactors, in particular SMRs. The Agency should intensify its efforts in that area and continue working towards a harmonized approach to those technologies. His country stood ready to engage in discussions on operational and regulatory aspects. Furthermore, noting the importance of knowledge management, Bulgaria supported all measures to ensure the sustainability of nuclear education and training in all areas of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

25. The TC Programme should render support to all Member States upon their request and according to their needs, according to the principle of non-discrimination. Currently participating in more than 30 regional and interregional TC projects, Bulgaria thanked the Agency for providing it with PCR equipment as part of its valuable COVID-19 emergency support. Noting that funding for TC activities should be sufficient, assured and predictable, Bulgaria paid its annual contribution to the TCF in full and on time and had contributed €30 000 to the ZODIAC initiative.

26. Lastly, he announced that in January 2021 Bulgaria had become a member of the Nuclear Energy Agency and would remain a constructive partner in all Agency activities.

27. Mr FEICHT (Germany) commended the Agency on adapting effectively to the challenges of the pandemic and, in particular, its important nuclear verification work. Effective and efficient Agency safeguards were crucial and Germany was working with the EU and other international partners to

promote additional protocols as the international verification standard. His country looked forward to close international cooperation in the preparations for the forthcoming Tenth NPT Review Conference.

28. Germany was deeply concerned at Iran's systematic violations of the JCPOA, its reduced transparency regarding its nuclear programme and its lack of cooperation with the Agency. Iran should rebuild confidence, reengage in diplomatic dialogue and return to full compliance as soon as possible.

29. His country supported the Agency in enhancing its readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme once the political conditions allowed. Complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the DPRK must remain the irrevocable goal.

30. With respect to security and safety, Germany had pledged €3 million to the NSF at the end of 2020 for the following three years. His country praised the Agency's work on the Joint Convention and the CNS, and welcomed the Agency's efforts in the area of nuclear applications, in particular the promising ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics initiatives and the crucial PACT programme. In addition to its voluntary financial contributions to those efforts, Germany would be contributing €500 000 to the ReNuAL 2 project, in line with the country's success in further developing nuclear technologies for use in medicine, energy storage, material science and research.

31. Although Germany would be closing down its last NPP by the end of 2022, the Government's strategy for competence and development of future talent for nuclear safety would cover waste management, radiation protection, the nuclear fuel cycle and cutting-edge material science with neutron sources.

32. Germany supported the Director General's initiatives to strengthen the Agency, including the increase of female participation in the nuclear field. His country had contributed €300 000 to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and was providing internships in Germany for female students.

33. Mr RAKHMETULLIN (Kazakhstan) said that his country was fully applying comprehensive safeguards and had continued to assist Agency inspectors in carrying out their activities during the pandemic. A party to all fundamental international treaties concerning nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of atomic energy, Kazakhstan had ratified the TPNW in 2019. Fully compliant with UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), it had signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia in 2006. Moreover, in 2020, the President of Kazakhstan had approved legislation on civil liability for nuclear damage, in keeping with the provisions of the 1997 Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage.

34. A consistent advocate of strict adherence to the JCPOA, Kazakhstan welcomed the six rounds of negotiations held in Vienna and looked forward to a complete resolution of the issue. Transparency regarding Iran's nuclear programme and strict implementation of the relevant agreements would strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and allow that NPT State party to exercise its legitimate right to develop peaceful nuclear activities.

35. The 30th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, at which a total of 456 nuclear weapons tests had been conducted, had been marked in August 2021. As part of Kazakhstan's non-proliferation efforts at the site, the test infrastructure had been totally eliminated by the year 2000 and the experimental field site had been brought to a safe non-proliferation state two decades later. An environmental investigation of the entire site would be completed by the end of the year, making it possible to assess more accurately the current radioecological situation. Although Kazakhstan had implemented a project in cooperation with the Agency to open up part of the territory of the Semipalatinsk test site for economic activity, much work was still needed to rehabilitate the site and adjacent areas.

36. The regular unanimous adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution on international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region demonstrated serious concern about the long term consequences of nuclear tests, especially for children and vulnerable groups.

37. Kazakhstan was supporting the peaceful use of atomic energy and the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime by hosting the LEU Bank, which had become fully operational in December 2019. The dilution of unirradiated HEU graphite fuel from his country's pulsed graphite research reactor, which had been completed in 2020, was a further contribution to non-proliferation efforts. National experts were currently developing a conceptual dry mixing technology for further use of the irradiated graphite fuel from the research reactor, which would be beneficial to other countries participating in minimization programmes.

38. Since joining the Agency, and in spite of its active and responsible stance, Kazakhstan had been deprived of the opportunity to participate in the work of the Agency's elected bodies, primarily the Board of Governors, because it had not joined any of the Agency's regional groups. The situation seriously impeded Kazakhstan's work with the Agency and violated the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members, enshrined in Article IV.C of the Statute. Kazakhstan had requested that an item on the issue be included on the General Conference's agenda and hoped that the difficult, long-standing situation could be resolved. His country stood ready to hold bilateral consultations with interested delegations.

39. Mr KABANGU (Democratic Republic of the Congo) thanked the Agency for providing his country with diagnostic and analytical tools essential for public health management and expressed regret that COVID-19 had significantly delayed the implementation of TC projects with the Agency.

40. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was continuing its partnership with the USA and the Agency to strengthen nuclear security. The modernization of the TRICO II research reactor continued, but diversification to technologies based on particle accelerators would require the country to make significant investment. A huge effort would be required to provide continuous training for existing staff and initial training for future young specialists, especially in accelerator physics and medical radiation physics.

41. His country's objectives were well aligned with Agency initiatives; national focal points and support teams had been established for impACT and ZODIAC. The Democratic Republic of the Congo appreciated the support it had received from the Agency in the past and was confident that it would continue.

42. Mr BALSEVICS (Latvia) said that the Agency played a key role in the global non-proliferation regime through its safeguards system and its important work was particularly relevant to the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.

43. Convinced of the benefits of the JCPOA, Latvia condemned Iran's reduced commitment to the Plan. It called on Iran to resume its engagement and enable the Agency to conduct full verification and reporting activities. Moreover, the talks in Vienna must continue.

44. His country called on the DPRK to move towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization; the continuation of the DPRK's nuclear programme and its nuclear arsenal build-up clearly violated UN Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, Latvia appreciated the Agency's readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme.

45. Furthermore, Latvia highly valued the Agency's role in strengthening global nuclear safety and security. It therefore supported the universalization of the International Convention for the Suppression

of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and of the amended CPPNM and looked forward to the Eighth CNS Review Meeting.

46. Latvia continued to emphasize the need to strengthen the safety of NPPs through appropriate international safety assessments, timely implementation of recommendations and an efficient flow of information through cross-border cooperation. Long term plans for the management of radioactive waste from nuclear installations, including disposal, were also important. The Agency's Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste Information System would provide an overview of radioactive waste management at the international level.

47. Latvia commended the Department of Technical Cooperation for its invaluable support to Member States, especially its guidance on adjusting regulatory frameworks. Three national projects had been submitted for the 2022–2023 cycle, aimed at improving the regulatory capacity for radiological emergencies and radioactive waste management, and at enhancing occupational radiation safety.

48. Latvia thanked the Agency and all donor countries for their support, ranging from additional equipment for COVID-19 analysis to new initiatives for the early detection and prevention of future zoonotic outbreaks. Looking forward to the implementation of ZODIAC, it welcomed the Agency's efforts in plastic pollution and marine monitoring. His country praised the Agency for adapting to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and for continuing to provide training and knowledge transfer activities using a virtual format.

49. Mr TAGHI-ZADA (Azerbaijan) said that the continuing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic could be overcome only if all countries joined forces. The Agency's activities were a clear example of how to respond promptly to such disasters through the most advanced scientific approaches, close international cooperation and targeted, effective and practical support, and the ZODIAC initiative merited particular mention. Azerbaijan was committed to an international, consensus-based and unified approach to the pandemic and had made a practical contribution to the global response. Furthermore, on the initiative of the President of Azerbaijan, on behalf of NAM, a special session of the UN General Assembly had been held on 3 and 4 December 2020 to discuss the pandemic.

50. Azerbaijan welcomed the Agency's initiatives in the use of nuclear technology to tackle plastic pollution, the transition to lower carbon energy sources and 'green energy', the development and use of materials with improved properties, and the cultivation of crops resistant to harsh conditions. Such issues were of particular importance to his country, which was rebuilding the territories liberated from Armenian occupation in the autumn of 2020. The President of Azerbaijan had declared Karabakh and the adjacent seven districts a 'green energy' zone; cities, towns and villages would be fully rebuilt with modern transport links using cutting-edge technologies and following the 'smart city–smart village' approach. Azerbaijan was interested in the involvement of all friendly countries in the reconstruction of the liberated territories.

51. Effective systems for export and border control needed to be put in place in those territories in order to counteract smuggling and the illicit trafficking of radioactive and nuclear material, as had been done at other border control points. Environmental monitoring, including radiological studies, was also being conducted in the liberated territories. Locations polluted with radioactive sources or residues had been detected and remedied, and the Agency's involvement in such endeavours would be of great assistance.

52. Azerbaijan welcomed its TC activities with the Agency facilitating the establishment of a radon standard laboratory, the introduction of radiation technologies in cotton cultivation and the development of nuclear medicine. They had also resulted in human and institutional capacity building, and the National Center of Oncology had taken initial steps towards becoming a regional training centre. Professional development courses in nuclear medicine for specialists from Central Asian countries had

been successfully held in 2021, and future activities with the Agency in that connection would be useful. Noting that Azerbaijan intended to continue promoting the development of priority areas and the achievement of the goals set out in its CPF, he assured the Agency of his country's continued support.

53. Mr KHAYKHAMPHITHOUNE (Lao People's Democratic Republic), commending the Director General and the Secretariat on their tireless efforts to pursue the Agency's work amid the global pandemic, said that, since joining the Agency ten years earlier, his country had received valuable technical assistance. Implementation of its CPFs for 2014–2018 and 2020–2025 served to strengthen technical capabilities for peaceful nuclear applications in such areas as food security, nutrition, and environmental management. The development of the national radiation safety infrastructure had also been supported and projects concerning the development and application of radiology and nuclear medicine had further improved diagnosis and treatment in the health sector.

54. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, a least developed country, possessed limited expertise in nuclear and radiation safety and security. Thanks to continued support from the Agency, his country had adopted its Radiation Protection and Safety Act in 2019, which set out standards for radiation protection and safety, including measures to prevent and mitigate risks to people and the environment. Furthermore, the recently adopted INSSP would help the country to fulfil its NPT and other obligations. In the final stages of concluding a modified SQP and adhering to the Amendment to the CPPNM, his country expected to conclude those processes before the Tenth NPT Review Conference in 2022.

55. Reiterating its commitment to the NPT and related instruments, and to strengthening cooperation with the Agency and ASEANTOM, the Lao People's Democratic Republic expressed its deep appreciation for its fruitful cooperation with the Agency. It was confident that the partnership would go from strength to strength in subsequent years.

56. Mr UMAR (Nigeria) conveyed his country's appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts to ensure that the Agency's activities and programmes could continue across the globe in spite of the challenges of the pandemic. It was reassuring to Member States that the Agency was a global player that could be relied upon to deliver, regardless of the circumstances.

57. The support provided under the TC project on 'Strengthening Capabilities of Member States in Building, Strengthening and Restoring Capacities and Services in Case of Outbreaks, Emergencies and Disasters' had helped his country respond to COVID-19 challenges. Grateful to other countries and international partners for their extrabudgetary contributions, Nigeria called on the Agency to continue deepening collaboration, with WHO, FAO and OIE, in order to create a unique response mechanism for outbreaks of both human and animal diseases.

58. Noting that the theme of the 2021 Scientific Forum, 'Preparing for Zoonotic Outbreaks: the Role of Nuclear Science', was apt, Nigeria was confident that the event would provide an opportunity for collaboration and exchange of ideas and best practices. His country had developed a national strategic framework for ZODIAC and looked forward to the Agency's support in its implementation. Noting, also, that the global plastics burden threatened efforts to combat climate change, Nigeria welcomed the NUTEC Plastics initiative.

59. Nigeria welcomed the designation of 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests, and looked forward to the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September. Such initiatives were important in sustaining global efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

60. The Agency's nuclear verification and monitoring work constituted an important building block for international peace and security; Nigeria would continue to support the Agency in discharging its mandate. Appreciative of the Agency's efforts to strengthen and enhance regulatory capacity concerning

nuclear safety, security and safeguards, his country hoped that the Agency's projects on developing safety infrastructure for regulating NPPs and non-power nuclear and radiation applications in Nigeria would improve regulatory capacity and strengthen the national framework for radiation protection and nuclear safety, among other areas.

61. Nigeria reaffirmed its commitment to the Agency's ideals, particularly concerning the promotion of nuclear security, safety and safeguards, and would continue to strengthen cooperation with other partners to ensure that nuclear science and technology was deployed more effectively.

Mr Johnson (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

62. Ms FAXAS (Dominican Republic), thanking the Director General and the Secretariat for their hard work to ensure that the Agency discharged its mandate in the ongoing exceptional circumstances, said that her Government, whose vision was fully in line with the 2030 Agenda, was of the view that the Agency's support to countries in the use of nuclear techniques contributed to most of the SDGs.

63. As a founding member of the Agency, the Dominican Republic was committed to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear technology and noted the role of the Agency's TC programme in that regard. Her country was due to sign a CPF for 2022–2025, the implementation of which would contribute to the achievement of national priorities and objectives and promote sustainable development, enabling those most in need to access nuclear energy for medical purposes and other uses.

64. The Dominican Republic was committed to updating and adapting its legislative and regulatory framework concerning radiological protection, the security of radioactive sources and safeguards, in line with the legal instruments adopted under Agency auspices and international standards. It supported NUTEC Plastics, noting that many countries were experiencing a deluge of plastic waste.

65. The Agency's important role in supporting Member States' efforts to tackle challenges in energy, environment, health and agriculture was becoming increasingly evident, and her country thanked the Agency for its assistance over the years. The SIT had been used successfully in her country to eradicate the fruit fly and the Agency had also made an essential contribution to nuclear medicine and cancer treatment. Furthermore, the Dominican Republic particularly appreciated the diagnostic equipment it had received to help in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. As initiatives such as ZODIAC, aimed at strengthening capacities and expertise, had proven highly important, her country called on donor countries to offer them robust support.

66. In view of the Agency's vital work in enabling countries to strengthen their national capacities, her country was pleased that training had continued despite the pandemic. It welcomed the progress made on gender equity within the Secretariat and recent initiatives such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. It was important to place women in positions of power and decision-making roles in order to tackle the issue of equality.

67. In recent years, the Agency had demonstrated its ability to adapt to constant change so as to meet Member States' needs, and the Dominican Republic would continue supporting all such initiatives.

68. In closing, her country welcomed the membership of Saint Kitts and Nevis, which would strengthen the presence of the Caribbean within the Agency.

69. Mr CHIRÚ OCHOA (Panama) said that, 65 years after its establishment, the Agency continued to display vitality and relevance and an ability to adapt to the new international reality. Amid the unprecedented global pandemic, the Agency had once again shown that multilateralism, dialogue and negotiation were effective tools in preserving peace and promoting the peaceful use and applications of nuclear science and technology.

70. Panama had made its Regional Logistics Centre for Humanitarian Assistance available to the United Nations and neighbouring countries, facilitating the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance, medical equipment and supplies to countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

71. Despite difficult circumstances, the Agency had implemented the largest TC project in its history, in terms of the number of beneficiary countries and resources disbursed. Panama commended the invaluable support and assistance provided through the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean, noting that the diagnostic kits delivered had enabled his country to better respond to the health crisis. It also welcomed ZODIAC, which aimed to strengthen global preparedness for future zoonotic pandemics.

72. In early 2020, Panama had signed two important TC documents: its CPF for 2020–2025 and the extension of the important ARCAL initiative. Both documents would form the basis for his country's cooperation with the Agency for the following five years, with a major impact on Panama's development.

73. Supportive of initiatives to increase the participation of women in the nuclear field, Panama praised the Secretariat's efforts to raise the representation of women at the Agency to 35%, the highest to date, but called for more women to occupy senior and decision-making roles.

74. Climate was at the heart of Panama's State policy, as protecting the environment, above all water resources and oceans, was essential. Panama had therefore joined the group of countries calling for at least 30% of the marine environment to be protected, contributing to ecological connectivity in the Tropical Eastern Pacific and the protection of marine species severely threatened by pollution. Since counteracting plastic pollution was another topic to which Panama paid close attention, it was an enthusiastic backer of NUTEC Plastics.

75. Panama upheld its international non-proliferation obligations, urging all States to comply with their safeguards commitments and additional protocols. Restating its full support for the Agency's verification and monitoring activities, his country called on all those involved to return, without preconditions, to the Vienna talks and resume their compliance with the JCPOA.

76. Ms RODRIGUES COELHO (Angola), having expressed her country's deep appreciation of the Director General's diligent leadership in challenging times, said that the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing health and socioeconomic problems required an unprecedented response from the international community. Her Government reiterated its support for ZODIAC, looking forward to the Scientific Forum, where the need to be proactive in response to any future pandemic would undoubtedly be emphasized.

77. Angola appreciated the close collaboration between the Agency and AU-PATTEC which had led to a significant decrease in trypanosomiasis in the sub-Saharan region. It anticipated continued support to access eradication strategies, including the cost-effective integration of SIT operations into area-wide integrated pest management campaigns.

78. Angola called on Member States to join NUTEC Plastics, the positive impact of which served to highlight the central role that the Agency must play in the environment.

79. Lastly, she expressed Angola's deep gratitude for the support provided by the Agency to developing countries, above all in Africa. Her country reiterated its firm commitment to promote the use of atoms for peace and development worldwide, especially at a time when the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic required unity and solidarity.

80. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates) expressed his country's appreciation for the Director General's successful leadership of the Agency over the previous year and for the Agency's continuing

firm support and outstanding cooperation. Over a year after Unit 1 at the Barakah NPP had reached the first operational stage, Unit 2 had been safely connected to the electrical grid, thereby making the Barakah NPP the region's first operational multi-unit NPP and helping to strengthen sustainable development while supporting the UAE's efforts to tackle climate change; units 3 and 4 were 90% and 94% complete. Once all four units had been constructed, they were expected to produce 5.6 gigawatts of electricity — about 25% of the UAE's electricity requirement — which would help to prevent the release of more than 21 million tonnes of carbon emissions every year.

81. From the outset, the UAE had been committed to applying the Agency's guidelines and international best practices in its peaceful nuclear power programme, ensuring full compliance with the highest standards of transparency, operational safety, security and non-proliferation. Upholding the highest standards of nuclear safety in all national applications of nuclear technology was of the utmost importance. His country therefore looked forward to hosting ConvEx-3 at the Barakah NPP under the Agency's auspices.

82. As a party to all international nuclear safety conventions, the UAE was committed to submitting all the relevant national reports under the CNS and the Joint Convention and participating actively in their review processes. All States in the region that had not yet acceded to the CNS, including Iran, should do without further delay. The Agency's safeguards system was indispensable as a reliable mechanism for ensuring that all nuclear materials and facilities were being used exclusively for peaceful purposes. The UAE joined the many States calling on Iran to honour its obligations under the JCPOA, the Agency's safeguards agreement and the NPT, and to cease all activities not in line with its commitments.

83. Mr TENNAKOON (Sri Lanka) said that his country appreciated the Agency's tireless efforts to ensure programmatic delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, welcoming the significant adaptations made to its working methods. Sri Lanka was grateful to the Agency for providing laboratory diagnostic equipment and accessories to contain the spread of the virus. Strong international solidarity and multilateral cooperation must be maintained in the fight against COVID-19; Member States' efforts to recover from the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic could be realized only through collaboration with multilateral organizations.

84. Sri Lanka endorsed the Agency's efforts to support Member States in the use of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques to enhance global preparedness and response to combat future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases. Accordingly, it continued to support ZODIAC, noting that the equipment and accessories provided would be used to upgrade veterinary investigation centres in the country. Sri Lanka also appreciated the Agency's assistance in mitigating the marine ecological disaster after a ship had caught fire off the coast in May 2021, including a comprehensive programme to monitor pollution from the spillage of chemicals and plastics. Sri Lanka fully supported the NUTEC Plastics initiative.

85. With Agency support and stakeholder collaboration, the country's Atomic Energy Regulatory Council had prepared a national nuclear or radiological emergency management plan and had submitted a project proposal for the 2022–2023 project cycle on 'Strengthening the National Capabilities for Responding to Nuclear or Radiological Emergencies'. His country was grateful for the Agency's technical assistance in enhancing the capacities of its institutions dealing with nuclear and radiological sources. Keen to focus on strengthening the regulatory infrastructure for radiation safety and source security, Sri Lanka would continue to work closely with the Agency and other bilateral partners to that end.

86. Sri Lanka fully supported the renovation of the Seibersdorf laboratories under ReNuAL, noting that peaceful uses and varied applications of nuclear technology supported Member States in their efforts to attain the SDGs.

87. Technical cooperation with the Agency and other forms of Agency support had helped his country to transition to cleaner technologies and make improvements in the agriculture and health sectors. Sri Lanka encouraged the Agency to continue building the capacity of Member States — especially developing countries — by supporting the use of nuclear techniques in such areas as agriculture, energy, industry, health and water management, in addition to nuclear power. While mindful of emerging trends and challenges in the nuclear field, Sri Lanka was keen to explore the possibilities of expanding the use of nuclear power for electricity generation and of other technologies.

88. Noting that the peaceful uses of nuclear technology could only serve their purpose if safely and securely deployed, Sri Lanka emphasized the Agency's important role in promoting global nuclear safety and security.

89. Mr HUSSEN (Iraq), affirming the legitimate right of States to the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology to strengthen their development, economic and health programmes and to support plans for future energy diversification to achieve the SDGs, said that his Government had passed a number of laws, including the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission Act, which it was now working to implement.

90. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, his Government had continued to cooperate constructively with the Agency to rebuild infrastructure and national capacities in all peaceful nuclear applications by participating in the Agency's TC programmes, providing training opportunities and approving numerous national and regional projects. His Government valued the Agency's cooperation with WHO to provide assistance to Member States such as his own, including in the form of advanced equipment to rapidly detect the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

91. The Iraqi authorities were working with the Department of Technical Cooperation to build national capacities to combat both communicable and chronic diseases, in particular cancer. The Agency's decision to conduct an impACT review in Iraq in cooperation with WHO was appreciated. Iraq hoped that the Agency would provide it with further support to develop its national action mechanisms. Praising the ZODIAC initiative, Iraq welcomed ongoing work to equip Member States' national laboratories, nominate national ZODIAC focal points and contribute the necessary diagnostic equipment.

92. The national executive and regulatory authorities had devised an integrated programme of action to eliminate radioactive contamination in Iraq, in addition to a national radioactive waste management strategy and a national strategy for the management of naturally occurring radioactive material waste. Important steps had been taken to eliminate radioactive contamination in several regions in Iraq, boosting the Government's tireless efforts to safely dispose of radioactive waste from nuclear installations, medical centres and oil facilities.

93. Iraq commended the Agency and the EU for their support and assistance to build urgently needed facilities for the definitive burial of radioactive waste in several regions of the country. A site selection study and the necessary designs and plans for building permanent radioactive waste landfill facilities had been prepared under a previously concluded contract with the EU. Iraq hoped that it would continue to receive the necessary assistance to construct those facilities, as they were crucial for protecting people and the environment from the negative impact of radioactive waste.

94. Cooperating directly and productively with the Agency, Iraq's national authorities had cleaned up 80% of the nuclear installations at the Al Tuwaitha site, the Tammuz 14 reactor, with only the reactor core remaining. Iraq hoped that the Agency would continue to provide support to remove the reactor core, the biggest challenge.

95. Iraq had received a routine visit under its safeguards agreement from the Agency's team of inspectors in June 2021, during which it had upheld the highest level of transparency, in full compliance

with international non-proliferation treaties and conventions. One of the first Member States to ratify the NPT, Iraq called on States that had not yet signed a safeguards agreement to do so, to comply with all the provisions of the NPT and the decisions pertaining to it, and to work closely with the Agency. His Government firmly believed that ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other WMDs was essential in promoting regional peace and security. Iraq looked forward to participating in the upcoming NPT Review Conference in the hope that an agreement would be reached on a Final Document, including on the creation of an NWFZ in the Middle East.

96. Mr ALMANSOURI (Qatar), commending the comprehensive nature of the documents submitted to the General Conference, said that the Agency played a central role in maintaining nuclear safety and security and ensuring that nuclear materials were not diverted for non-peaceful purposes. States had a high level of confidence in its impartiality and professionalism. Noting that the CNS had entered into force in Qatar in March 2021, he said that the country looked forward to participating effectively in the ninth review meeting in March 2023 and working with other States Parties to strengthen nuclear safety standards and guidelines.

97. Supportive of the Agency's activities to raise awareness about the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, Qatar welcomed its effective involvement in global dialogue on the sustainable development agenda, especially its efforts to support developing States. Qatar commended the Agency's response to the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and its provision of services to tackle the related challenges in many States, in particular through the ZODIAC project and capacity building in viral pathogen detection. It looked forward to closer, more extensive cooperation with the Agency in future, especially as the country had begun to implement ambitious socioeconomic development programmes.

98. The Agency played a crucial role in the international system for preserving peace and security, including through its contributions to the creation of NWFZs. Qatar looked forward to seeing progress in the implementation of the resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and of General Conference resolution GC(63)/RES/13 on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, to accelerate the creation of a Middle East NWFZ. Qatar called on the Director General to pursue further consultations with States in the region to facilitate the early application of comprehensive Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East. All other parties, especially those with a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should render all assistance to the Director General to that end.

99. Concerted international efforts were needed to advance the universal prohibition of nuclear weapons and achieve full and universal disarmament. The upcoming NPT Review Conference was an opportunity to make progress towards the balanced and effective implementation of the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the use of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes under the Agency's supervision.

100. Qatar was proud of its bilateral cooperation with the Agency on numerous programmes and training sessions concerning the peaceful uses of atomic energy, including in medicine, agriculture and the strengthening of regulatory infrastructure, along with human and technical capacity building in the area of preparedness and response in the event of a radiological or nuclear emergencies. One such programme was the design of a secondary standards dosimetry laboratory to be built in Qatar with the Agency's cooperation, to be the largest of its kind in the region.

101. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy had been promoted through support and training for specialists in nuclear medicine physics and through advice on measures for the quality assurance programme. In the area of radiological emergencies, through the TC programme, Qatar had created a national coastal network for monitoring air, land and marine radiation levels. With regard to nuclear

security and the fight against the illicit trade of nuclear materials, radiation detection gates had been installed at all border ports in preparation for the 2022 World Cup. In agriculture, work was under way to produce crops with better salt tolerance and to improve water management methods to irrigate land using brackish water.

102. Mr PALACIOS HERNÁNDEZ (Mexico) commended the Agency on its assistance in building the national capacities of designated laboratories to fight the pandemic, and on disseminating and transferring peaceful nuclear applications and technology. His country was grateful to the Agency for the COVID-19 detection equipment and tests that it had received. Mexico recognized its role as a responsible global player and the importance of collaboration on peaceful nuclear applications to ensure the socioeconomic well-being of current and future generations.

103. Having signed the ARCAL extension for the following five years, Mexico was involved in 10 ARCAL projects for the 2020–2021 cycle, and in 13 further projects with Agency support. Such strong involvement created synergies with a number of other organizations and academic research institutions.

104. Thanks to the capacity built in Mexico over previous years, for 2017–2021 the National Institute for Nuclear Research had been designated as a Collaborating Centre for the safety, maintenance and upgrading of gamma irradiation facilities. In view of the very positive results achieved, in particular with regard to training, steps had been taken to renew the designation for another four years.

105. Mexico underscored the importance of the cooperation and mutual support between FORO and the Secretariat, in particular the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security and the Department of Technical Cooperation, and noted its participation in GNSSN initiatives. Strengthening cooperation with the Agency was a priority for FORO.

106. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the need for a number of sectors to take coordinated measures to protect health. Particular attention should be given to zoonotic diseases through an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, above all if the 2030 Agenda was to be achieved. Accordingly, Mexico welcomed the theme of the Scientific Forum.

107. Member States should ensure that the Agency was able to fulfil all its safeguards functions, which constituted a key element in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and guaranteeing States' legitimate right to use nuclear applications for peaceful purposes. Mexico reiterated its hope that the JCPOA talks in Vienna would resume promptly to ensure a return to full implementation of the Plan.

108. Mexico reiterated its call on all countries to comply fully — without any delay or precondition — with UN Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, and with the NPT, and to cooperate fully with the Agency in the effective implementation of their safeguards agreements.

109. Mexico commended the Director General on his distinguished leadership at a difficult time, ensuring him of its close cooperation. His Government was seeking to bring about a fairer and safer society where all inhabitants could benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Increasing numbers of Mexicans were able to access such applications, which had played a fundamental role in the country's economic, scientific and technological development.

110. He concluded by reasserting Mexico's commitment to continue working constructively with the Agency, helping to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, gender equality, environmental protection and health, in order to bring about global prosperity.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.