

# General Conference

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## Sixty-fifth regular session

# Plenary

## Record of the Sixth Meeting

*Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Tuesday, 21 September 2021, at 5.05 p.m.<sup>1</sup>*

**President:** Ms SRISWASDI (Thailand)

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<sup>1</sup> 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

A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARASIA	Co-operative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
CNESTEN	National Centre for Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Technology
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
EU	European Union
FNRBA	Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
HEU	high enriched uranium
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IRMIS	International Radiation Monitoring Information System
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
IT	information technology

**Abbreviations used in this record (continued)**

JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NDT	non-destructive testing
NPP	nuclear power plant
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
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PUI	Peaceful Uses Initiative
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
SSDL	secondary standards dosimetry laboratory
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

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

1. Mr FARHANE (Morocco), highlighting the health context in which the current session was being held, said that, under the leadership of the Director General, the Agency had proven its ability to respond quickly and effectively to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The session was an important opportunity for all Member States to renew their commitment to the safe and secure use of nuclear applications, assess progress made, identify shortcomings and adopt resolutions in line with the Agency's fundamental vision of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'. Thanks to the political will of Member States and the technical assistance provided under the TC programme, the Agency's activities were in step with that vision. For its part, his country continued to support the Agency's efforts to develop nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes.
2. Morocco supported the implementation of important development projects, in particular ZODIAC and ReNuAL2, to build the capacity of Member States in nuclear applications. It therefore welcomed the progress made in strengthening national and regional diagnostic and detection capacity in accordance with the resolution<sup>3</sup> on the ZODIAC project, which had been adopted by consensus, under its presidency, at the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Conference. His country had contributed financially to that innovative project for establishing a comprehensive global framework to address the zoonotic diseases that affected an estimated 2.6 billion people and caused some 2.7 million deaths per year. Morocco had also contributed funds to the ReNuAL project. Moreover, with Agency support, Morocco had developed national expertise in health, nuclear medicine and medical physics, nutrition, and water.
3. In the academic field, his country's National Centre for Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Technology (CNESTEN) had worked with other relevant national institutions to organize the eleventh Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources under the auspices of the Agency and AFRA. CNESTEN annually hosted around 100 professional internships and scientific visits for technicians, managerial staff and decision makers and organized scientific and technical events. In addition, the first cohort of Francophone African students enrolled in a Master's degree programme in radiopharmaceutical sciences at Mohammed V University had recently graduated.
4. Chaired by the Moroccan Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security Agency (AMSSNuR), the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa (FNRBA) worked to enhance the role of nuclear regulatory bodies in African countries. To that end, the AMSSNuR had provided training to 2000 people, 38% of them from Africa. Furthermore, as part of strengthening regional cooperation in Africa and through collaboration with the FNRBA, the African Commission on Nuclear Energy, AFRA and the Agency, Morocco's national strategy to provide education and training in the area of nuclear and radiation safety and security was expected to benefit more than 300 people annually.
5. Morocco welcomed the designation of CNESTEN as Africa's first Collaborating Centre and of the AMSSNuR as the continent's first Collaborating Centre in the area of nuclear safety and security. As such, the two institutions would continue to work with the Agency with a view to further consolidating their technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

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<sup>3</sup> GC(64)/RES/12.A.4

6. As the African continent was a strategic priority for Morocco within the Agency, his country remained firmly committed to supporting the Agency's central role in providing Member States with technical assistance and triangular cooperation.

7. Mr ROLDÁN BARILLAS (Guatemala) said that it was important to remember the victims of COVID-19 and to recognize that, despite the challenges faced, the Agency had continued to conduct its work throughout the pandemic, finding mechanisms to provide ongoing support to Member States. His country was among the many that had benefited from the Agency's rapid response in meeting the needs emerging from the crisis and from its support following other emergencies caused by natural disasters, such as hurricanes Eta and Iota. Guatemala appreciated not only that assistance but also the valuable extrabudgetary contributions that made such cooperation possible. It furthermore recognized the resilience of the Secretariat and the actions of the Director General; it was thanks to their commitment to carrying out their functions that the Agency had continued to operate in fulfilment of its mandate.

8. In late 2020, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the PUI, the Moscamed programme had been upheld as an example of exceptional cooperation among the countries concerned: Guatemala, Mexico and the USA. Employing the SIT method as a means of continuously monitoring and eliminating the Mediterranean fruit fly, the programme had directly benefited his region and, in the case of his country, had enabled it to continue exporting papaya all year round, generating more than 4000 jobs for local people. Guatemala accordingly favoured the promotion of innovative projects such as ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, which, with adequate cooperation and resources, could provide solutions to complex challenges through the transfer of knowledge and good practices to Member States.

9. As the main vehicle through which Member States benefited from the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, the TC programme must be assured of sufficient, assured and predictable resources. It was similarly important to maintain related forums, such as the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology, scheduled for 2023, which must continue to be held every four years.

10. With cancer remaining a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for nearly 10 million deaths in 2020, according to WHO data, one of Guatemala's main priorities was to ensure that health care using nuclear techniques was delivered in a safe and appropriate manner and that medical staff were trained in radiation protection and safety. Guatemala therefore welcomed the new guidance, published by the WHO and the Agency within the framework of PACT, on the procurement of radiotherapy equipment to fight cancer.

11. Guatemala warmly welcomed the results achieved by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme; its aim of increasing the number of women in the nuclear field and inspiring young women to embark on a career in science would in turn improve women's representation at the Agency.

12. Much progress had been made over the previous 65 years in achieving the Agency's objectives; among other things, the verification system had proven adaptable and resilient in the face of numerous challenges. Nevertheless, Guatemala was concerned that the Agency continued to encounter obstacles relating to the application of safeguards, especially in the area of verification. Such issues called for a global response and multilateral cooperation.

13. Firmly committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and to Agency safeguards, Guatemala was in the final stages of ratifying the TPNW, which had entered into force on 22 January 2021 and complemented existing related instruments. In addition, it had taken part in the IAEA Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs (COMPASS).

14. Reaffirming its pacifist position and recognizing the Agency's important role in preventing nuclear proliferation, Guatemala expressed its support for the Agency's professional and independent work to promote the principle of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'.

15. Mr SADLEIR (Australia) said that his country — a founding member of the Agency — strongly supported the Agency's essential work to advance the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and prevent nuclear weapons proliferation. By ensuring strict adherence to safeguards obligations, the Agency was central to the global non-proliferation architecture. Australia commended the Agency's diligent implementation of safeguards throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. His country strongly favoured universalization of the additional protocol, as it was essential for strengthening the Agency's safeguards system and constituted the contemporary standard for verification. It supported the Agency's efforts to continue improving internal work practices and ensure consistency in the development and implementation of State-level approaches to safeguards.

17. All Member States must ensure that the Agency was able to conduct its safeguards work, including the analysis of all safeguards-relevant material. Australia was therefore deeply concerned at Iran's decision to stop implementing its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA, including the additional protocol, and reiterated its urgent call for Iran to reverse its steps away from the Plan and recommit to its terms of the Plan.

18. His country was also deeply concerned at Iran's failure to address, in a technically credible manner, the presence of nuclear material at undeclared locations and its decision not to implement the modified Code 3.1, contrary to its safeguards obligations. Australia continued its strong support for the Director General and Agency staff as they sought professionally, persistently and patiently to implement safeguards in Iran.

19. Australia noted the commitment made by Iran, on 12 September 2021, to allow Agency inspectors to service identified equipment, replace storage media and keep them under appropriate seals. Australia further noted the commitment of Iran and the Agency to holding high-level consultations with the aim of enhancing cooperation. Such commitments must be acted upon without delay.

20. Gravely concerned at the situation on the Korean Peninsula, Australia urged the DPRK to return to full compliance with the NPT, permit an early return of Agency safeguards inspectors, comply fully with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and sign and ratify the CTBT. The international community must continue to implement UN sanctions against the DPRK until the country took clear steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization.

21. Australia appreciated the Agency's flexible approach to the TC programme, notably in facilitating access to nuclear techniques for the fast and effective diagnosis of COVID-19. As co-chair of the Group of Friends for Women in Nuclear, Australia commended the efforts to increase representation and diversity in the Agency and to enhance the role of women in the nuclear sector.

22. The governments of Australia, the UK and the USA had recently announced an 18-month process of consultation and analysis to determine the best way forward for Australia to acquire conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines. His country remained committed to its status as a non-nuclear-weapon State in full and unconditional compliance with its obligations under the NPT. The three countries would engage closely with the Agency throughout and cooperation among them would be fully consistent with their respective nuclear non-proliferation obligations. For its part, Australia would ensure that its exemplary non-proliferation credentials and long-standing commitment to the nuclear non-proliferation regime were strengthened through the trilateral consultation process.

23. Mr OJEDA VIGLIONE (Uruguay) said that his country was recognized as a pacifist country and a supporter of international law, the principles of which had unequivocally guided its activities and

foreign policy. In that context, Uruguay reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the non-proliferation regime and to complete, verifiable and universal disarmament, which could be achieved only through multilateralism based on the principles of good faith and mutual respect.

24. Uruguay welcomed and supported the work of the Agency, in particular with respect to safeguards, which should be extended to States not yet covered by the system. Having ratified the additional protocol, his country was committed to preventing the diversion of nuclear material to non-peaceful uses and the appropriation of such material by terrorist groups. It also supported the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones worldwide as an effective means of achieving disarmament and non-proliferation. Uruguay firmly defended the inalienable right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy for national development and well-being.

25. Uruguay appreciated the Agency's substantial contribution to tackling the challenges posed by COVID-19 and its timely and professional support in that endeavour, highlighting the effective coordination role played by the Department of Technical Cooperation's Division for Latin America and the Caribbean. Also to be highlighted were the Agency's efforts to support human resources training, which represented a significant challenge for Uruguay when it came to nuclear technology-related professions.

26. The impact of the pandemic had demonstrated the threat posed to human health by zoonotic diseases, prompting Uruguay to reiterate its support for the ZODIAC initiative. Agency cooperation was undoubtedly the best way to optimize new and peaceful uses of nuclear energy to support progress and well-being and achieve the SDGs. Uruguay also commended the NUTEC Plastics initiative, in view of its strong focus on environmental protection.

27. Uruguay welcomed the Agency's ongoing work to implement gender policies, both in the area of training and in relation to its own composition and structure. It welcomed in particular the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, which addressed the roots of the issue by promoting training for young women.

28. Uruguay participated actively in ARCAL, which was an important initiative. In view of the extensive needs of Latin America and the Caribbean, Uruguay believed that the TCF should not have to rely on voluntary contributions for its resources, which must be sufficient, assured and predictable.

29. Expressing its appreciation for the Agency's work in the area of nuclear safety and security, his country reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Security Plan and the Amendment to the CPPNM and recognized the fundamental role of States and their national policies in that sphere. For its part, Uruguay had established an independent, professional and responsible regulatory authority that maintained regular contact with its counterparts in the Agency.

30. His country supported the work of FORO, which sought to ensure the highest standards of radiological and nuclear safety and security in its member States and, by extension, the entire Ibero-American region. FORO had made comprehensive efforts to update its action plan, with a focus on activities aimed at generating, disseminating and managing knowledge in the regulatory field. Strengthened cooperation with the Agency and similar organizations was also a priority focus. Through its activities, FORO provided a model for the exchange of regulatory experience and knowledge and the implementation of a rigorous technical programme for maintaining high levels of nuclear and radiation safety and security in the region.

31. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, a member of the world's first NWFZ established under the Tlatelolco Treaty and a State Party to the NPT and other relevant treaties, Uruguay urged all Member States to comply fully with their obligations and respect their commitments, so as to contribute positively to international peace and security.



32. Mr KHADDOUR (Syrian Arab Republic), commending the Director General on his outstanding leadership, expressed confidence that the Agency would continue to respond effectively to the growing needs of Member States so as to ensure the preservation of the global non-proliferation regime.

33. The Board of Governors' agenda item on the implementation of the safeguards agreement in his country was an example of the exploitation of the Agency by certain States to further their political agendas. Israel's assault on Syrian territorial sovereignty in 2007 — which should have been roundly condemned — had been used as a platform to attack, demonize, blockade and exert political pressure on his country. Israel's acknowledgement of its responsibility for the assault should oblige the Agency to start sending inspection missions to that country immediately. The continued discussion of the agenda item would serve no purpose as long as Israel remained uncooperative.

34. In contrast, Syria had cooperated with the Agency in a fully transparent and flexible way, including by agreeing an action plan to resolve the issue. In addition, the Agency's annual reports on safeguards implementation had confirmed that Syria fully complied with its CSA and the NPT and had met all periodic inspection requests on time.

35. Syria welcomed Iran's commitment to implementing the JCPOA, deploring the unilateral and illegitimate decision by the USA to withdraw as a flagrant breach of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). Welcoming the positive atmosphere that had led to the Joint Statement issued by Iran and the Agency on 12 September 2021, Syria supported the continuation of bilateral talks between the two sides as the only way of putting the matter to bed.

36. Israel's conduct in the region and its continued possession of nuclear capabilities covered by neither the NPT nor a CSA posed a serious risk to the non-proliferation regime and threatened regional and international peace and security. As Israel not only refused to join the NPT or any other treaty on WMD disarmament but also possessed significant nuclear capabilities, it had no moral right to criticize cases of non-compliance with the NPT.

37. Israel continued to defy the international community, remaining outside the non-proliferation regime, and relied on the full backing of its allies, above all the USA, which applied double standards to non-proliferation when it came to Israeli nuclear capabilities. All other States in the region were committed to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. Intensive international action was needed to take practical steps to compel Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear State and achieve that goal.

38. Syria backed the Agency's efforts, in particular under the TC programme, to share nuclear technology among Member States to advance their development plans. Despite the unilateral imposition of compulsory economic measures by certain Member States, and thanks to the support of the Department of Technical Cooperation, his country had successfully implemented a considerable number of national TC project components. Syria called for an immediate end to those unjust and inhuman measures.

39. Welcoming the opportunity to host training activities under the TC programme, Syria was willing, he concluded, to provide all necessary guarantees for the successful implementation of those activities.

40. Mr DAGOH (Togo) welcomed the convening of the current session despite the ongoing public health crisis, the harmful repercussions of which continued to affect human lives and economies around the world. His country was deeply grateful to the Agency, the Director General and all those who had provided assistance for their solidarity and support, which had contributed significantly to combating COVID-19.

41. Appreciative of the fact that the Scientific Forum was once again being held alongside the General Conference, Togo noted the relevance and importance of the selected theme, given the serious threat that zoonotic epidemics posed to humanity.

42. Togo commended the Agency's ongoing commitment to the consistent and effective implementation of ZODIAC in Member States. It welcomed the NUTEC Plastics initiative, which aimed to help Member States solve plastic pollution, one of the world's greatest environmental challenges.

43. Recognizing that the Agency continued to work tirelessly and make progress, Togo remained fully committed to the Agency's objectives and to promoting, in a realistic and pragmatic manner, the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear applications for sustainable development purposes. Thanks to Agency assistance, initiatives implemented in that spirit by Togo had included the adoption of a decree, in February 2021, on the composition, organization and functioning of a national nuclear safety and security authority, which was shortly to become operational; the INSSP review conducted in April 2021 to consolidate the country's nuclear security regime; and the execution of three national projects under Togo's CPF for the 2020-2021 cycle. Those projects were designed, respectively, to improve milk and meat production through artificial insemination and improve plant production through mutation breeding and the establishment of a regulatory authority; create a national inventory of ionizing radiation sources; and build human and institutional capacities in the application of nuclear science and technology.

44. Lastly, his country reiterated its firm commitment to working more closely with the Agency with a view to the full achievement of its objectives, above all the promotion of global peace and prosperity.

45. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada) said that the global COVID-19 pandemic reaffirmed the fundamental truth that solutions to global problems required collective approaches that could be achieved only through effective multilateralism and international solidarity. Since its establishment, the Agency had been working in line with that principle by fostering innovative solutions to ensure the collective security of Member States and meeting their energy, health and development needs.

46. Canada applauded the Agency's pivotal role in supporting Member States' responses to the COVID-19 crisis. The country's own nuclear sector had proven indispensable throughout the pandemic, providing critical resources to support the health sector, including for the sterilization of medical equipment.

47. The peaceful use of nuclear energy also showed clear promise with respect to other global challenges, with Canada recognizing the key role of nuclear energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting climate change targets. Advanced technologies such as SMRs had the potential to enhance energy access and unlock opportunities for decarbonizing the global economy. Having issued its SMR Action Plan in 2020, Canada would gladly share its progress and ongoing efforts to advance SMR technology.

48. Concerning the NPT Review Conference, Canada would work towards a meaningful outcome that advanced the implementation of each of the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The use of nuclear energy went hand in hand with important obligations regarding nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation. In that regard, Canada was pleased to have completed a multi-year project to repatriate HEU from Canada to the USA. The two countries would continue to work together on those repatriation efforts.

49. The Agency and Member States must continue the full and robust implementation of nuclear safeguards, including the application of the additional protocol, which was essential to building confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities.

50. Continued efforts to address past and ongoing regional proliferation concerns, including in the DPRK and Syria, were central to preserving international peace and security. In the Middle East, Iran's nuclear programme had long been a cause for concern. Emphasizing that global peace and stability were strengthened through multilateral commitments to nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of WMDs, Canada was a strong proponent of the JCPOA and a leading contributor to the Agency's monitoring in Iran, having provided \$17 million since 2014, including \$2 million in 2021.

51. Integrated efforts to preserve nuclear safety and security would be essential to maintaining confidence in the nuclear sector. Canada welcomed the Agency's ongoing work to help Member States fulfil their nuclear safety and security responsibilities, without which the continued advancement and sharing of nuclear technology would not be possible. It also applauded efforts to support Member States in their implementation of nuclear liability conventions.

52. Canada was committed to ensuring that safe and secure solutions were in place for managing radioactive waste. As recommended by the Agency following its IRRS mission in 2019, Canada was reviewing its radioactive waste policy so as to confirm that it was based on the best available science and continued to meet international best practices.

53. Since 2003, Canada had provided \$68 million in voluntary contributions to the NSF for projects of benefit to countries around the world. It looked forward to the Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the CPPNM and to the International Conference on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, both of which were due to take place in 2022.

54. As the socioeconomic, financial and health-related fallout of the pandemic became clearer, all countries would face the pressure to prioritize what was most urgent while preserving what was essential. In that context, Canada would remain an active and consistent supporter of the Agency's central role in ensuring the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

55. Mr GARCÉS BURBANO (Ecuador) said that his country promoted peace and universal disarmament, condemned the use of WMDs, and was committed to nuclear non-proliferation — a commitment borne out by its membership in the first NWFZ, covering a densely populated area of the world, and by the positions it had taken in all international forums rejecting non-peaceful nuclear programmes. Ecuador encouraged proposals and endeavours relating to non-proliferation, including the reduction of nuclear arsenals and the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, and supported the Agency's verification and safeguards system.

56. His country recognized the Agency as the authority competent to verify and ensure compliance with the safeguards agreements signed by Member States, in line with the NPT and the Agency's Statute, so as to prevent the diversion of expertise, technology and nuclear material for belligerent purposes. Ecuador therefore underscored the importance of universal adherence to the Agency's safeguards system, in particular by countries that were currently outside the system. It reiterated that accession to the NPT was not merely optional; rather, it was a priority for enabling the international community to guarantee international and regional security.

57. Having taken a principled position on nuclear non-proliferation, Ecuador firmly believed that all NPT States Parties had the inalienable right to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. That right was conditional on the faithful application of the regime, which, in return, set out non-negotiable obligations that had to be fulfilled in their entirety, with full transparency and without delay. His country ascribed the utmost importance to diplomatic dialogue and other means of peaceful settlement of international disputes and rejected the unilateral use of force outside the bounds of the UN system and international law.

58. The safety and security of nuclear material and radioactive sources must be regulated and sustained. In view of the potential consequences of the accidental or malicious misuse of such material and nuclear technology, States had a national responsibility to spare no effort in controlling them as part of a commitment also shared with the international community.

59. Ecuador underlined the importance of the technical cooperation provided by the Agency to promote human development and well-being. Under the country's TC programme with the Agency, significant progress had been accomplished with the establishment of the first public paediatric radiotherapy service; the application of the SIT to eradicate agricultural and health pests; the implementation of radiation technologies for industrial applications; and the use of isotope hydrology for water resources assessment and sustainable water management, including in relation to the impact of microplastics in ecologically sensitive areas. His country appreciated the Agency's cooperation under PACT in the drafting of a national cancer control plan and looked forward to the new TC programme to be approved in November 2021. It would build on the objectives achieved and help the country to control pesticides and pests in agriculture, conserve water resources, strengthen its radiation safety infrastructure and improve radiation medicine services.

60. Commending the Agency's substantial contribution to combating the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide — in particular the donation of PCR kits to Ecuador — his country looked forward to receiving additional Agency cooperation in the form of X-ray equipment for various hospitals. It welcomed the Agency's ability to adapt to contemporary needs and challenges, and hailed the progress achieved by ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics to tackle marine plastic pollution. To demonstrate its confidence in the Agency, Ecuador had pledged the recommended amount for the TCF for 2022.

61. Ecuador thanked the Agency for its swift reply to its request — made in its capacity as the rotating president of the Andean Community — for cooperation in combating tropical race 4, a pest that affected banana plants, jeopardizing the banana sector and its value chain and also food security in the Andean subregion. The Agency's positive response would undoubtedly give rise to short-, medium- and long-term actions.

62. In closing, Ecuador emphasized the importance that it attached to ARCAL and to the Agency's TC activities more broadly, expressing appreciation for the support provided by the Department of Technical Cooperation.

63. Ms SAPAG MUÑOZ DE LA PEÑA (Chile), noting that 21 September was the International Day of Peace, reiterated her country's total commitment to multilateralism, disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the peaceful resolution of disputes, and to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as set out in Article III of the Statute.

64. Chile appreciated the Agency's work in health, agriculture and food, in line with the goals of the 2030 Agenda (Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), and lauded its collaboration with specialized national bodies such as the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission.

65. The cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, the NPT was essential to maintaining a global system for stable and durable peace. Chile was strongly committed to that issue; its National Congress had approved the TPNW, the spirit of which complemented the NPT.

66. Her country valued the role played by FORO in nuclear and radiation safety and security and noted the forum's focus on stepping up its cooperation with the Agency as a matter of priority.

67. The participation of Chile's Minister for Foreign Affairs in the virtual NUTEC Plastics roundtable for her region was a clear demonstration of the country's commitment to protecting the marine environment from litter and plastic pollution. In addition to passing legislation on that subject, Chile had

recently joined with Portugal to launch the Nairobi Group of Friends to Combat Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution.

68. Given the paramount importance of women in the nuclear field, the Agency should ensure their participation at the highest level and also step up the production and dissemination of updated statistics, disaggregated by sex and region, for countries to review periodically. The Agency had a key role to play in ensuring parity on discussion panels and in supporting civil society organizations that brought together scientific professionals working on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. With reference to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, the interest sparked in it among the country's women scientists had led Chile to hope that some of them would soon become fellows.

69. It was vital for the Agency to have clear and well-defined protocols to protect the work of inspectors in the field. Such protocols should be communicated to Member States in advance and be constantly updated to provide Agency inspectors with the necessary guarantees. Chile called on countries that had not signed an additional protocol to do so without delay.

70. Chile ascribed great importance to the Agency's TC programme in areas such as capacity building, training and the strengthening of national infrastructure for radiation safety.

71. Chile had received no Agency inspections in 2020 and 2021, but it was the State's duty to ensure that no nuclear material was diverted to other non-peaceful uses and that there were no undeclared activities. Chile had therefore redoubled its efforts during the pandemic to uphold the application of all safeguards measures and to remain in permanent contact with the Agency by means of declarations and updates. Moreover, Chile acknowledged the importance of the digital tools supplied by the Agency, including the State Declarations Portal and the electronic communication channels that had facilitated interactions and strengthened in turn the application of safeguards.

72. The Agency's work was essential to the maintenance of international peace and security. Also essential was its collaboration with countries on technical aspects of the peaceful use of nuclear energy with a view to enhancing development and quality of life.

73. Ms ÁLVAREZ NUÑEZ (Cuba) said that the COVID-19 pandemic had given rise to a crisis that had brought devastating effects and new socioeconomic and scientific challenges for the entire world, especially developing countries. She commended the Agency on the support it had provided to some 130 countries, including Cuba, in the form of consumables, equipment and training to help them combat the pandemic. Cuba was deeply grateful for that assistance, which had enabled it to strengthen a countrywide network of molecular biology laboratories with highly trained staff and to develop a reagent module for PCR testing performance, based on a nanotechnology product that used magnetic particles to extract RNA from the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2 virus).

74. The Agency's ability to adapt and alter procedures was important to ensuring continuity of its essential operations and compliance with its legal obligations in delivering on its three main areas of work. Cuba would therefore continue to support steps taken by the Agency to adjust its activities in each area.

75. Despite the difficulties encountered in 2020, Cuba had found innovative ways of continuing to strive for its goals. National projects had consequently achieved positive outcomes and the authorities had discharged their regulatory functions. Work was also under way to enhance the national impact of the thematic networks in which Cuba participated, which had enabled interchange and collaboration with specialists from around the world, even in the isolation brought about by the pandemic.

76. Cuba had established a national network for learning, education and training, which offered virtual support in response to ever-increasing needs, and had also initiated a medium- and long-term national strategy. Similarly, a nuclear youth network had been created to promote nuclear applications

in Cuba and encourage youth participation in such disciplines, which had been instrumental in the introduction of information and communication technology and in work conducted in conjunction with Women in Nuclear Cuba.

77. The use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and sustainable development had acquired new significance. In addition to enabling the use of nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques to tackle the challenges of marine pollution in her region, the NUTEC Plastics initiative could help to sustain the network in place for measuring microplastics in marine ecosystems as part of the national strategy for SDG 14. Cuba had also supported and joined the ZODIAC project.

78. ARCAL, an effective cooperation mechanism in Latin America and the Caribbean, had pursued its work in spite of the difficult circumstances. During the two years in which Cuba had presided over the ARCAL Technical Co-ordination Board (ATCB), and since mid-2021 when it had become secretary of the ATCB Steering Group, the national TC programme had been implemented and the schedule for designing new TC projects for Cuba for the 2022–2023 cycle had been followed.

79. Her country was a party to all international safety conventions, demonstrating its firm commitment to the safety of its facilities and activities in which ionizing radiation sources were used and to the global safety regime. Cuba observed the highest levels of compliance with the non-binding safety and security agreements implemented by the international community. Its commitment to safeguards was evidenced by the fact that it had received a double certification for 13 consecutive years and by the satisfactory results of Agency inspections. In order to maintain the credibility of safeguards activities, it was vital for the Secretariat to continue working in a professional manner.

80. Cuba set great store by the support provided by the Agency to train front line and border protection officers under the INSSP. Significant results had also been achieved by joint FORO–Agency projects, which continued to have a meaningful impact on tightening nuclear and radiation safety and security in the Ibero-American region and worldwide.

81. Cuba condemned the escalation, in a time of pandemic, of the embargo imposed on it by the USA, which had added a further 243 measures affecting the country’s development and the well-being of its citizens. Cuba also condemned the unilateral coercive measures taken by the USA against other countries of the world and all attempts to deprive a sovereign State of the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It furthermore repudiated the USA’s withdrawal from the JCPOA.

82. Noting that, 50 years after the entry into force of the NPT, there had been no significant reduction in nuclear arsenals, Cuba reaffirmed its utmost commitment to nuclear disarmament and urged the international community to take decisive steps to guarantee a world free of nuclear weapons.

83. Lastly she reiterated that, to make progress on nuclear technology for peace and sustainable development, Cuba stood ready to share with all States, in particular those in the South, its human resources and the capacities it had acquired during years of fruitful cooperation with the Agency.

84. Mr ASSAF (Lebanon), noting the Agency’s pivotal role in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and their significant impact in achieving sustainable development, said that the hard new challenges posed at the transboundary level by the COVID-19 pandemic would be overcome only through collective global efforts made also at the transboundary level. The pioneering role the Agency played in providing support to Member States through ZODIAC to address the repercussions of the pandemic further confirmed the vital benefits of peaceful nuclear applications.

85. In the light of its difficult socioeconomic circumstances, Lebanon appreciated the support provided by the Agency in the areas of technical cooperation and of nuclear safety and security, which had included COVID-19 detection equipment and other radiological medical devices. The Lebanese

Atomic Energy Commission continued to cooperate constructively with the Agency and was finalizing the draft CPF for review and signature before the end of 2021.

86. Following the explosion at the Port of Beirut in 2020, Agency experts had worked actively with the Commission to assess the radiation situation in the surrounding area and had recently undertaken a mission in which radiation-based NDT was used to examine ancient structures in the surrounding area. Cooperation to establish an effective nuclear security system in Lebanon continued through the INSSP, and the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security was assisting the country with radiological waste management and the disposal of orphan sources and radioactively contaminated parts.

87. Highlighting the programmes and successes achieved under ARASIA, Lebanon thanked Member States for having entrusted it with chairing its Board of Representatives for the previous 10 years.

88. The application of safeguards in the Middle East was of increasing strategic importance for the success of the non-proliferation regime of which the Agency was a fundamental pillar. It was gravely worrying that, as stated in his most recent report on the subject, the Director General had been unable to make further progress in fulfilling his mandate in that regard, with Israel remaining as the only non-party to the NPT in the region.

89. In November 2021, the second session of the UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction was set to take place in New York. Lebanon reiterated its support for that course of action, which was aimed at strengthening regional and international security by banishing from the Middle East the spectre of WMD proliferation and use, in line with the relevant decisions and resolutions of the NPT Review Conference, especially those adopted in 1995.

90. Lastly, an important issue for Lebanon was the under-representation of women in the Agency — a chronic problem that must be systematically addressed. Lebanon therefore appreciated the progress made towards closing that gender gap through the Gender Equality Policy being implemented by the Secretariat to achieve gender balance.

91. Ms KOIKA (Greece), again commending the Director General on his work over the preceding months to ensure that the Agency had remained fully operational throughout the pandemic, expressed her country's appreciation to the Secretariat for its dedicated and professional work.

92. The Agency's multilateral, impartial, professional and effective safeguards system remained a core component of the NPT and a fundamental insurance for collective security. CSAs together with additional protocols represented the current verification standard and their universalization must be pursued without delay, as a means of forging mutual trust and as a necessary step towards the purely peaceful use of nuclear energy and applications.

93. Greece was deeply concerned at the increasingly alarming steps taken by Iran in recent months to expand its nuclear programme while seriously undermining the Agency's verification and monitoring activities under the JCPOA. A key component of the global non-proliferation architecture and an important achievement of multilateral diplomacy, the Plan had been endorsed by the United Nations through Security Council resolution 2231 (2015); its full implementation was crucial for regional and international security.

94. Following the Director General's latest visit to Tehran, Greece called on Iran to abide by the recent understandings with the Agency, as indicated in the Joint Statement, to reverse all activities inconsistent with the JCPOA and to return, without any further delay, to its full implementation — including with regard to all transparency measures. Her country supported the diplomatic efforts within the Joint Commission and believed that the Vienna talks, under the effective

coordination of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, could substantially contribute to crystallizing the choices to be made by Iran and the USA.

95. Nuclear power was not an option for its national energy mix, but Greece remained a strong proponent of the third pillar of the NPT: the peaceful use of nuclear technology. It acknowledged the sovereign right of all States to opt for peaceful nuclear energy and recognized the importance of the Agency's nuclear safety and security standards to ensuring nuclear safety and security worldwide.

96. Greece was a party to all main international nuclear safety conventions and was convinced that transparency was an essential component in instilling public confidence in the safety of nuclear energy. Greece insisted on the systematic conduct of peer reviews in Member States and on publication of the corresponding reports.

97. While it was regrettable that the COVID-19 pandemic had led to the postponement of the Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety and of the Review Meeting of Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, all Contracting Parties must consistently address their nuclear safety issues. Greece welcomed the growing number of Contracting Parties and encouraged Member States that had not yet joined to follow suit.

98. The second version of her country's ministerial decision on the national programme for the management of spent fuel and radioactive waste had been issued, with a view to bringing Greek legislation fully into compliance with European directives. Secondary legislation, in the form of decisions taken and guidelines issued by the Greek Atomic Energy Commission to facilitate the implementation of the Radiation Protection Regulations, had been published. The Commission had submitted the national report required under the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

99. Greece reaffirmed its strong backing for the Agency's TC programme, underlining the importance of the results-based delivery of projects in order to ensure tangible socioeconomic impact and respond to Member States' policies so as to attain the SDGs. The Agency's TC activities were appreciated by the Greek Atomic Energy Commission and its highly qualified staff, who exchanged and gained experience by participating in regional and interregional projects. Greek scientists continuously supported Agency activities by participating in expert missions. The country's experts had been assisting other Member States in drafting radiation safety regulations and establishing national policies and strategies for education and training in radiation, transport and waste safety.

100. Greece praised the Agency's important role in supporting Member States in the area of comprehensive cancer control, including through PACT, and encouraged steps to enhance the coordination and systematic implementation of the Agency's cancer control activities.

101. Greece welcomed the Director General's commitment to the use of nuclear technology to tackle global issues, such as pandemics and pollution. It highlighted the importance of ZODIAC and supported the focus of the 2021 Scientific Forum on the critical issue of zoonotic diseases. Her country was a strong supporter of NUTEC Plastics as it paid particular attention to the protection of the marine environment and was involved in several synergy activities. Committed to all actions relating to plastic pollution, it stood ready to further contribute to that praiseworthy initiative.

102. Greece appreciated the important steps taken to enhance the representation of women at the Agency, such as the Director General's announcement of the goal of gender parity in the Professional and higher categories by 2025 and the launch of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme to help increase the number of women in the nuclear field.



103. Mr FACETTI (Paraguay) said that the Agency had responded efficiently, effectively and expeditiously to the worst health crisis for a hundred years by donating equipment, training and reagents to diagnose COVID-19. In the context of the Agency's rightful role and leadership in combating the pandemic and future biological threats to the global population, Paraguay wished to highlight the ZODIAC project, which it supported along with its aim.

104. Having closely followed developments and safety measures adopted in the nuclear field around the world, Paraguay also wished to highlight steps to improve compliance with the safeguards regime so as to guarantee the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

105. Cooperation was essential to the pursuit of nuclear development with an eye to security. His country therefore underscored the importance of the Nuclear Security Plan 2022–2025. In connection with the Conference of the Parties to the A/CPPNM, to be held in 2022, Paraguay recalled that it had ratified the amendment in 2016, testifying to its national commitment to protecting facilities and the use, storage and transport of nuclear material within the country.

106. The establishment of NWFZs in other regions should be a priority, as it would enable progress towards widespread and complete nuclear disarmament under effective international oversight. Paraguay also expressed its concern at the trend towards the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons and the modernization of existing arsenals to extend their lifetimes.

107. The first meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen international engagement with a view to taking tangible steps to implement the obligations arising from the Treaty. In that same vein, Paraguay underlined the importance of working towards the Tenth NPT Review Conference.

108. His country supported the actions taken in connection with the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, it was important to preserve the JCPOA — a cornerstone of global non-proliferation — and vital for the participants to resume negotiations as soon as possible.

109. In the area of nuclear applications in medicine, agriculture and industry, Paraguay prioritized the training of its human resources, fostered research and promoted women's access to training opportunities. It was committed to facilitating access to cutting-edge nuclear medicine technology. Paraguay valued the progress achieved by PACT and the assistance provided by the Agency, which would enable the country to strengthen its capacities for implementing the National Cancer Control Programme. It thanked the USA for its continued support for PACT and its generous contribution, which had enabled Paraguay to procure cancer treatment equipment.

110. Paraguay continued to refine its nuclear legal framework, which in turn enabled it to assist other countries in their efforts to promote the regional and global security of nuclear and radioactive material.

111. His country backed the Agency's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, which would help to close the persistent gender gap in the nuclear field.

112. Lastly, as demonstrated by the large number of projects and high implementation rate, the TC programme was the cornerstone of horizontal cooperation. In the Latin America region, his country had one of the highest such rates. Expressing its gratitude to the Agency and contributors to the TCF, Paraguay reaffirmed its commitment to continue working together to promote the use of nuclear techniques and applications for peaceful purposes throughout the world.

113. Ms HASHIM (Malaysia), commending the Agency's action to ensure the continuation of its work during the challenges of the pandemic, reaffirmed her country's ongoing support for the Agency's mandate to promote safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The Agency must be provided

with sufficient, assured and predictable resources in order to function effectively and discharge that mandate. To that end, Malaysia paid its Regular Budget and TCF contributions in full and on time.

114. Malaysia looked forward to the success of the upcoming NPT Review Conference, at which it would chair Main Committee I on nuclear disarmament in a further reflection of its unwavering commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. Her country commended the Agency's professionalism in verifying Iran's nuclear programme under the JCPOA. Recent developments with regard to the Plan were of concern; it was essential that all parties adhered to it.

115. Malaysia had reaffirmed its commitment to EPR in the event of radiological or nuclear incidents by signing Practical Arrangements with the Agency, in April 2021, on the voluntary exchange and visualization of routine radiation monitoring data through IRMIS. That action represented its continued belief in the Agency's central role in safety, security and safeguards, and its desire to contribute at the regional level in the event of a nuclear or radiological incident or accident.

116. Malaysia attached great importance to strengthening nuclear safety and continued to implement capacity building programmes on nuclear and radiation safety through virtual platforms. Her country appreciated the online workshops provided by the Agency to boost the pedagogical and e learning skills of postgraduate course lecturers of the Regional Training Centre of Malaysia.

117. The Agency carried out key activities to enhance Member States' capabilities so as to achieve and maintain high quality and consistency in radiation measurements and dosimetry standards. In that regard, the IAEA/WHO SSDL Network had proven enormously valuable to Malaysia.

118. Malaysia recognized the importance of nuclear security in preventing the unauthorized use of nuclear material and nuclear technology. At the previous regular session, her country had signed a partnership agreement with the Agency on establishing a loaner pool for nuclear security detection equipment as part of enhanced support for regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region. Having received the equipment, Malaysia invited Member States from Asia and the Asian Pacific to participate in the loaner pool project through the Agency.

119. Malaysia appreciated the Agency's continuous support in the implementation of its INSSP. Her country would receive an INSServ review mission in 2022 to further assist its completion of a gap analysis to improve existing security mechanisms.

120. Malaysia valued the Agency's central role and was pleased to have been nominated to participate in the COMPASS pilot phase, which would undoubtedly raise awareness among Malaysian stakeholders and industrial players.

121. Cognizant of the importance of Agency safeguards, in particular the additional protocol, Malaysia continued to undertake serious action on nuclear safeguards as part of its confidence-building measures within the non-proliferation regime. Her country looked forward to completing its domestic procedures for the possible ratification of the additional protocol.

122. Reaffirming its long-standing support for the TC Programme, Malaysia commended the Agency for adapting to the new realities of the pandemic while ensuring the continuation of TC activities. Indispensable support was being provided to Member States through NUTEC Plastics and ZODIAC, promoting the application of nuclear technology in solving global issues. Malaysia stood ready to cooperate with the Agency and other Member States under those initiatives to support that work.

123. Nuclear science and technology and their application in the agricultural sector were important for achieving the SDGs. As a result of its research activities on mutation breeding, her country had successfully developed two new rice varieties, NMR151 and NMR152, which had increased local farmers' incomes and reduced their production costs. Malaysia stood ready to share with other countries,

especially in the Asia Pacific region, the experiences and lessons learned in plant mutation breeding through its Collaborating Centre.

124. Supportive of the Agency's efforts to promote a quality management approach among Member States in the interest of obtaining the best results from nuclear medicine practice, Malaysia would continue to work closely with the Agency through its National Steering Committee for Quality Management Audits in Nuclear Medicine Practices to implement a national quality management programme for enhancing clinical practice and service quality.

125. In conclusion, Malaysia commended the Agency's transparency and its indispensable support for enabling Member States to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful uses to achieve their development objectives and priorities. In realizing the full benefits of nuclear technology for sustainable socioeconomic development, her country reaffirmed its commitment to fostering closer cooperation and partnership with the Agency, other States and interested parties to achieve common goals.

126. Mr HEWSON (New Zealand) said that the pandemic had continued to test the international community by challenging its collaborative efforts to address pressing issues of global concern and had highlighted the value of multilateralism. Noting that the Agency had continued its critical work effectively over the previous year, his country joined others in commending the Director General and all Agency staff for their perseverance in such difficult circumstances. New Zealand fully supported the Agency, which remained a cornerstone for international peace, security and development.

127. Although global attention was currently rightfully captured by the pandemic response and the threat posed by climate change, the risk of nuclear proliferation remained very real in 2021. The Agency's safeguards work and the integrity of the international nuclear safeguards regime must not therefore be taken for granted. New Zealand fully supported the efforts by the original signatories of the JCPOA to return the deal to full functionality. Iran's systematic breaches of the JCPOA limits were of deep concern and presented a growing nuclear proliferation risk. As the swift restoration of the JCPOA was in everyone's interests, all parties should redouble their efforts to reach a positive outcome.

128. Similarly, the DPRK's nuclear programme remained an ever-present challenge to international security. New Zealand urged the DPRK to cease its provocations, which had included recent ballistic missile launches, and return to meaningful diplomatic dialogue to find a peaceful resolution. His country thanked the Agency for its professional and hard work on those and other safeguards matters and was pleased to have continued to make extrabudgetary contributions to support that important work.

129. The aforementioned challenges underscored the importance of a modern safeguards regime that applied the highest standards to curb the risk of nuclear proliferation. The additional protocol remained the gold standard and its universalisation was in the interests of all. New Zealand fully supported the Director General's efforts to ensure that all States with outdated SQPs — most critically those already engaged in developing nuclear programmes without the appropriate Agency monitoring — either rescinded them or adopted the modified SQP.

130. As clearly demonstrated by the Agency's activity over the previous year, nuclear science, technology and applications could deliver great benefits for all but also carried undeniable risk that must be thoroughly mitigated. History had shown that a nuclear safety or security incident anywhere could have significant transboundary impacts and regional — or even global — implications. Each country must apply the highest standards of safety and security for the sake of mutual protection, in which regard the Agency's work provided critical support for the peaceful use of the atom.

131. New Zealand looked forward to the International Conference on a Decade of Progress after Fukushima-Daiichi: Building on Lesson Learned to Further Strengthen Nuclear Safety, to be held in November 2021, and to the International Conference on the Safe and Secure Transport of Nuclear and

Radioactive Materials in December 2021. There was certainly more work to be done on both subjects, which were of critical interest to New Zealand and the Pacific region.

132. The international legal framework on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses must remain current and fit for purpose. New Zealand looked forward to the delayed NPT Review Conference, scheduled to be held in New York in January 2022, and supported a positive consensus outcome covering all three interdependent pillars of the Treaty and highlighting the Agency's essential role in its implementation. New Zealand also commended the entry into force of the TPNW. The work in Vienna did not exist in a vacuum; nuclear weapons posed an existential threat to humankind and must be abolished. The TPNW bolstered the international legal framework on disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses, and New Zealand looked forward to advancing the related work at the first Meeting of States Parties, in March 2022, in Vienna.

133. Mr SOLANO ORTIZ (Costa Rica), noting that the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was a central pillar of the Agency's mandate, said that his country was proud to lead Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of cost sharing under the Agency's TC programme. For the 2020–2021 cycle, the programme for Costa Rica addressed stereotactic body radiotherapy and radiosurgery, food safety, protection of patients and occupationally exposed workers, strengthening of safety regulatory infrastructure, and plasma application in medicine.

134. His country's participation in 21 regional projects and 3 interregional projects relating to food, agriculture and nuclear knowledge management truly epitomized the commitment of its institutions to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Costa Rica thanked the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean for the significant support provided to it for ocean acidification monitoring equipment and further highlighted its acquisition of an ultra-high performance liquid chromatography plasma mass spectrometer, plasma air purifiers and a plasma water generator

135. In line with its deeply environmental approach to foreign policy, Costa Rica hoped in the following cycle to focus on strengthening national capacities to identify sources of pollution affecting highly vulnerable aquifers. It was committed to the objectives of the NUTEC Plastics initiative as a step towards freeing the oceans of plastic pollution and its effects on food chains and ecosystems. Costa Rica would continue to work side by side with the Agency to fight cancer and, through the ZODIAC initiative, to increase the resilience of its health systems in the face of possible future pandemics.

136. Costa Rica recognized the Agency's central role in promoting and sustaining the global nuclear safety regime. The country was making strong progress in its domestic law and, in 2020, had formalized the INSSP and the implementation plan. Pleased to be working with the Agency on strengthening its nuclear security capabilities, it had requested the Agency's assistance in preparation for the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup. A party to the CPPNM and its Amendment, Costa Rica hoped that the forthcoming Review Conference would provide an opportunity to identify how States could continue cooperating.

137. The Agency deserved full support for its efforts to strengthen the effective application of safeguards, which, as the main guarantee of nuclear non-proliferation, were vital for global peace and stability. All States without an additional protocol should sign one, while States with an SQP based on the original standard text should adopt the revised standard text. Costa Rica called on all States to comply fully with their legal safeguards obligations.

138. With 86 signatories and 55 States Parties, the TPNW had entered into force in January 2021, meaning that all WMDs were finally prohibited under international law. The first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty would be held in 2022 to discuss, among other things, technical aspects of the effect of radiation from nuclear explosions on the environment and people. The Agency's expertise and technical knowledge would be very useful for those discussions.

139. The nuclear disarmament obligation enshrined in the NPT remained unmet. Regrettably, existing commitments had not been fulfilled and it had become urgent to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its cornerstone. The achievement of tangible outcomes at the NPT Review Conference in 2022 was be one of the great challenges ahead.

140. Lastly, Costa Rica called for increased geographical representation of staff and more use of Spanish in the Agency's work as a sign of the value of multilingualism. His country aimed for greater promotion of gender equality and equity policies as a cross-cutting theme in order to achieve SDG 5 and empower all women and girls in areas related to science and technology.

141. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said, with respect to the matter of ALPS-treated water at the Fukushima Daiichi NPP, that his country shared the view of the Republic of Korea that nuclear safety was the top priority and that the Agency's role was crucial in ensuring objectivity, transparency and safety in the handling of such water. For that reason, Japan had worked closely with the Agency so as fully to assume its accountability to the international community. In September 2021, Japan and the Agency had agreed to move forward with safety and regulatory reviews of ALPS-treated water and marine monitoring.

142. On the basis of the terms of reference signed in July 2021, Japan firmly believed that the Agency would play a crucial role by carrying out those activities in an objective and independent manner, including with the participation of internationally recognized experts from various countries. For its part, Japan would make every effort to facilitate the Agency's performance of those activities.

143. To ensure public safety and protection of the surrounding environment, his Government would never discharge ALPS-treated water unless it met regulatory standards set as recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. The Agency acknowledged that discharge into the sea was technically feasible and in line with international practice. His Government had engaged in dialogue through a range of bilateral, regional and international channels, and had continued to provide all relevant information in a consistent and transparent manner, on the basis of scientific evidence. Japan was ready to continue those efforts.

144. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), speaking also in exercise of the right of reply, said that his country resolutely rejected the groundless accusations made against it by the representative of Azerbaijan and the fabricated claims and distorted interpretation of facts and events that had occurred in 2020.

145. In his statement the representative had labelled as a 'liberation of territories' what had in fact been a brutal war of aggression launched by Azerbaijan and its ally in September 2020, with the engagement of foreign terrorist fighters from conflict areas. The sole aim of that aggression had been to suppress, through use of force and ethnic cleansing, the right of the people of Artsakh — also known as Nagorno-Karabakh — to self-determination.

146. Azerbaijan was attempting to make hypocritical references to its role in the global fight against the pandemic. Yet it was the only country to have ignored the UN Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire in order to fight the COVID-19 outbreak by instead launching a war of aggression.

147. Armenia had serious concerns that the thousands of foreign terrorist fighters deployed in the Azerbaijani-occupied territories of Artsakh — or Nagorno-Karabakh — had not been removed from those territories and that plans were afoot to create artificial settlements for their benefit in order to cement the results of Azerbaijani aggression. The prolonged presence and settlement of those terrorists in the occupied territories of Artsakh would pose an immediate threat to the security of the region, including from the nuclear security perspective.

148. Azerbaijan's support for international terrorism came as no surprise to Armenia; Azerbaijan and its current autocratic regime had effectively joined the list of nuclear terrorists in 2020 as a result of their

unprecedented threat to target the Armenian NPP, a move that responsible Member States had condemned. Armenia had yet to see Azerbaijan act in compliance with its international obligations to renounce its threat of nuclear terrorism. Until such time, Armenia would continue its efforts to address those crimes properly.

149. Mr YOON (Republic of Korea), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated the deep concerns of his Government that Japan was pushing ahead with its decision to release contaminated water stored at the Fukushima-Daiichi NPP into the ocean without engaging in sufficient consultations with stakeholder countries.

150. Taking note of Japan's explanations about ongoing efforts to engage stakeholders, his country once again stressed the importance of more meaningful and substantial consultations with all stakeholders, including neighbouring countries. The shared goal in that collective effort was to protect human health, the marine ecosystem and the environment and to build public confidence in nuclear safety, which was instrumental to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Republic of Korea looked forward to proactive cooperation and consultations among all stakeholders under the Agency's professional guidance.

151. Ms MAMMADOVA (Azerbaijan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her delegation resolutely rejected all the absurd allegations made by the delegation of Armenia. Her country called on Armenia to fully comply with its obligations arising from the trilateral statement signed by Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation in November 2020. It was no time to make empty statements. Instead it was necessary to focus on taking steps to act on the trilateral statement and to bring peace, security, development and progress to the region.

152. The Armenian speculations about foreign fighters used by Azerbaijan in the military operation were groundless. No one other than the Azerbaijani Armed Forces had engaged in that operation and, as in the case of the Azerbaijani people, the morale and motivation of those forces had been very high. The allegations made by Armenia were fabricated and without basis.

153. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan), again speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the disposal of contaminated water would require a two-year process, which would be fully open and transparent, and a meticulous and objective science-based review by the Agency. Japan remained ready to engage in continued dialogue with stakeholders throughout that process.

154. Mr YOON (Republic of Korea), speaking once more in exercise of the right of reply, said that the issue at stake had grave nuclear safety implications and must be dealt with in a manner that responsibly, transparently and effectively addressed and resolved the concerns of all stakeholders. His country therefore looked forward to more meaningful and sincere consultations by Japan with those stakeholders, in particular neighbouring countries.

**The meeting rose at 7.05 p.m.**