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President: Ms KROIS (Poland)

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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

ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement 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
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
ConvEx	Convention Exercise
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
Early Notification Convention	Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
EDF	Electricité de France
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FMCT	fissile material cut-off treaty
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

ICERR	IAEA-designated International Centre based on Research Reactor
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IT	information technology
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
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
LDC	Least Developed Country
MW(e)	megawatt electrical
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
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PET -CT	positron emission tomography – computed tomography
PHWR	pressurized heavy water reactor
R&D	research and development
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
RT-PCR	reverse transcription – polymerase chain reaction

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	small island developing States
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
SSAC	State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMD	weapon of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

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

1. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed deep regret that the delegation of Azerbaijan had repeatedly abused and hijacked the present international forum to present false and distorted narratives about matters of irrelevance to the Agency's mandate and professional work. While resolutely rejecting the groundless accusations made, Armenia, out of respect for the work and spirit of the General Conference, would refrain from replying in kind.
2. Ms DRÁBOVÁ (Czech Republic), welcoming the opportunity to attend the General Conference in person, said that efforts must be made to hold physical meetings whenever possible while also ensuring that the benefits of virtual tools were not lost. Her country fully supported the Agency's important work in developing and promoting widespread applications of nuclear technologies, which could contribute significantly to improving lives and the environment. The Czech Republic praised the Secretariat's relentless efforts to ensure the continuity of the Agency's mission and sincerely appreciated the support provided by the Agency to help Member States deal with COVID-19.
3. Emphasizing that lessons learned from the world's two most serious nuclear accidents at the Chornobyl NPP in 1986 and at the Fukushima Daiichi NPP in 2011 must never be forgotten, the Czech Republic looked forward to the upcoming International Conference on a Decade of Progress After Fukushima-Daiichi. Those two tragic disasters notwithstanding, nuclear power had always been one of the safest means of energy production, provided that technical limitations were not disregarded in favour of political priorities.
4. Given that the discharge of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi site was planned in compliance with international safety standards and would take place under the Agency's independent and objective supervision, it posed no real risk to human health and the environment. Japan and the Agency therefore had her country's full trust.
5. The ongoing pandemic had regrettably hindered the organization of the Eighth CNS Review Meeting, which was instead to be held jointly with the Ninth CNS Review Meeting in 2023, a situation that, as President of the former, she did not take lightly. Appreciative of the support of the Contracting Parties, she assured them of her continuous efforts to navigate what were uncharted waters and encouraged their further constructive engagement in the process.
6. The Czech Republic remained a strong supporter of nuclear energy, among other uses of nuclear technologies. Nuclear power was the country's largest low-carbon energy source, generating around one third of its electricity, and would play an important role as coal was phased out of the national energy mix. Earlier in 2021, moreover, the country's nuclear regulatory authority had issued a siting licence for two new reactors at the Dukovany site. The Czech Republic fully backed the Agency's efforts to highlight the role of nuclear power and other nuclear applications in tackling climate change.
7. Her country commended the Agency's efforts to ensure that its core mission in the area of safeguards — indispensable for global peace and security — continued unimpaired. With her country's support, and despite significant challenges associated with the pandemic, the Agency had been able to carry out all safeguards inspections in Czech territory. Furthermore, as part of the Agency's Safeguards Traineeship Programme for nuclear experts from developing countries, the Czech Republic had received

its very first technical visit in 2021. Her country's involvement in the programme underlined its long tradition of safeguards-related training.

8. Convinced of the Agency's technical expertise, objectivity and impartiality, the Czech Republic fully supported its long term verification and monitoring mission. It was essential to support the JCPOA framework and the Agency's irreplaceable role in monitoring and verifying Iran's commitments.

9. Lastly, her country recognized the Agency's major contribution, in particular the invaluable role of the TC programme, to ensuring that nuclear technologies were used effectively, safely and securely. The Agency's mission deserved the full support of Member States.

10. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), highlighting her country's presidency of the critical 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) taking place later in 2021, said that climate change was the biggest threat facing the planet. The most recent IPCC report showing the human impact on the planet was a wake-up call and underlined the immediate need for drastic and dramatic action to protect the Earth for generations to come. Safe and secure nuclear power would be an important component of the plans to reach net zero emissions.

11. Countries must think differently, embrace innovation and come together to champion the wide range of opportunities that all nuclear technologies offered. To that end, the UK's Ten Point Plan, published at the end of 2020, set out the aim of approving at least one additional large-scale nuclear power plant by 2024 in addition to the commitment of £385 million for unlocking the opportunities of advanced nuclear technologies. As her country looked towards hosting COP26, she wished to personally thank the Agency for its dedication to climate action.

12. The UK was proud of the collective progress made to ensure that nuclear power was one of the safest energy generation technologies and commended the Agency for its role in helping countries to develop their nuclear industries to the highest standards of safety and security. Her country also continued to back the Agency's efforts to strengthen and enhance the nuclear safeguards system and called on all States that had not yet done so to ratify and implement the CSA and the additional protocol. Those agreements, together with the NPT, had successfully deterred many countries from seeking nuclear weapons, providing the key framework for, and enabling, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

13. With that in mind, the UK had consistently demonstrated its commitment to the JCPOA and was working for its full restoration. Her country's priority was for the USA return to the deal and for Iran to resume compliance with its commitments. The UK urged Iran to return to negotiations as soon as possible with a view to swiftly concluding the JCPOA, reversing the extremely dangerous trajectory of the Iranian nuclear programme, and restoring the access required for the Agency to give the international community assurances that Iran's nuclear programme was peaceful.

14. The UK commended the Director General for his tireless efforts to engage with Iran in connection with the separate investigation of its declarations under the NPT safeguards agreement. It also welcomed the agreement between the Agency and Iran, which confirmed that consultations on outstanding issues would be held with the new Iranian Government. Iran must swiftly implement that agreement and engage meaningfully with the Agency.

15. Applauding the Director General's unwavering commitment to nuclear science and research, the UK was proud to pledge more than €4 million to the TCF. Given that the technologies being uncovered were key to solving the most pressing global development challenges of the time, States had a responsibility to deliver them to those most in need.

16. Her country also shared the Director General's vision for, and commitment to, improving gender diversity across the nuclear field. The phenomenal contributions of women to nuclear science and

research could not be understated. The UK had therefore pledged €500 000 to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. All Member States should follow suit and do more to inspire future generations of women to enter the nuclear sector.

17. The UK's supreme audit institution, the National Audit Office, was a strong candidate for the role of the Agency's External Auditor. With over 60 years of experience across the United Nations, it would provide high-quality assurance about the use of the Agency's resources and advise the Agency and its Member States on how the Agency could deliver its important mandate more efficiently and effectively. The UK hoped that Member States would support the National Audit Office's bid.

18. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel) commended the Agency for its leadership as well as for continuing its core activities throughout the current difficult period and making every effort to address the urgent needs of Member States. Despite the constant obstacles raised by the pandemic, his country's annual safeguards inspection had been conducted by the Agency as planned.

19. Israel strongly supported the important ZODIAC initiative and PACT, both of which, together with the TC programme, would further enhance the Agency's role in leading innovative nuclear applications to confront challenges. His country also commended the ReNuAL 2 initiative by the Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications and was pleased to announce that it would make an extrabudgetary contribution to support the Agency's efforts to upgrade the remaining laboratories.

20. Supportive of the Agency's essential role in verifying and monitoring the nuclear obligations of Member States, Israel had full confidence in the Agency's professional technical capabilities, including in relation to the ever-challenging Iranian nuclear programme, which was evolving both publicly and covertly. The Agency's numerous regular and special reports reflected the fact that Iran remained in serious non-compliance with its safeguards obligations. Its constant failure to provide credible explanations for traces of uranium found at undeclared, massively sanitized sites was a grave concern. The existence of undeclared nuclear material and activities and of a fully documented nuclear weapons programme left no doubt that Iran was working towards a military nuclear programme.

21. The international community should not ignore the facts and evidence on the ground in favour of appeasing Iran, a tactical manoeuvre that had never yet prevented its malicious, obstructive and destabilizing actions at the regional level or in the nuclear realm and never would. Such manoeuvres would not sway Iran's clear ill intention to pursue a nuclear weapon programme.

22. Syria, Iran's fellow violator, had been in non-compliance with its safeguards obligations for more than a decade, during which time it had consistently failed to cooperate with the Agency's investigation to clarify the origin of a significant number of uranium particles. Syria's lack of compliance and cooperation set a dangerous precedent for current and future cases, including the DPRK and Iran — two great allies of the Syrian regime. Even Iran, Syria's closest ally, had finally admitted in an official note verbale to the Agency that Syria had built a clandestine nuclear reactor. It was time for Syria to come clean.

23. In continuing to support the Agency's efforts and programmes, Israel stressed the need for ongoing attention to those crucial professional and technical issues. The continuous abuse and politicization of the General Conference by some Member States was regrettable. The annual agenda item on Israeli nuclear capabilities, for instance, was politically driven and contradicted the spirit of the Agency.

24. The repeated explicit threats made by Iran and its proxies to attack Israel's nuclear facilities must not be ignored. In May 2021, thousands of missiles and rockets had been launched at the civilian population in Israel. Coupled with Israel's long history of security threats from neighbouring countries, that latest round of escalation underscored his country's constant need to upgrade the protection and

security of its nuclear facilities, which were regularly maintained in line with Agency safety and security guidelines to withstand an attack. All countries must take a clear stand against those willing to sacrifice the nuclear security and safety of an entire region. Israel continued to adhere fully to the most stringent nuclear safety and security guidelines.

25. His country looked forward to participating in the upcoming International Conference on Emergency Preparedness and to sharing its knowledge and best practices with all Member States. It had openly expressed its willingness to cooperate with any State in the Middle East in order to strengthen nuclear security and safety and promote peaceful applications of nuclear technologies in the region. Israel was hopeful that the Abraham Accords signed in 2020 would mark a path forward for meaningful and direct regional dialogue. In closing, it looked forward to the continuation of its fruitful relationship with the Agency.

26. Mr GIERVELD (Netherlands), recognizing the profound impact of COVID-19 on countries, lives and livelihoods, said that the pandemic had also united countries through their efforts to solve the crisis. His country commended the Director General and all Agency staff for their excellent work during the current period and was proud to support the COVID-19 test kit programme.

27. The Netherlands commended the Director General's focus on promoting gender equality at the Agency and within the wider nuclear domain. It happily supported the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, towards which it pledged to contribute € 250 000. In keeping with its motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development', the Agency had developed many important assistance programmes. The Netherlands proudly made frequent voluntary contributions towards activities under those programmes in addition to paying its TCF share on time and in full.

28. As Chair-Designate of Main Committee III of the NPT Review Conference, the Netherlands fully supported the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and would strive to identify synergies between the Agency's work and the NPT process in order to move both forward. The amount of nuclear material worldwide was growing in step with the use of nuclear technology. Member States must ensure that the material was used responsibly and that the Agency had the means and tools to carry out its safeguards, safety and security tasks.

29. Attaching the highest importance to the implementation and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, the Netherlands called on Member States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify both a CSA and an additional protocol. His country supported the Agency's State-level safeguards approach, which ensured that the safeguards system was fit for purpose.

30. All Member States must fulfil their obligations and commitments. The Netherlands therefore called on Iran to cease all escalatory steps and go back to the negotiating table, together with the USA, for a mutual return to the JCPOA. Iran must also urgently clarify the outstanding safeguards-related questions.

31. The Netherlands reaffirmed its support to the Agency, which continued to prove its excellence. As the world faced increasingly complex challenges, States should ensure that the Agency could continue its important mission for a further 65 years and more to support them in overcoming their challenges.

32. Mr AL JABRI (Oman) thanked the Director General for the efforts made to bolster the Agency's role and working mechanisms, especially in nuclear safety and security, health, food and agriculture, environmental protection and climate change mitigation. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the continuing importance of collective action to address and alleviate the socioeconomic repercussions of crises.

33. Oman appreciated the generous support provided by the Agency for combating the pandemic, which had included SARS-CoV-2 detection equipment for a national public health laboratory and an animal health laboratory in Muscat, The country would take part in the Agency's ZODIAC project to establish a comprehensive multisectoral and multidisciplinary global framework for detecting and preventing the spread of zoonotic pathogens.

34. Joint action was urgently needed to avert the growing dangers of environmental pollution, especially plastic waste and the direct threat that it posed to sustainable development. Oman praised the Agency's NUTEC Plastics initiative, which used nuclear and radiation technology to monitor marine pollution from microplastics and recycle plastic waste.

35. A pillar of the Agency's work, the TC programme transferred expertise and technology to Member States and supported them in the peaceful use of atomic energy, thereby contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Since joining the Agency, Oman had paid careful attention to TC activities. Its TC projects for the 2020–2021 cycle were focused on national capacity building in food safety and traceability; assessment and monitoring of radioactive and non-radioactive pollutants in marine environments and coastal areas; safe management of radioactive waste and naturally occurring radioactive materials in the oil and gas industry; and strengthening of radiation safety infrastructure and capacity.

36. It was crucial to rid the Middle East of WMDs, including nuclear weapons. Oman backed all initiatives and resolutions aimed at ensuring regional security and stability — a goal that could be achieved only by universalizing the NPT and applying comprehensive Agency safeguards — and firmly supported the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. All States concerned should take part in the second session of the conference, to be held under Kuwait's presidency, to bring about a safe world in which peace and stability prevailed.

37. Mr MANLAIJAV (Mongolia) said that, in the face of an uncertain new reality and the challenges of national lockdowns, reduced operations and global transport limitations, the Agency had proved itself an important partner in battling the pandemic. His Government appreciated the Agency's absolute solidarity with its Member States in the current unprecedented times and the assistance that it had provided to strengthen national technical capacity to fight COVID-19.

38. Mongolia was fully committed to nuclear non-proliferation and to the Agency's safeguards system as the cornerstone of international security and as an indispensable tool for the sustainable development of nuclear energy. His country welcomed the Secretariat's reports on ongoing verification efforts and commended the Director General's endeavour to ensure the continuation of the Agency's essential verification work despite the challenging environment.

39. To support the implementation of the NPT and make a worthwhile contribution to the peace and security of humankind, Mongolia was committed to fulfilling its safeguards agreements by acceding to the CNS, the Joint Convention and CPPNM Amendment and concluding a modified SQP.

40. In doing its utmost to strengthen and enhance its national safeguards regime in line with Agency safeguards, Mongolia had introduced key regulations during the previous year, including an SSAC regulation and a regulation on the transport of nuclear and radioactive material.

41. Mongolia fully supported the promotion of a global nuclear safety and security framework. To enhance safety measures, his Government had placed an important focus on incident and emergency preparedness and approved a national radiological emergency plan in 2020. His country's continued participation in the ConvEx exercises had been effective in building national coordination and response capacity.

42. Appreciative of the Agency's efforts to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and introduce nuclear technology through the TC programme, Mongolia noted that its CPF for 2016–2021 had been successfully implemented. His country welcomed the Agency's international efforts to strengthen global capacity to detect, prevent and respond to zoonotic diseases through nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques.

43. Mongolia aimed to fully utilize nuclear science and technology to make an impact on the sustainable development objectives set out in its long term development policy and had successfully introduced its first ever PET–CT facility to tackle the most common cancer in the country. Given their great potential to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, the peaceful applications of nuclear technology were in increased demand by Member States seeking to meet their development objectives.

44. Mongolia would continue to support the Agency's activities to promote international cooperation on the peaceful use of atomic energy and the application of safeguards. His country would give its full support and cooperation to achieve the best outcome at the General Conference.

45. Mr MOUSSAOUI (Algeria), welcoming the role of nuclear science in preparing for zoonotic outbreaks as a prudent choice of topic for discussion by the Scientific Forum, said that his country renewed its support for the pioneering ZODIAC project to establish an integrated global framework for the early detection and prevention of zoonotic diseases. In addition, Algeria backed the NUTEC Plastics initiative, which used nuclear techniques and technology to tackle plastic pollution, thereby strengthening the Agency's important role in protecting the environment and achieving the SDGs. Moreover, Algeria supported the ReNuAL 2 project to modernize and expand the Agency's Seibersdorf laboratories to better meet Member States' needs in nuclear techniques and applications.

46. Noting the importance of the TC programme in strengthening national capacities on the basis of needs and priorities, his country thanked the Agency for contributing virus detection and diagnostic equipment and other supplies to three of its frontline institutions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

47. At the regional level, it was pleasing to note that the Agency continued to prioritize Africa in critical areas, such as food and agriculture, health, nuclear knowledge management and development, nuclear safety, water and environment, and nuclear energy and applications, including through the AFRA programme, which contributed substantially to the strengthening and sustainability of regional cooperation. Algeria had recently accepted the revised AFRA, which was of indefinite duration.

48. His country strongly supported the work of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy and encouraged the Commission, the Agency and AFRA to intensify their cooperation on the development of programmes in nuclear safety and security and safeguards. Ever willing to deploy its national expertise and infrastructure to boost African cooperation, Algeria had made available to the Commission a regional collaborating centre in nuclear safeguards for Francophone and Arabic-speaking parties to the Pelindaba Treaty as well as a regional collaborating centre in nuclear safety and security.

49. With respect to national nuclear security, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and Nuclear Facilities and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism had been incorporated into domestic law and regulations. His country stressed the need to continue promoting the universalization of the CPPNM and its Amendment and looked forward to the conference scheduled for 2022.

50. Algeria had finalized its national plan for implementing nuclear security provisions in accordance with its INSSP and had made significant progress in strengthening the relevant legal and regulatory framework, in particular by criminalizing the malicious use of radioactive materials and acts of nuclear

terrorism. In addition, as provided in its nuclear law enacted in 2019, Algeria had in 2021 established a national nuclear safety and security authority.

51. The Agency's safeguards system was the best legal framework for ensuring full compliance with non-proliferation obligations. During its co-presidency of the Article XIV process with Germany, Algeria had actively coordinated international efforts to expedite the CTBT's entry into force, which would promote international peace and security by strengthening nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Furthermore, the creation of an NWFZ in the Middle East, pursuant to the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council and the outcomes of NPT Review Conferences, notably the 1995 resolution, was an important measure for building confidence and establishing peace in the region.

52. Mr BHATIA (Singapore), thanking the Secretariat for its efforts to carry out the Agency's important work despite the protracted challenges of COVID-19, said that the Agency had been a steadfast partner of the international community in the pandemic response, in safeguards verification and in helping developing countries to attain the SDGs through the safe and secure application of nuclear technology. Across all those areas of work, the internationally trusted brand of professionalism, objectivity and technical competence that the Agency had built up over the years was instrumental in the effective discharge of its mandate.

53. Singapore welcomed the resumption of dialogue aimed at restoring the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA. Nevertheless, the persistent testing of JCPOA thresholds remained of deep concern. Given the continuing crucial role of the JCPOA in the international nuclear non-proliferation architecture, all parties must avoid further escalation, intensify efforts to uphold their respective obligations, and work in good faith towards the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

54. Recent developments in the DPRK were another cause for concern. Singapore urged that country to take concrete steps to fulfil its international obligations, including those under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and avoid provocative actions that could escalate tensions in the region. His country rigorously implemented its obligations under the Security Council resolutions on the DPRK, including by prosecuting those who violated the domestic laws giving effect to sanctions in accordance with those resolutions. A strong advocate for meaningful engagement on the issue, Singapore looked forward to the resumption of constructive dialogue to resolve differences and promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

55. In view of continued advances in the development of new nuclear technologies, including transportable NPPs, SMRs and advanced nuclear power reactors, it was crucial for the Agency to continue its central role in enhancing nuclear safety and security and thereby enable Member States to harness the benefits of nuclear power safely, securely and sustainably. In addition to providing multifaceted support to Member States, the Agency should regularly update its guidance documents to keep pace with the latest technological advancements.

56. Technical cooperation was an integral part of the Agency's mission and played a critical role in helping developing Member States, especially LDCs and SIDS, to tackle ever-evolving challenges and achieve their development objectives. As the main vehicle through which the Agency provided such assistance to Member States, the TC programme must be sufficiently resourced. Singapore would continue its support on that front, including by renewing the Singapore-IAEA Third Country Training Programme. Having signed its CPF for 2021-2025 in May 2021, his country looked forward to the Agency's guidance in the implementation of its TC projects.

57. Singapore greatly appreciated the support rendered by the Agency to ASEAN for the safe and secure utilization of radiation and nuclear technologies and looked forward to strengthening that

collaboration, including through the Practical Arrangements concluded between the Agency and ASEAN in 2019.

58. Under the Director General's leadership, the Agency had navigated the pandemic and would undoubtedly continue to deliver strong support to Member States for the pandemic response and other aspects of its core work as it had done throughout the crisis. Singapore would sustain its support for the Agency and work with fellow Member States to ensure that it could fully discharge its mandate.

59. Mr VYAS (India) said that, despite the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, his country's Department of Atomic Energy had made substantial progress in its continued efforts to develop technologies of immense value and benefit to industry and society.

60. Over the previous 65 years, India's nuclear energy programmes had evolved side by side with the Agency. His country accorded paramount importance to the Agency for its central role in promoting peaceful uses of atomic energy for the development and prosperity of humankind while duly maintaining its safeguards work, even during the pandemic.

61. India had a cumulative record of approximately 551 reactor-years of safe operation and, for the 37th time, one of its reactors had operated continuously for more than a year, with the Narora Atomic Power Station setting a fresh record of 852 days in 2020. His country's NPPs had been operating optimally, even during the pandemic, and a fleet capacity factor of around 85% had been maintained throughout 2021.

62. On the project front, the first indigenous 700 MW(e) PHWR at Kakrapar 3 had been successfully synchronized with the grid in January 2021, and the first pouring of concrete for the Kudankulam NPPs, which were being built in cooperation with the Russian Federation, had taken place in June 2021.

63. Under India's programme for growing its nuclear power capacity, considerable progress had been made towards establishing 10 indigenous 700 MW(e) PHWRs in fleet mode. Furthermore, satisfactory progress was being made in discussions with EDF and Westinghouse Electric Company on building NPPs at Jaitapur and Kovvada, respectively.

64. With regard to non-power applications, the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre had developed an indigenous carrier-free yttrium-90 acetate; ruthenium-106 plaques for cancer diagnosis and treatment; and two new radiopharmaceuticals, 90-yttrium hydroxyapatite (90Y-HA) and 177-lutetium hydroxyapatite (177Lu-HA), which would allow joint-related disorders to be treated effectively and economically. In addition, the Tata Memorial Centre had initiated CAR T-cell therapy for the first time in India, bringing treatment costs down from 40 million to 2.5 million rupees.

65. Through its aided and R&D institutes, the country's Department of Atomic Energy continued to make substantial contributions to mega science projects, such as the ALICE experiment, the Compact Muon Solenoid experiment and the Worldwide LHC Computing Grid at CERN; ITER; the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory; and the Square Kilometre Array.

66. The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board continued to participate in the activities of the Agency, the Nuclear Energy Agency and other bilateral arrangements through virtual platforms, including examining the draft nuclear safety and nuclear technology reviews for 2021. It also continued to gather information about the impact of COVID-19 on nuclear installations worldwide and about preventive and corrective measures taken in that context.

67. Thanking the people and Government of Austria for hosting the Agency in Vienna with warmth, commitment and graciousness, his country looked forward to the Agency's continued leadership in fostering the safe, secure and sustainable use of nuclear energy in the future and would continue to support it in all its endeavours.

68. Ms DONCIU (Romania), commending the Agency's efforts in the current complex dynamic, said that COVID-19 had highlighted the importance of solidarity and coordination in overcoming hardships. Her country thanked the Agency and the generous donors for having coordinated to equip hospitals and specialized institutions with COVID-19 testing materials. Another lesson learned from the pandemic was the importance of maintaining and continuing the progress made towards international peace, security and stability.

69. Romania reaffirmed its ongoing support for the NPT, which was the foundation of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and for efforts to promote the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Her country stood ready to work with international partners towards a successful Tenth NPT Review Conference in 2022.

70. Romania's efforts towards ensuring the success of the 2020 International Conference on Nuclear Security, including the adoption, by consensus, of a Ministerial Declaration, stood not only as a contribution to the implementation of the NPT and the Agency's work overall but also as proof of the country's commitment to multilateralism and a consolidated global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

71. The year 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of the CTBT's opening for signature, prompting renewed calls for the Treaty's entry into force and universalization and for an immediate start to negotiations on an FMCT at the Conference on Disarmament. Romania encouraged all States to become parties to the treaties and conventions aimed at creating a strong nuclear safety and security regime.

72. The Agency's safeguards system played a major role in strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and was an inalienable part of that architecture. It was therefore in the common interest of all States to maintain its efficiency and effectiveness. Her country continued to call for the CSA and the additional protocol to be universalized without delay.

73. In Romania, the National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control and the Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste had continued their activities during the pandemic, including by adjusting work modes, and every effort had been made to ensure that Agency and Euratom safeguards inspectors were able to enter Romanian territory. The inspections carried out at the country's main nuclear facilities — Cernavodă NPP, the Feldioara plant, the Institute for Nuclear Research in Pitești and the Horia Hulubei National Institute for Research and Development in Physics and Nuclear Engineering — had revealed no undeclared nuclear material or diversion of nuclear material from peaceful purposes. At Romania's request, the Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste was set to receive an ARTEMIS mission in November 2021.

74. In conjunction with the Agency, the National Commission for Nuclear Activities Control had hosted a number of events, including a national workshop on threat assessment and design basis threat; a national workshop on nuclear security systems and measures for major public events; a transport security tabletop exercise; and a regional training course on computer security incident response for nuclear facilities. Romania had also worked with the US Department of Energy in 2021 to organize a comprehensive online workshop series for the regional implementation of INFCIRC/909 regarding a joint statement on transport security of nuclear materials.

75. Romanian experts from the State Owned Company "Technologies for Nuclear Energy", the Institute for Nuclear Research in Pitești and the Nuclear Agency for Radioactive Waste had participated as members of the INPRO working group tasked with finalizing two reports for publication — one on factory fuel and SMRs and the other involving a comparative evaluation of nuclear energy system options. In a further recognition of Romania's contribution to promoting the Agency's goals, the Institute for Nuclear Research in Pitești had been designated an ICERR for education and training and for joint R&D projects.

76. The Horia Hulubei National Institute continued to be involved in strengthening nuclear forensics. Its laboratory was now equipped and ready to assist regional and international partners in responding to cases of unauthorized use of nuclear or other radioactive material. Romania's expertise had already proved a valuable asset in steering the Nuclear Forensics Working Group of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The Institute could also provide training on the decommissioning of nuclear facilities.

77. Romania supported the Agency's valued TC programme through voluntary financial and other contributions. In preparing for the 2022–2023 TC cycle, her country had approved three national projects and two regional projects for enhancing and harmonizing nuclear medicine and diagnostic imaging capabilities and for improving efficiency in water and soil management, in line with the European Green Deal, which was aimed at building an economy and society resilient to climate change challenges.

78. Ms VILLATORO TARIO (El Salvador) said that her country welcomed the recent accession of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the Agency as a significant step towards the universalization of Agency agreements and a demonstration of her region's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. El Salvador also welcomed the 2021 Scientific Forum's focus on zoonotic diseases and the ZODIAC project, which would provide a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences, ideas and best practices for preventing and addressing not only outbreaks of those diseases but also related threats.

79. El Salvador recognized the Agency's role in ensuring that nuclear energy was used for exclusively peaceful purposes and valued the technical cooperation provided to developing countries through the TCF. The TC programme had helped to build her country's capacities for using nuclear science and technology in key areas, including health, agriculture, environment and food security. At the height of the pandemic, the Agency had also provided El Salvador with three pieces of PCR equipment for the rapid detection and management of COVID-19, together with training in the most efficient and effective use of the equipment.

80. In that same vein, ARCAL had contributed to strengthening regional capacities for using nuclear science and technology in connection with the fight against cancer, efficient water management, energy supply security, climate change adaptation, environment, and attainment of the SDGs. El Salvador was consequently a party to the agreement reached in 2020 to extend ARCAL for a further period of five years³. In the 2022–2023 cycle, her country would lead a project to assess organic and inorganic environmental pollution in aquatic environments and its impact on the risk of the proliferation of cyanotoxin-producing cyanobacteria.

81. With respect to the non-proliferation regime and the application of Agency safeguards, El Salvador had signed a CSA, an additional protocol and an SQP. It neither possessed, produced, imported nor stockpiled WMDs and, as a member of a region entirely free of nuclear weapons, it reaffirmed its commitment to nuclear disarmament as a guarantee of peace, security and respect for human rights.

82. A party to the NPT, the CTBT and the TPNW, El Salvador firmly supported all instruments and initiatives leading to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and full WMD disarmament. Those three complementary treaties furthered the ultimate goal to which all aspired: a world free of nuclear weapons.

83. Mr AINCHIL (Argentina) said that, in the light of complex socioeconomic, health and environmental challenges, scientific and technological R&D had again proved to be a central asset in finding solutions to common problems. International cooperation must be strengthened to make those solutions accessible to all. Cooperation and know-how were hallmarks of the Agency; it had used technology transfer at a difficult time to help Member States to cope with the pandemic, thereby

³ INFCIRC/582/Add.5

reaffirming its TC credentials and enabling appropriate safety standards and safeguards guarantees to be maintained.

84. Argentina had accumulated seven decades of experience in the development of nuclear technology and know-how. Moreover, the pursuit of technological sovereignty and the defence of the inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy had always been the guiding principles of its foreign policy on nuclear matters. In spite of the challenges posed by the pandemic and the adaptation required as a result, Argentina had continued to make significant headway in various projects of high national priority.

85. One such project involved CAREM, the first modular reactor to be fully designed by Argentina. The project was almost 60% complete and the National Atomic Energy Commission was working intensively on the licensing process. Once the prototype was finished, Argentina would be a leader in the development of that type of innovative reactor technology, which was consistent with the Agency's expectations and its support for the expansion of nuclear power infrastructure.

86. The civil engineering work for the country's RA-10 multipurpose nuclear reactor was 65% complete. The project involved the design, construction, assembly and operation of a reactor that would ensure the medical radioisotope supply for the national and regional markets. Scientific research in the reactor facilities was an additional possibility.

87. Argentina was proud to announce the progress of the Argentine Proton Therapy Centre, the first of its kind in the whole of Latin America. Its launch would allow the country to continue making advances in nuclear technology for health, offering strategic prospects for future R&D and international cooperation.

88. As part of a cross-cutting public policy, Argentina encouraged women's increased participation in the nuclear field, in particular through specific capacity-building and technical advisory activities. It also encouraged women's active involvement in the Agency's TC programme with the aim of reducing the gender gap and promoting the gender perspective in the region. Over 50% of national, regional and interregional TC projects developed by Argentina were led by women.

89. Solid progress in international peace and security could not be achieved without a firm commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. In assessing the NPT's history and implementation, it was interesting to note that the Agency had emerged as both a forum for cooperation on peaceful uses and a guarantor of the global non-proliferation system. The upcoming NPT Review Conference would allow the States Parties, which were also Members of the Agency, to continue working on the basis of their commitment to implementing the Treaty's three pillars and reconciling their positions.

90. Reiterating its support for the JCPOA, Argentina looked forward to the prompt resumption of negotiations for full compliance with the Plan by all its parties and trusted that the sense of responsibility and the negotiating spirit that had led to its creation would prevail.

91. In his region, ABACC, established in 1991 between Argentina and Brazil, had made an innovative and significant contribution to both those countries without undermining the right to the development of nuclear technology for the scientific, technical and socioeconomic progress of their peoples. Argentina was proud of the reciprocal inspection work carried out in coordination with the Agency by ABACC's team of highly qualified inspectors of both nationalities.

92. In the year of ABACC's 30th anniversary recently celebrated in Rio de Janeiro, Argentina reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and bolstering the Agency and would work to further enhance cooperation between the two organizations to that end.

93. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the institutions and companies constituting Argentina's nuclear sector had continued to operate their facilities safely, adjusting their work methodology under strict protocols and without interrupting processes related to essential inputs supplied as part of the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear medicine activities. In respect of nuclear activities carried out within the national territory, the Nuclear Regulatory Authority had ensured the maintenance of high standards of nuclear and radiation safety, safeguards implementation, and physical protection and security. His country singled out for special acknowledgement the work of FORO towards upholding the highest standards of nuclear and radiation safety and security in its member countries and, by extension, in the entire Ibero-American region.

94. For all those reasons, Argentina reiterated its commitment to the Agency as an instrument for the peaceful and safe uses of nuclear energy and for non-proliferation.

95. Mr RATEMI (Libya), noting the importance of TC activities for the achievement of sustainable development, said that his country greatly appreciated the support provided by the Agency for the implementation of physical protection systems and was hopeful that such support would be extended to two offices recently created as part of its Atomic Energy Establishment with the aim of strengthening nuclear and radiation safety and security. One of those offices dealt with the physical protection of nuclear material and the other with nuclear radiation emergencies. Libya also thanked the Agency for its assistance in helping it to obtain equipment needed for the implementation of existing projects and the USA for its contribution to the country's cancer treatment project. In the area of capacity building, especially among women, Libya welcomed the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and looked forward to the Agency's support for the admission of Libyan candidates.

96. Calling on the international community to improve coordination on the pandemic, his country was grateful to the Agency for continuing to provide equipment that would enhance its national programmes for tackling COVID-19. It also highly appreciated the work of the Agency and the Arab Atomic Energy Agency to create early warning stations in Arab States, including eight across Libya. His country backed the ZODIAC initiative and stood fully ready to cooperate with the Agency for its success.

97. The inclusion of nuclear power in the energy mix could contribute to achieving the international requirement of net zero carbon emissions to save the planet. Likewise, the trend towards SMRs could encourage many States to introduce the nuclear option into their programmes.

98. International efforts must be intensified to prevent the production of WMDs, above all nuclear weapons, and to develop a timetable and verifiable mechanism for their complete elimination. Libya reminded nuclear-weapon States of their responsibilities to prevent the use or threat of use of such weapons and called on the international community to provide the necessary assurances for the security of non-nuclear-weapon States.

99. Ms SRISWASDI (Thailand) said that, during the previous year, the international community had confronted not only the challenges of COVID-19 but also sociopolitical uncertainties that had put multilateralism and diplomacy to the test. Against that backdrop, the Agency remained strong in supporting international peace and security and in carrying out with commitment and professionalism its mandate to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

100. Thailand attached importance to the Agency's central role in bridging the development needs of Member States through the uses of nuclear science and technology, contributing significantly to sustainable development and the enhancement of human welfare and livelihood. The assistance provided to Member States for COVID-19 and the early response to the pandemic through the ZODIAC initiative each demonstrated the continued relevance of the Agency's work on peaceful uses. In addition, the NUTEC Plastics initiative responded to pressing global environmental degradation with a nuclear

solution for plastic pollution, which was a direct threat to sustainable development. The Agency's technical cooperation was therefore very important in enabling Member States to build the necessary capacity and expertise and in providing increased safe and secure access to nuclear science and technology for peaceful uses.

101. The TC programme was an essential mechanism for delivering the Agency's technical mandates and engaging with Member States on the peaceful uses agenda. Thailand would continue to promote the TC programme nationally and regionally and join others in raising public awareness of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

102. As Chair of the RCA, Thailand highly appreciated the Agency's contribution to enhancing the region's socioeconomic development through innovative cooperation. Moreover, once endorsed, the ASEAN Protocol for Preparedness and Response to a Nuclear or Radiological Emergency would considerably improve regional radiation safety, further reaffirming the significance of the Practical Arrangements concluded between the Agency and ASEAN.

103. Reasserting its commitment to the NPT, Thailand underscored the importance of the Agency's central role in strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting peaceful uses, as well as the importance of discharging its safeguards mandate under the NPT through verification and monitoring activities. Her country stood ready to engage meaningfully in the NPT Review Conference so as to achieve positive outcomes in all three pillars of the Treaty.

104. The evolving situations around non-proliferation were of serious concern. The JCPOA was crucial and urgently needed to be preserved. Encouraging all parties to spare no effort towards revitalizing the JCPOA, Thailand looked forward to a swift resumption of the Vienna negotiations. Her country also appreciated the Agency's continued efforts to monitor the development of the DPRK's nuclear programme and maintain its readiness to resume its verification mandate once diplomatic and political solutions had been reached. Her country called on the DPRK to comply fully with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and with its international obligations. All parties must continue dialogue, which was an essential pathway towards peace, stability and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

105. In January 2021, an important milestone in the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons had been achieved with the early entry into force of the TPNW, which had been created to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Both the TPNW and the NPT would benefit from the Agency's constructive involvement in view of the shared aspiration for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Thailand looked forward to the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW, to be held in Vienna in March 2022.

106. In closing, Thailand reaffirmed its steadfast commitment to the obligations under the Statute and related international instruments on nuclear safeguards and safety. Her country was determined to support the Agency — a rules-based organization — in its deliberations and stood ready to cooperate constructively with it and its Member States.

107. Mr ALOBAIDI (Kuwait) said that, in addition to knowledge transfer and the application of safeguards, the Agency played a leading role in promoting the benefits of nuclear applications and in strengthening nuclear safety and security systems in Member States. It also contributed significantly to capacity building and disaster response.

108. Noting that collective efforts were key to enabling the Agency to continue fully discharging its Atoms for Peace and Development mandate, Kuwait reaffirmed its keenness to step up cooperation with all parties to that end and its readiness to support all initiatives and programmes, especially those that could contribute to improving living and health standards. During the previous year, Kuwait had contributed US \$300 000 to the ZODIAC initiative and US \$100 000 to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie

Fellowship Programme. It had also increased its support to ReNuAL by US \$500 000, bringing its total contribution to the initiative to US \$1.5 million.

109. Although all States had the right to produce, develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in line with the NPT, the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMDs posed an additional challenge to international peace and security, which were already being threatened by global tensions and events. Kuwait attached paramount importance to the comprehensive safeguards system and called on the DPRK to comply with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and international treaties.

110. Urging Iran to return to full compliance with the JCPOA, which had been endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), Kuwait looked forward to that country's ratification and implementation of the additional protocol so that the Agency could provide credible assurances of the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities in Iran and ensure Iran's continued status as a non-nuclear-weapon State. The joint statement and the Director General's report issued during his recent visit to Tehran were promising steps on which Iran should build to bring the matter to a close.

111. Kuwait was committed to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East, in line with the 1995 resolution of the NPT Review Conference and the outcomes of the NPT Review Conferences held in 2000 and 2010. Echoing the Arab Group's statement on the risks associated with Israeli nuclear capabilities, his country stressed the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT. Kuwait had welcomed the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in 2019, and looked forward to the second session in November 2021, over which it would preside. Fully committed to achieving the goals of that conference, his country encouraged the States concerned to participate.

112. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen), praising the Secretariat's substantial efforts towards achieving the noble purposes for which the Agency had been founded, said that his country supported the Agency's activities in radiation protection, health, agriculture, and science and technology. Yemen called on all Member States to take advantage of the peaceful applications of nuclear energy while respecting the non-proliferation regime, in particular the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system.

113. Yemen affirmed its continued support for the Agency's activities, in particular the verification and monitoring undertaken in Iran pursuant to Security Council resolution 2231. Iran must fully cooperate with all the Agency's requests and allow it access to all information and all sites so as to build trust and provide assurance that all Iranian nuclear activities were wholly consistent with its JCPOA commitments. Iran must also ratify the additional protocol.

114. His country highly valued the determined efforts of the Agency, in particular the Department of Technical Cooperation, and the continued support provided for its national TC projects, notably in the areas of cancer treatment, agriculture and livestock, and science and technology. Yemen looked forward to receiving further support from the Agency in those areas, especially as part of the ZODIAC initiative to strengthen global preparedness for pandemics.

115. The support received from the Agency to tackle COVID-19 had been of significant help to Yemen's deteriorating health sector, which was experiencing extraordinary difficulties as a result of the coup by the Iran-backed Houthi militia. The Agency should keep working to find alternatives and means for ensuring the continuation of TC projects in countries such as his where exceptional circumstances prevailed.

116. His Government was grateful for the substantial support provided by the Agency for establishing Yemen's first cancer radiotherapy centre and a nuclear medicine unit. Further Agency support would be

needed to tackle the country's increasing cancer rates and set up cancer treatment centres in a number of governorates.

117. Yemen endorsed all steps taken by the Agency to strengthen the nuclear security system in order to prevent terrorist groups from gaining access to nuclear material and to combat illicit trade in radioactive nuclear material. His country likewise backed all initiatives for ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons and establishing WMD-free zones, especially in the Middle East, where the power imbalance and the existence of nuclear activities not subject to the non-proliferation regime were creating instability and insecurity.

118. Emphasizing the need to strengthen the Agency's safeguards system, his country urged Iran to comply with its JCPOA commitments and fully implement the Board's June 2020 resolution⁴ calling on it to allow the inspection of suspect sites and respond to all the Agency's questions about those sites and other related matters.

119. Having welcomed the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction held pursuant to UN General Assembly decision 73/546, Yemen looked forward to the second session and encouraged all States to participate and contribute to its success. All Arab States had acceded to the NPT and stressed their continued readiness to establish a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. In contrast, Israel persistently refused to accede to the Treaty and place all its nuclear facilities under a CSA and also continued to reject all international initiatives to universalize the NPT in the Middle East, creating regional instability as States slid into an undesirable arms race.

120. Ms MURILLO CENTENO (Nicaragua) said that her country appreciated the extraordinary TC support provided directly by the Agency to 146 countries and territories in all, including Nicaragua, which had enabled them to tackle COVID-19 through timely detection and control measures. It also greatly appreciated the support provided to assist thousands of people affected by Hurricanes Eta and Iota.

121. A supporter of ZODIAC, her country noted that, one year after the initiative's inception, 146 Member States had designated their national coordinators and 116 Member States had designated their national ZODIAC laboratories, helping to improve preparedness and capabilities for the detection and control of emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases through nuclear and molecular biology techniques.

122. The year 2020 had been full of challenges; the pandemic had affected the progress of projects, prompting a search for innovative mechanisms to achieve the aims of those projects and generate socioeconomic benefits. In addition to regional and interregional training courses in which its partner institutions and hospitals were participating, Nicaragua was grateful for the implementation of its national TC programme through projects to enhance food contaminant surveillance and control, strengthen the national radiation safety infrastructure, improve radiotherapy and nuclear medicine services, and acquire COVID-19 diagnostic kits.

123. Thanks to the professionalism and dedication with which it delivered its TC programme, the Agency was a crucial player in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Her Government reiterated its support for the work of the Director General and the Agency and recognized the valuable contribution of all those involved in that programme.

124. Ms KARSELADZE (Georgia), highlighting the valuable impact of the Agency's activities, said that her country commended the Director General and the Secretariat for their efforts to ensure the

⁴ GOV/2020/34

continuity of the Agency's mission and for the assistance provided to help Member States to respond to the pandemic.

125. Attaching great importance to the Agency's core responsibilities in the areas of non-proliferation, nuclear energy, nuclear safety and security and technical cooperation, Georgia supported the universal and effective implementation of the NPT and underlined the importance of the Agency's safeguards system in that respect. With CSAs and additional protocols constituting the current verification standard, her country would continue to call for their rapid universalization.

126. As countries pursued their efforts to tackle the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the TC programme had again proved to be an important tool in assisting Member States to strengthen their capacities, thereby enabling them to control the spread of the virus. Highly appreciative of the Agency's positive response to its request, Georgia had received standard sets of RT-PCR equipment and related materials. Agency assistance had enhanced national capacities for the rapid detection of COVID-19, which was critical in avoiding outbreaks. Her country also valued the generous extrabudgetary contributions from the USA and Norway that had allowed the Agency to assist Georgia and other countries in need.

127. The prevention of, and response to, nuclear and radiological threats was a main element of State security. The two Russian-occupied regions of Georgia continued to pose a clear and multidimensional security challenge. Recorded attempts to smuggle nuclear and radioactive materials through those regions had been prevented as a result of effective measures carried out by Georgian law enforcement agencies. However, in the absence of an international presence in those occupied territories of Georgia, it had become virtually impossible to conduct any verification activities on the ground.

128. Georgia continued its irreversible development in nuclear and radiation safety and security. An independent regulatory body established as part of implemented reforms and with strong government support was fulfilling its responsibilities effectively. Under the Agency's TC programme, Georgia had received cementing equipment, which had been installed in a radioactive waste disposal facility. The national regulatory infrastructure was also being strengthened and supported through national and regional projects — a core tool in developing and maintaining knowledge in the areas covered by the Agency. Georgia's technical cooperation with the Agency had been further strengthened by its CPF for 2020–2025, which addressed nuclear and radiation safety and security, health and nutrition, food and agriculture, water and environment, and energy and industry.

129. Georgia greatly appreciated the technical and financial assistance and active contribution received from the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission for the development of its nuclear and radiation safety and security regulations and systems. The successful bilateral partnership was growing stronger and had enabled Georgia to enhance its regulatory framework for nuclear or radiological emergencies. A nuclear and radiological emergency response management centre had been established as part of the country's regulatory body to ensure the coordinated and integrated implementation of emergency preparedness and response measures.

130. Georgia also attached great importance to the role of the European Union and the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority in advancing its nuclear and radiation safety and highly appreciated the valuable support provided for the establishment of a radioactive waste management system.

131. Mr ÓSKARSSON (Iceland) praised the outstanding work performed by the Agency and its staff in the extremely difficult circumstances stemming from the global pandemic and growing challenges related to nuclear security and non-proliferation.

132. All countries agreed on the importance of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology and its benefits in such fields as health, agriculture and water management. The most immediate hurdle for

the Agency, however, was arguably the preservation of its critical role in contributing to international peace and security through its safeguard agreements, which played a key role in the implementation of the NPT, a cornerstone of the global arms control regime.

133. The NPT Review Conference in January 2022 would take place in the context of increasing challenges to global non-proliferation and, even more importantly, the weakening of the prevailing international arms control architecture — unacceptable developments that must be reversed. In the face of that situation, the Agency's nuclear safeguards regime must be strengthened, in particular by universalizing the additional protocol, which all States should sign and ratify.

134. Iceland strongly supported the JCPOA, which was of paramount importance to international security and non-proliferation. The USA's return to the Plan and the timely and positive conclusion of the ongoing negotiations for its revival were crucial. Iceland called on Iran to revert immediately to full compliance with its JPCOA commitments and cooperate fully with the Agency on its safeguard obligations.

135. The DPRK's continuing brinkmanship around nuclear weapons posed a major threat to international peace and stability. It was essential for the DPRK to comply with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, return to the NPT and the CSA, and join the CTBT in order to bring about the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

136. Like other international organizations forming an integral part of the global community, the Agency must look at how it could apply its extensive know-how and expertise in nuclear technology to meet the grave challenges of the accelerating climate crisis and other environmental concerns. In that matter, all hands and instruments, including nuclear technology, were needed on deck.

137. Iceland looked forward to the implementation of the Agency's forward-looking initiatives, in particular ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, which would both greatly contribute to tackling current global issues. His country welcomed NUTEC Plastics as a very important tool in the fight against pervasive global plastic pollution, the maritime aspect of which was of special concern to fishing nations like Iceland. His country also strongly supported the Director General's efforts to increase gender equality within the Agency.

138. Convinced that the Agency would continue — and even increase — its important contribution to the critical role of multilateralism in solving the tough challenges of the day, Iceland was determined to strengthen its support to the Agency.

139. Mr NSABIMANA (Rwanda), affirming his Government's commitment to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology to meet the SDGs, said that his country was working closely with the Agency to build the strong legal, institutional and regulatory framework needed for the safe application of nuclear science and technology. The Rwanda Atomic Energy Board, established in 2020, would play a significant role in accelerating atomic energy development for clean energy, agriculture, health, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, industry, the environment, geology and mining.

140. In cooperation with the Agency, Rwanda was carrying out projects in medical physics, radiation oncology and radiation therapy and looked forward to more partnerships in such areas as energy planning, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, nuclear knowledge development and management, radiation safety, and water and environment. His country thanked the Agency for its continuous support and looked forward to further collaboration in order to build back better from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rwanda also commended the Agency's leadership for its firm commitment to promoting the education of women and girls in nuclear science.

141. Rwanda would continue to meet its obligations and commitments as a Member State to support the Agency in achieving its vision and mission. At the current General Conference, moreover, it had

acceded to the Early Notification Convention, the Assistance Convention and the Joint Convention, accepting in addition the CPPNM Amendment.

142. Lastly, Rwanda would host the 33rd AFRA Technical Working Group Meeting in 2022, which would be held physically if the pandemic allowed. His country's COVID-19 response has been swift and robust. Since the roll-out of its vaccination campaign in March 2021, 93% of adults in Kigali had received a first dose and 67% had been fully vaccinated. Elsewhere in the country, more than 22% of the adult population had received one or two doses. The campaign would continue until the adult population was fully vaccinated, ensuring full preparation for a physical meeting. Rwanda thanked the Agency for its timely provision of COVID-19 testing kits and other materials.

The meeting rose at 12 noon