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Plenary

Record of the First Meeting

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Temporary President: Mr ALFASSAM (Kuwait)

President: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IT	information technology
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
MESA	Middle East and South Asia Group
MW	megawatt
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
PUI	Peaceful Uses Initiative
R&D	research and development
RANET	Response and Assistance Network
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMRs	small and medium sized or modular reactors
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TEPCO	Tokyo Electric Power Company

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

– Opening of the session

1. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT declared the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference open.
2. In accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, he invited the delegates to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.

3. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT expressed his gratitude to all Member States for entrusting his country, Kuwait, and his predecessor as ambassador, Mr Marafi, with leading the proceedings of the sixty-fifth regular session of the General Conference. Thanking MESA for having nominated Kuwait to the role and provided valuable consensus and support, he commended the Secretariat for its efforts to facilitate the task of the Presidency and ensure the successful conclusion of the sixty-fifth session.
4. A believer in the importance of multilateral action, Kuwait supported all efforts to promote cooperation and collaboration towards ever greater heights in all international forums, including the Agency, which played a leading role in advancing nuclear sciences and applications and enabling States to benefit safely and effectively from them across many fields.
5. The high-level presence at the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference reflected the importance of the Agency's role in translating the concept of Atoms for Peace and Development into reality; enabling knowledge transfer and maximizing access to all forms of nuclear applications; further developing the concepts of nuclear safety and security, and contributing to their application at all levels; and maintaining verification systems and the application of safeguards as an integral part of the non-proliferation regime.
6. Over the preceding year, the Agency, led by the Director General and with the support and participation of the Member States, had continued to perform its core functions with the utmost competence and effectiveness, helping to achieve Member States' objectives. He applauded the efforts made by the Agency and its staff to ensure business continuity and to support Member States in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through the development of innovative new working mechanisms. In particular, he commended achievements such as the NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope initiatives, a welcome addition to the Agency's impressive record in placing nuclear technology at the service of humankind. The Agency had continued to host and participate in numerous scientific and technical conferences in a variety of fields.
7. Reiterating his country's thanks to the Member States and the Secretariat, he reassured them that Kuwait would make every effort to work with all parties to ensure the success of the sixty-sixth regular session. He conveyed his country's best wishes to all present.

1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee

8. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.

9. Mr SCHMIDT-BREMME (Germany), speaking on behalf of the Western Europe Group, proposed Mr Cortese (Italy).

10. Mr Cortese (Italy) was elected President by acclamation.

11. The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT congratulated Mr Cortese and wished him a successful conference.

Mr Cortese (Italy) took the Chair.

12. The PRESIDENT expressed his gratitude and sense of honour at the trust bestowed in him. He thanked the Western Europe Group, in particular its Co-Chairs, for their support and encouragement, and conveyed his deep appreciation to his predecessor for his enlightened stewardship of the sixty-fifth regular session of the General Conference.

13. The Agency had been created with a mission to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world through the safe and secure use of nuclear science in service of all humankind. Given the sensitive and important technical and political issues on the Conference's agenda, it was clear that unprecedented challenges had emerged in recent months and that the role of the Agency had become even more crucial — arguably one of the most important and delicate in all global multilateral relations.

14. Welcoming the fact that the Conference was being held in the physical presence of all delegations for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic had begun, he highlighted the admirable role that the Agency had played in overcoming major threats to nuclear safety and security in different parts of the world and in implementing projects and activities to cope with what was the biggest global health emergency of recent centuries.

15. He thanked the Director General and the entire staff of the Secretariat for their commitment, dedication and professionalism in conducting their work, which had enabled the Agency to continue to carry out its ever more vital functions.

16. The Director General's recent mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP, which faced great danger and posed extreme political and logistical difficulties, was the finest demonstration of the professionalism — and courage — of which the Agency, the Director General and the Agency's officials were capable in the fulfilment of their duties. To carry out such missions, however, they needed the support of all Member States.

17. The issues on the Conference's agenda at its sixty-sixth regular session called for greater commitment and responsibility than ever. He appealed to all Member States to ensure that the UN spirit and the Agency's founding principles — peace, cooperation, scientific progress, technological advancement, economic and human development, and sustainability — were alive and kicking. While the 'Vienna spirit' might seem to be fading, he remained convinced that it would help make the session a great success.

18. The Conference must aim high if the Agency were to continue contributing tangible solutions to global challenges. Nuclear applications could be a game changer in addressing those challenges, which highlighted the importance of the Agency to the SDGs. Those aspirations for human progress would become unattainable if the Conference lost sight of the fundamental values of peace and cooperation

among nations and peoples, however. He counted on the support of all Member States to ensure that the sixty-sixth regular session of the Conference could successfully accomplish all its work.

19. Turning to procedural matters, he said that the Conference was required under Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure to elect 8 Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and 5 additional members of the General Committee to constitute a General Committee of 15, which he would chair.

20. As MESA and the Eastern Europe Group had not yet reached agreement on their candidates to serve on the General Committee, he suggested proceeding with the election of the candidates whose names were already known. He therefore proposed that the delegates of Australia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Romania and Sweden be elected as Vice-Presidents, that Mr Bengu of South Africa be elected as Chair of the Committee of the Whole, and that the delegates of Montenegro, Paraguay, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates be elected as additional members of the General Committee.

21. The President's proposals were accepted.

22. Mr MAZUMDAR (India) said that MESA had received one candidature for the position of Vice-President of the General Committee. Despite the group's unrelenting efforts, however, it had been unable to make a positive recommendation in that regard.

23. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) thanked the Chair and members of MESA for working relentlessly to reach consensus. Yemen consistently sought to resolve issues and achieve consensus internally within the group. Unfortunately, however, one country had refused to join consensus and take a realistic approach. Yemen had presented its candidature for the position of Vice-President of the General Committee during the meetings of MESA and had submitted a note verbale to that effect on 25 September 2022. He hoped that the Member States would support Yemen in its candidacy. He reiterated his country's full support for the President of the Conference.

24. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country continued to support the operational principles and practices of regional groupings within the international organization framework, on the basis of a spirit of cooperation, accommodation and inclusive participation.

25. The concept of equitable geographic representation in the Agency's PMOs was under serious and systematic attack by certain members of MESA, however, which had been unable to reach consensus on the candidates for the position of Vice-President of the General Committee and other positions within the PMOs.

26. Representation on the PMOs provided regional groups with an opportunity to present their group's views, as appropriate, and to help facilitate proceedings and make progress towards shared goals. The aim of equitable geographic representation was to ensure that the interests of all groups were served. It was therefore unacceptable that one candidate to the General Committee sought to use the position to pursue a narrow-minded, self-serving political national agenda. Such an approach was certain to cause disagreement and division with MESA.

27. Iran wished to maintain the integrity and tranquillity of MESA and prevent division. It would continue to avoid confrontation and engage in good faith with a view to ensuring the smooth conduct of the Conference. He concluded by warning that an unbalanced and discriminatory approach to the nomination of officers to the PMOs would undoubtedly compromise the inclusivity of the Agency.

28. The PRESIDENT proposed that the delegate of Yemen be elected as Vice-President of the General Committee. He also proposed deferring the election of the additional members of the Committee from the Eastern Europe Group until the group had completed its consultations, in line with past practice.

29. The President's proposals were accepted.

4. Arrangements for the Conference (GC(66)/2)

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

30. The PRESIDENT proposed that, before receiving the General Committee's recommendation on the provisional agenda, the General Conference should suspend Rule 42 of its Rules of Procedure and proceed with consideration of items 2, 3, 5 and 6 — in that order — so as not to delay the start of the regular session.

31. It was so decided.

2. Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

32. Ms WALY (Director General, United Nations Office at Vienna), speaking on behalf of the UN family in Vienna, congratulated the President on his election and wished him luck in his mission. She wished the participants fruitful discussions and a successful session.

33. She read out the following message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

“I am pleased to send greetings to the General Conference of the IAEA.

“This past year has been marked with grave trials and tests. We face continued challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ramifications of the ongoing war in Ukraine, and other crises of global consequences, not least climate change.

“On all these fronts, the IAEA has made important contributions to helping achieve a safer and more secure world, acting as an expert, impartial and technical interlocutor.

“On COVID-19, the IAEA has utilized nuclear and nuclear-driven techniques to provide critical support to Member States. Despite increasing restrictions, the Agency has worked to verify the nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. By assisting more than 140 countries and territories, through its technical cooperation programme in areas such as health, nutrition, food, agriculture and climate change, the IAEA has contributed to efforts to advance the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

“And, of course, the IAEA has been at the forefront of the critical task to ensure the safety, security and safeguarding of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, especially Zaporizhzhya NPP. I thank the Director General and his team for their critical work to consult with relevant parties on concrete measures to ensure the safety of the plant and the area surrounding it.

“I believe that the presence of the IAEA at the plant is a very important deterrent and repeat my call for an end to attacks, and for the reestablishment of the purely civilian nature of this plant.

“I look forward to further strengthening our cooperation across the board. I wish you a successful General Conference.”

3. Statement by the Director General

34. The DIRECTOR GENERAL said that the combination of circumstances — war in Europe, the food crisis, and an energy crisis compounded by the pressures of climate change — albeit astounding, considerably strengthened his personal commitment to his duties. Although the Agency could not change the situation, it could at least address some of those substantial challenges and mitigate the risks.

35. At the forefront of the Agency's concerns was the situation in Ukraine — and he agreed with the UN Secretary-General that the war must stop. In the meantime, the Agency must do everything in its power to prevent a nuclear accident, which would only compound the ongoing tragedy. He had visited Ukraine and the Agency's mission in the country several times since February 2022. Zaporizhzhya NPP — the largest in Europe — was under fire, and the Agency needed to act. Otherwise, if a human-made incident were to occur there, the international community would be guilty of inaction. A plan was already in place to prevent such an occurrence, however, and a week earlier he had begun consultations with the Russian Federation and Ukraine to urgently establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the plant. He would pursue consultations to that end in order to stabilize an otherwise entirely unacceptable situation.

36. He paid homage to the permanent Agency presence established at the plant — the first of its kind to be established at a facility during wartime. The Agency would continue to keep the international community informed of the situation and, as far as possible, deter the actions of those who wished to cause harm at the site. He hoped to be able to deliver news of more positive developments regarding the establishment of a protection zone.

37. Given the close link between the war in Ukraine and the global climate and energy crises, many countries — confirmed users of nuclear energy and new users alike — were looking to nuclear power as a way of meeting energy needs while addressing global warming. The Agency would continue its work in all 32 countries where nuclear reactors were operational or under construction. Many States, especially developing countries, wished to benefit from what was a clean source of energy, especially through the use of SMRs. The Agency would continue to help all such countries build the necessary capacities, in full respect for Article IV of the NPT, in which the principle of unfettered access to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology was enshrined.

38. The Agency would continue to ensure that nuclear energy held its rightful place in global energy debates, including at the upcoming 27th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Egypt — a country which embodied changing attitudes towards nuclear energy, itself having only recently decided to launch a nuclear programme.

39. While efforts to promote nuclear energy were important, so was what the Agency was doing to use nuclear applications to improve the lives of those in need, such as combating non-communicable diseases, especially cancer. In February 2022, he had visited Addis Ababa, where, together with the President of the African Union, he had launched Rays of Hope. Some 70% of the African population had no access to radiotherapy and in many other parts of the world — in Latin America and Asia — patients were dying of preventable and curable forms of cancer. Through Rays of Hope, many African countries had begun working with the Agency to improve their cancer control capacities.

40. He called on Member States to support Rays of Hope — its goals were neither costly nor difficult to achieve. The Agency had the necessary technology and know-how, and was working in close cooperation with WHO on implementation. The Agency was also working cooperatively on food security and he had recently met with the Director of FAO to discuss plans to that end. The Seibersdorf laboratories were providing support in many areas necessary to combat both the current food crisis and problems linked to global warming.

41. The Agency had launched another flagship initiative, NUTEC Plastics, to combat the urgent issue of plastic pollution — and environmental degradation in general. It hoped to expand the initiative worldwide.

42. The Agency took its role as the nuclear watchdog seriously. It had a duty to ensure that the blessing that was nuclear energy for peace and development was not turned into an instrument of destruction and suffering, especially as increasing numbers of countries adopted nuclear power.

43. In addition, the Agency was concerned with addressing the headline issues, such as the outstanding issues in relation to Iran. He therefore welcomed the presence of the Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, with whom he planned to meet later that same day.

44. Common solutions to such issues needed to be found, as the problems faced would not go away on their own. The DPRK, unfortunately, was not taking such an approach, however, choosing instead to forge ahead with its nuclear programme, in violation of several UN Security Council resolutions.

45. The world of proliferation and safeguards was evolving. With the advent of projects on naval nuclear propulsion, the Agency must also provide the necessary technical answers to such issues, as foreseen under the existing legal framework.

46. He concluded by acknowledging that the Agency's workload was vast. While the international community faced an enormous number of problems, the Agency had the immense privilege of doing something about them. He looked forward to hearing from all Member States during the Conference and, above all, receiving their indispensable support.

5. Contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2023 (GC(66)/15)

47. The PRESIDENT, recalling that, on 6 June 2022, the Board had recommended a figure of €92 600 000 as the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 2023, drew attention to the table in document GC(66)/15 showing the contribution that each Member State would need to make in order to meet its share of that target.

48. The early pledging and payment of contributions to the TCF greatly helped the Secretariat in planning the Agency's TC programmes. All delegations in a position to do so were urged to notify the Secretariat during the current session of the contributions that their Governments would be making for 2023. He was pleased to note that 32 Member States had already made their.

49. He would provide an update at the end of the session on the contributions pledged and hoped to be able to report favourably on the percentage of the 2023 target figure already pledged.

6. General debate and Annual Report for 2021 (G(66)/4)

50. Mr ESLAMI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the aim of his country's development plans was to ensure sustained and sustainable progress along with the promotion of justice. To that end, a comprehensive strategic document for the development of nuclear power had been approved at the national level. The nuclear share of national electricity production was to be increased to at least 20% and a 10-year plan for creating nuclear capacity totalling 10 000 MWe was foreseen. The document also addressed the development and application of radioisotopes, and called for increased use of radiation in health, agriculture, environment and industry. Iran therefore welcomed the Rays of Hope initiative, the theme of the 2022 Scientific Forum.

51. Turning to climate-related matters, he said that the Agency had special responsibility for achieving global targets of zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Director General had highlighted the importance of the issue in various international forums, including the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, and at the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in New York.

52. He wished to take the opportunity to make some clarifications about the JCPOA, which had been the outcome of a collective effort to strike a delicate balance of reciprocal commitments and responsibilities. Iran was to limit its nuclear enrichment activities, reduce its capacity, slow its momentum and accept a robust verification system for a specified period of time; in return, the cruel and illegal sanctions and other obstacles standing in the way of Iran's international economic, commercial and financial cooperation and interactions were to be lifted. Furthermore, the JCPOA, as a confidence building tool, was to prevent baseless allegations being made against a peaceful nuclear programme and other activities carried out by Iran. However, against the will of the international community, the USA had violated provisions of the JCPOA and Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), withdrawn from the Plan and resorted to its infamous 'maximum pressure policy', which had failed miserably.

53. After two and a half years of the USA's continued stepping up of economic sanctions against different sectors of Iran's economy and the absence of any practical steps by the E3 or European Union to meet their commitments, the Iranian parliament had enacted a strategic action plan with a view to the lifting of sanctions and protection of Iran's national interests, which required, inter alia, certain actions from the AEOI, which he led.

54. As had been stated repeatedly, Iran still adhered to the 2015 deal. Iran's remedial measures had been taken in response to the violation of obligations by the other side. If the other parties returned to their obligations by removing all obstacles and lifting the sanctions, the implementation of remedial measures would cease, pending authorization by the relevant Iranian authorities, including Parliament.

55. As a responsible Member State, Iran had always lent its support to the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the NPT and its CSA. His country had an exemplary record of cooperation with the Agency. There were no undeclared nuclear materials and activities in Iran and all allegations to the contrary were based on false and fabricated information provided by the Israeli regime. Iran expected the Agency to conduct its reporting on verification activities in a more professional, impartial and independent manner.

56. The Agency was expected to preserve its integrity and credibility and not allow certain elements to raise under different guises old allegations that had been closed in 2015. Iran believed that the Agency must refrain from relying on baseless information from unreliable sources. In that vein, the Agency must maintain its independence, impartiality and professionalism and play a constructive role.

57. Drawing attention to the dangerous consequences of the acts of sabotage by the Israeli regime against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities and its assassination of Iranian scientists, he said that the aim of those malicious acts was not only to devastate Iran's nuclear industry, but also to undermine any possible political solution. Those desperate and criminal actions by the Israeli regime should have been met with a firm response from the Agency. By exerting political pressure, the Israeli regime had forced the US Government to withdraw from the JCPOA.

58. He concluded by emphasizing that Iran had always cooperated fully with the Agency in order to maintain the continuity of knowledge regarding its peaceful nuclear activities. The Joint Statement between the Agency and the AEOI, issued in March 2022, was a clear example of such cooperation. Iran's current remedial measures, including those relating to surveillance equipment beyond the CSA and the robust verification system, would not be reversed until the illegitimate sanctions were lifted and baseless allegations about Iran's peaceful nuclear programme were withdrawn. In the meantime, Iran stood ready for dialogue and engagement to constructively address and clarify any ambiguities.

59. Mr HOEKSTRA (Netherlands) said that, in the current unstable and grim reality, international cooperation was more important than ever and the Agency's work was absolutely essential. Over the preceding months, one name had been on everyone's mind: Zaporizhzhya. The incidents at that NPP in Ukraine continued to pose a great danger to workers and anyone living nearby. He commended the Director General and his team for their boldness and determination in protecting the safety of those people — and that of the international community. The Director General had carried off an important diplomatic feat in ensuring that inspections could take place at the power plant. By doing so, he had shown the value not only of his own work, but also of the agreements that had been signed, and the value of the rules-based order.

60. Despite the terrible conflict, the Agency's work continued: its inspections, underpinned by common interests, formed the basis of global safety and security. It was paramount that the seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security were upheld as they represented the most fundamental of the rules to be followed in order to ensure the safe and secure operation of nuclear facilities. They were easy to understand and did not require a full read-through of the Agency's Safety Standards and Nuclear Security Series.

61. In the current instability, Member States had to be able to rely on commitments to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. In that respect, they must continue to strengthen the existing regime. Fundamental to international peace and security, the NPT represented States' shared determination to prevent nuclear conflict and work towards global zero. But, like any other commitment, it required a collaborative effort to ensure it remained relevant. The Netherlands had therefore endeavoured to play a constructive role as one of the Co-Chairs of the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. His country regretted the blocking of the final document by the Russian Federation, which had prevented a consensus from being reached. However, 190 countries had been ready to compromise and strike a deal. That positive momentum should help the international community to keep moving forward in making the world a safer place.

62. In the current instability, safeguards were another necessity. Without them, there would be no non-proliferation regime. The Netherlands therefore called on Member States that had not yet done so to sign and ratify a CSA and an Additional Protocol. It supported the State-level approach, ensuring a safeguards system that was fit for purpose. And, in respect of new commitments with regard to non-proliferation, a renewed nuclear agreement with Iran remained of the utmost importance.

63. Everyone was aware of the importance and positive impact of nuclear technology. It could help cure, feed and protect people, and improve lives and the world as a whole, provided it was safe and secure and did not contribute to nuclear proliferation. The Agency helped on all of those counts. As the

use of nuclear technology grew, so did the amount of nuclear material worldwide. It must be ensured that that material was used responsibly. And that the Agency had the means and tools to apply its safeguards, and carry out its safety and security tasks. In other words, the international community needed the boldness and determination shown by the Director General and the Secretariat to protect global safety and security.

64. Mr KORIKOV (Ukraine) expressed his country's gratitude to the Director General for his outstanding leadership during a difficult year. He said that, for the first time in history, a country using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes — operating 15 NPPs, in his country's case — had undergone the military seizure and occupation of one of its nuclear facilities — in Ukraine's case, the largest in Europe: Zaporizhzhya NPP. The exclusion zone around Chornobyl Unit 4, where the largest human-made accident in history had occurred, had also been occupied.

65. The Russian Federation had seized peaceful nuclear facilities in Ukraine by military means and occupied them. The Russian Federation was a nuclear State and a permanent member of the Security Council. Yet, the Russian Federation was also a nuclear terrorist State that, in 2022, had carried out an unprovoked full-scale invasion of an independent State and occupied both Zaporizhzhya and Chornobyl NPPs. The Russian Federation had deployed heavy weapons to shell facilities at the site of Zaporizhzhya NPP, in the immediate vicinity of the six nuclear reactors and a spent nuclear fuel storage facility. The Russian Federation — and nobody else — had shelled the NPP's satellite town of Enerhodar, where civilians, including NPP personnel families, lived. Other Ukrainian cities had been shelled from the Zaporizhzhya NPP site.

66. The Russian Federation was a State that terrorized and tortured NPP employees, who were working under tremendous psychological pressure. The Russian Federation was a State that launched cruise missiles over NPP sites, ignoring the no-fly zone around them. Heavy weapons and ammunition belonging to the Russian Federation were located inside the turbine halls of Zaporizhzhya NPP Units 1 and 2. The list of Russian nuclear terrorist acts carried out at Ukrainian nuclear facilities, including shelling the neutron source, was a long one.

67. He launched an appeal to the Agency and the global community: because of Russian actions, the whole world was on the brink of a nuclear disaster whose consequences would be planet-wide, and it was still impossible to predict them. The spread of an emergency release of energy in the event of such a disaster, depending on the direction of air mass transfer, might enter the territory of other countries. He called on other States not to be indifferent and not to expect that the consequences of any potential nuclear accident would bypass them. Instead, they should use every lever of influence to stop the country occupying the NPP from carrying out its terrorist activities.

68. He personally thanked the Director General for organizing and leading missions to Chornobyl and Zaporizhzhya NPPs. The reports on the mission outcomes had become indisputable evidence of the crimes of the Russian army in the occupied territories and documentary confirmation for the international community. However, the report on the mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP had not yet helped to solve the main issues there: the cessation of shelling of nuclear facilities, demilitarization and an end to the occupation of the plant. The total withdrawal of the Russian occupation troops and Rosatom representatives from the territory of Zaporizhzhya NPP had to be the main goal of the mission.

69. His country highly appreciated the adoption on 15 September 2022 of the Board of Governors resolution² on the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine. It strongly supported the call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease all actions against and at Zaporizhzhya NPP and any other nuclear facility in Ukraine, in order for the competent Ukrainian

² GOV/2022/58

authorities to regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, including Zaporizhzhya NPP, to ensure their safe and secure operation, and in order for the Agency to fully and safely conduct its safeguards verification activities, in accordance with Ukraine's agreement pursuant to the NPT and the Statute. Yet, even after the adoption of that resolution, in the early hours of 19 September 2022 the Russian Federation had attacked another Ukrainian nuclear facility, South Ukraine NPP, with a cruise missile. It had fallen just 300 metres from the nuclear reactors.

70. On behalf of Ukraine, he wished to thank the partner countries that had already provided — or would be providing in the near future — equipment for Ukrainian organizations in the framework of RANET. That equipment was needed for restoring the capabilities of organizations that had suffered as a result of the Russian military occupation and would be used to remedy the negative consequences for nuclear and radiation safety caused by military actions carried out on the territory of Ukraine. His country highly appreciated the Agency's efforts and coordinating role in the process.

71. He concluded by thanking the Agency for the international technical assistance about to be provided to Ukraine. Even in wartime, his country remained fully committed to its obligations under the NPT, and under the CSA and additional protocol in particular. However, if nothing was done to stop the Russian Federation, the international community would remain hostage to a nuclear terrorist State. Nobody knew which NPP, in which country, would be its next target.

72. Ms DRÁBOVÁ (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Iceland aligned themselves with her statement.

73. Acknowledging the unprecedented circumstances of the sixty-sixth regular session, she said that the European Union strongly condemned the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine — a gross violation of international law, notably the UN Charter, severely undermining European and global security and stability.

74. The European Union was of the opinion that the Russian Federation's actions posed serious and direct threats to nuclear safety and security and the Agency's safeguards verification activities in Ukraine. It was deeply concerned that all seven of the indispensable 'pillars' outlined by the Director General had been compromised as a result of Russian aggression. Echoing the Director General's words, the European Union urged that a nuclear accident must not be added to the tragedy of the war in Ukraine.

75. Recalling that the European Union attached great importance to the whole of the Agency's mandate, she expressed its strong backing for its work to assist Ukraine, notably its Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and its continued presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP. The European Union also backed the Director General's proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the NPP. There was only one sustainable solution: the Russian Federation must stop its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, above all from Zaporizhzhya NPP, and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders.

76. Turning to the JCPOA, she said that the European Union reaffirmed its resolute commitment to, and continued support for, full and effective implementation of the Plan. The European Union was increasingly concerned at Iran's continued actions, which were inconsistent with the JCPOA: they had severe, and in the case of R&D activities, irreversible proliferation implications and some actions had no plausible civilian justification. Iran should promptly return to full JCPOA implementation, including all transparency measures. The European Union supported the intensive diplomatic efforts within the JCPOA Joint Commission and the contacts made by the EU High Representative, as Coordinator of the Joint Commission, with all relevant partners to achieve a return to the JCPOA by the USA and the resumption of full implementation of all JCPOA commitments by Iran and the USA.

77. Noting that the JCPOA negotiations were separate from Iran's legally binding obligations under the NPT, the European Union urged Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency to resolve all pending safeguards issues, in accordance with its legally binding obligations under its CSA.

78. The European Union condemned the DPRK's continued engagement in nuclear and ballistic missile activities and regretted the lack of action towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It urged the DPRK to comply with obligations under a number of Security Council resolutions and to return to negotiations. It should take immediate steps towards abandoning all nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

79. The European Union regretted that the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons had not achieved consensus on a final outcome document owing to the position of the Russian Federation. The European Union would continue promoting the implementation of the NPT and its universalization and continue the discussions held during the Review Conference to prepare for the new review cycle. As a cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the legally binding obligations and past commitments of the NPT remained valid. Furthermore, the European Union reaffirmed its support for the establishment of a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as agreed at the 1995 NPT Review Conference, and for the establishment of a working group to strengthen the review cycle.

80. The European Union supported the strengthening of the Agency's safeguards system and called for the universalization of CSAs and the Additional Protocol without delay. It urged all States which had not done so to amend their SQPs and apply CSAs.

81. As it attached the utmost importance to nuclear safety, the European Union had developed a legally binding nuclear safety framework and provided support beyond its member States through the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation, with a budget of 300 million euros.

82. Stressing the importance of strengthening nuclear security worldwide, the European Union encouraged all Member States to promote a strong nuclear safety and security culture and implement the highest possible nuclear safety and radiation protection standards. The European Union recognized the central role of the Agency in facilitating international cooperation and providing technical assistance.

83. The European Union reaffirmed its strong commitment to international nuclear safety and security conventions, supported their implementation and called on all States to join them. The European Union stressed the need to consider new legally binding international rules prohibiting armed attacks against nuclear installations devoted to peaceful purposes.

84. The European Union reaffirmed its commitment to the Agency's TC Programme and support for the Agency's work in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to reach the SDGs and the Paris Agreement commitments, including in the context of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. The European Union acknowledged that Member States pursued different approaches to ensure energy security at affordable costs and that countries could decide whether to include nuclear power in their energy mix to collectively achieve the 2030 Climate Target Plan and the Paris Agreement commitments. It also acknowledged the role of nuclear technologies in limiting climate change and mitigating its negative effects. Moreover, it welcomed the 2022 Scientific Forum on the theme of "Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All".

85. Welcoming the Agency's strong commitment to gender equality, the European Union was proud to be the largest donor to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

86. Lastly, as one of the largest donors to the Agency overall, the European Union expected efficient and effective programme delivery. The European Union therefore hoped that Member States would ensure sustainable funding for the Agency's key activities.

87. Mr SCHALLENBERG (Austria), noting that his country was proud to host the Agency, said that, since the previous regular session, monumental shifts had been witnessed on the European continent. War had returned to Europe, with the unprovoked aggression by a nuclear armed State against its sovereign neighbour. It was a war in Europe, but it was not a European war; its shockwaves were felt around the world, as had been made very obvious during the previous week's UN General Assembly.

88. The Russian Federation's brutal invasion of Ukraine had been accompanied by explicit nuclear blackmail and the occupation of Zaporizhzhya NPP — the largest in Europe — by Russian armed forces. Those actions showed an alarming degree of irresponsibility, risking catastrophic consequences for everyone. He saluted the leadership of the Director General and the determination and expertise of his whole team at the Agency. They were the world's insurance, its eyes and ears on the ground, offering at least some sense of security in such troubling times. Austria stood fully behind them and fully supported the establishment of a safety zone around the Zaporizhzhya plant, as the responsible and logical thing to do.

89. Over the previous months, Vienna had hosted the Iran nuclear talks. Austria was grateful for the European Union's untiring efforts to enable all sides to return to full participation in and compliance with the JCPOA. That was crucial in order to avoid a nuclear arms race in the region, with disastrous consequences for security and stability. Nonetheless, it was very disappointing that there was still no agreement and the window of opportunity was almost closed. Meanwhile, Iran was increasing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, serving no civilian purpose. He called on Iran to fully cooperate with the Agency on safeguards and provide the necessary information.

90. The developments of recent months had shaken the entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime to the core. Nuclear risks had not been so high for decades. And yet the mechanisms put into place to deal with them were not working. The NPT Review Conference had been a failure, and not just because the Russian Federation had decided to block consensus on the final document. Member States had to be clear-eyed that the whole process was disappointing, because of the unwillingness of nuclear weapons States to move forward on nuclear disarmament. Many still believed in the logic of nuclear deterrence, a logic that he fundamentally disagreed with. Because deterrence required credibility — the readiness to actually use nuclear weapons — it was nothing less than a massive nuclear sword of Damocles hanging over everyone's heads. The downward spiral must serve as a wake-up call: the nuclear status quo was not sustainable.

91. A new momentum and a paradigm shift were needed, such as those represented by the TPNW. He was proud that the first meeting of States Parties, held in Vienna in June 2022, had delivered results: a strong condemnation of all nuclear threats and an ambitious programme to implement the Treaty. Austria would not tire of convincing others of the positive transformational power of the TPNW.

92. In addition to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the world currently faced the urgent task of diversifying and decarbonizing its energy sources. Everyone was suffering from high energy prices and the Russian Federation's cynical use of energy as a weapon. Member States' citizens rightly looked to their leaders for answers. Austria did not, however, consider nuclear fission as a sustainable or safe way to generate electricity or to fight climate change. It would rather invest in renewable energy technologies that were simple and quick to implement, easy to maintain, and had none of the safety, security and proliferation risks of nuclear power.

93. He concluded noting that, while the challenges before the international community were far-reaching, the tools to meet them were undoubtedly available. States only had to make proper use of the Agency and its independent expertise and respect both the letter and the spirit of the NPT.

94. Mr LIKHACHEV (Russian Federation) said that the entire system of international cooperation in the nuclear power industry had faced unprecedented challenges over the previous six months. Politicization of the activities of certain international organizations had reached unparalleled levels. Cynical and absurd accusations were being made against the Russian Federation, going far beyond the framework of their statutory activities.

95. In such a challenging situation, the Agency was withstanding the strength test and had stayed within the parameters of its professional mandate, despite the attempts of some Member States to convert it into a platform for promoting political views. It was important that the Agency continued to maintain a professional and non-politicized approach.

96. The principled position of the Russian Federation was that ensuring the nuclear safety and physical protection of nuclear facilities was its absolute priority, regardless of their location. It supported the Agency's efforts to ensure the nuclear safety and physical protection of the nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Moreover, it strictly observed the seven nuclear safety principles established by the Director General.

97. Referring to the statements being delivered in plenary, he stated that everybody had the right to his or her own opinion within the framework of the UN system. But nobody had the right to his or her 'own' facts. And the facts were the following:

98. Ukrainian armed forces had attacked Zaporizhzhya NPP with the use of drone aircraft, heavy artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems. Ukrainian sabotage groups had blasted the power transmission line pylons of Kursk NPP, on Russian territory, posing a direct threat to nuclear safety.

99. There were no Russian armed forces at Zaporizhzhya NPP. There were service personnel from the Russian National Guard performing security functions. And there were special-purpose vehicles belonging to the radiation, chemical and biological protection forces, which were essential for assuring NPP nuclear safety against a background of endless Ukrainian attacks. Several Rosatom specialists were present at the NPP site, but they did not interfere with plant operation control. Their only objective was to assist with the administration of ensuring NPP safety.

100. From the very beginning, the Russian Federation had supported the efforts of the Agency and its Director General to arrange a mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP. Russia had done its best to ensure the visit by Agency experts to the power plant could take place as early as June 2022. The visit had failed through no fault of the Russian Federation. It had actively assisted in arranging the Agency's mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP at the end of August. He took the opportunity to highlight the courage of the international mission participants and the Director General in particular.

101. The Russian Federation encouraged the permanent presence of two Agency employees at the site of Zaporizhzhya NPP. The solution would enable speculation of all kinds in relation to the situation at the NPP to be dispelled. The Russian authorities kept in working contact with them, guaranteed their safety and proper working and living conditions, and made sure that nobody interfered with their work.

102. The Russian Federation would be providing all further assistance with the Agency's safeguards activities, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP. It stood ready for cooperation on the technical aspects of the nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP, in order to agree on its creation as quickly as possible.

103. In spite of the dramatic circumstances, the Russian Federation's cooperation with the Agency in the basic statutory areas had not stopped. It was financing major Agency projects through the TC Programme, the Nuclear Security Fund, the Member State Support Programme, the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy and the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles. Russian experts were participating in Agency events and making substantial contributions to Agency activities. The climate agenda was becoming increasingly important in the latter, and the Russian Federation was systematically participating in all work on the topic carried out under the Agency's leadership.

104. The argument most often used against nuclear power generation was based on the allegedly unsolvable problem of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste management. His country's solution was to use fast neutron reactors for closing the nuclear fuel cycle and it was proposing the same approach to its partners.

105. Turning to the main events in the nuclear industry, both in the Russian Federation and international cooperation, he said that, in spite of the unprecedented pressure of sanctions, his country was fulfilling all obligations undertaken within the framework of concluded contracts. None of the construction projects had stopped. In April 2022, the time limits for implementing the national nuclear science and technology development programme had been extended to 2030 by presidential decree. Its priorities remained unchanged: the development of spent nuclear fuel handling technologies, the closed fuel cycle, and SMRs.

106. The Russian Federation attached special importance to the development of small-scale nuclear power generation. It was building an onshore plant with a 55 MW capacity in the Republic of Sakha based on the RITM-200N reactor. The world's only floating NPP, with two low-power reactors, was operating in Chukotka, and a further four upgraded power units would be deployed. He noted with satisfaction that the Agency was actively integrating SMR technologies into its existing rules and regulations, above all in the framework of the unofficial Group of Vienna platform established at the initiative of the Director General.

107. He concluded with the words addressed by President Putin to the participants at the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: "All countries complying with the NPT requirements shall have the right of access to the peaceful atom without any additional conditions. We are ready to share our experience in the area of nuclear power engineering with our partners".

108. Ms TAKAICHI (Japan) said that her country highly commended the Agency's work in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and non-proliferation. Committed to contributing to global peace and prosperity, Japan supported the leadership of the Director General.

109. At the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in August 2022, Prime Minister Kishida had announced the Hiroshima Action Plan for a world without nuclear weapons, and had reiterated Japan's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It was deeply regrettable that the final document had not been adopted by consensus owing to an objection by the Russian Federation. Japan would continue, however, to work with the Agency to maintain and strengthen the international non-proliferation regime and to facilitate the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy underpinned by the NPT.

110. Japan was gravely concerned about the situation of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Russian military activities at or near NPPs and other facilities in Ukraine, and the Russian Federation's unjustifiable and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, could not be tolerated. Japan condemned the Russian Federation's actions in the strongest terms.

111. Japan commended and supported the continuous efforts of the Agency to secure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine on the basis of the ‘seven pillars’, which included the Agency’s assistance to Ukraine and its mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP. In that regard, Japan had pledged €2 million to support the Agency’s efforts. It underlined the need to restore, without delay, the safety and security of Ukraine’s nuclear facilities and materials.

112. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy played an important role for prosperity. Unlocking the immense potential of nuclear energy made it possible to address a wide array of global challenges, such as climate change and energy security and to implement SDGs. Japan had contributed €1 million in 2022 through the PUI to the Rays of Hope, the initiative launched by the Director General in February. Japan placed top priority on safety, taking into account the lessons learned from TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station Accident, and would continue to work together with the Agency to ensure the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in a sustainable manner.

113. The decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station had been steadily advancing and environmental restoration activities off site had been continuing, with the cooperation of the Agency, whose mandate and expertise for that purpose were unique.

114. Regarding the handling of the ALPS treated water, with the involvement of international experts the Agency had been conducting reviews of the safety and regulatory aspects of the water along with marine monitoring. Japan highly appreciated the professional work of the Agency, which had been carried out in an independent, objective and transparent manner. In close cooperation with the international community, including the Agency, Japan would continue to advance its efforts in a transparent and scientific manner in accordance with domestic and international safety standards.

115. Agency safeguards were the fundamental instrument for ensuring global nuclear non-proliferation. Japan strongly supported the Agency’s efforts to make them more effective and efficient, and strongly supported the universalization of the CSA and additional protocol. The international community should continue to work together to resolve all regional non-proliferation issues.

116. The DPRK’s nuclear and missile programmes posed a serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime and were totally unacceptable. Japan strongly urged the DPRK to take steps towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all WMDs, ballistic missiles of all ranges and related programmes. In that regard, she emphasized the critical importance for all States to fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions, and noted that the denuclearization of the DPRK required robust verification, in which the Agency should play an important role.

117. With regard to Iran’s nuclear-related activities, Japan supported the JCPOA to uphold the international non-proliferation regime. It would proactively contribute to efforts towards achieving the return to compliance with the JCPOA by all countries concerned.

118. Lastly, she said that gender parity expanded the horizon in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and non-proliferation. Japan therefore welcomed the continued efforts by the Agency to achieve gender parity, including through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, to which Japan was a proud contributor.

119. Mr SZIJJÁRTÓ (Hungary) said that the European Union was heading towards economic recession having already faced a very serious energy supply crisis. A European energy market as such did not exist and prices were skyrocketing. As east-to-west supply chains were being interrupted, the situation greatly enhanced the importance of nuclear energy. It was undoubtedly a fact that, without nuclear energy, there was no security of energy supply in Europe. And without nuclear energy, there

could be no affordable energy in Europe. Greater capacities in nuclear energy would decrease Europe's dependency on totally unpredictable changes in the energy environment.

120. Nuclear energy capacities were the same as national sovereignty. For more than four decades, Hungary had had a very positive experience with using nuclear energy. It was cheap, safe and sustainable, and without it Hungary would find it absolutely impossible to meet its green goals. The European Union had introduced sanctions because of the war. But in the first package it had been made crystal clear that the peaceful use of nuclear energy did not fall under the sanctions regime. Unfortunately, regardless of that, some entities in the European Union were trying to outdo each other, forever trying to put hurdles and obstacles in the way of investments in nuclear energy.

121. He emphasized that Hungary considered all actions — whether they were carried out by the institutions in Brussels, national export authorities or by banks operating in Europe — to put obstacles in the way of the construction of its NPP to be attacks on its sovereignty. For Hungary the issue of energy supply security was an issue of sovereignty. Indeed, it had decided to build a new NPP in order to ensure the security of its energy supply and, by extension, to protect its sovereignty.

122. The two new reactors would definitely comply with the strictest safety requirements and regulations. After all, Hungary was a neighbour of Austria, and therefore had to ensure such compliance. It was an international project led by Rosatom — with companies from France, Germany and the USA among the subcontractors. He was happy to announce that the construction licence for the planned NPP had been issued. According to the schedule, the first concrete would be laid by the end of 2023 and the new NPP should be operational as of 2030. Thanks to that investment, Hungary would prevent the annual emission of 17 million tonnes of CO².

123. Hungary had an absolute right to build the NPP — because the composition of a country's energy mix was a national competence. Moreover, there were no European sanctions against nuclear energy. Putting obstacles in the way of nuclear investment would be a violation of European regulations. In fact, as there was an energy supply crisis in Europe, Hungary had decided to submit a request to the European Union to prolong the lifetime of all nuclear reactors currently operating. Hungary expected the European institutions to carry out a fair and fact-based procedure, without taking any kind of ideological or political approach.

124. Noting that the European Union was planning to put together another sanctions package, he said that there was a red line for Hungary in that regard. It would never support — and had never supported — any sanctions that could endanger the country's energy supply security. Hungary had never supported — and would never support — any sanctions that could endanger nuclear investment, be it directly or indirectly. Hungary would never support any kind of sanctions regarding engineering, construction or IT services relating to nuclear facilities. The point he was making had no Russian or Ukrainian element. Hungary did not care what those countries thought about its position. It cared only about one thing, its national interest. And its national interest was that it should be able to guarantee the secure supply of energy for Hungary. That was why it was doing its best to complete the construction of the NPP as quickly as possible, so as to include it in the national energy mix and connect it to the country's power grid.

125. Hungary supported the Agency and counted on its support. In its endeavours, Hungary counted on the Agency to ensure that there would be a level playing field in the future of nuclear energy in Europe. It counted on the Agency to oppose any kind of negative discrimination against nuclear energy in political discourse in Europe. Hungary was opposed to any kind of unnecessary political or ideological debates that would endanger its investment in nuclear.

126. Lastly, he expressed Hungary's support for the Director General's actions and his brave efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security globally, often in very challenging circumstances.

127. Ms GRANHOLM (United States of America) read out the following message from President Biden:

“This year’s General Conference arrives at a defining moment in history. We face an existential climate crisis, fast-paced technological innovation, and Russia’s brutal and unnecessary invasion of Ukraine. We can tackle these challenges by building on the work done at the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and working with the IAEA to promote non-proliferation, safety and security standards as we advance peaceful applications of the atom.

“My Administration is dedicated to re-establishing US leadership in nuclear energy as we tackle the climate crisis. We seek to establish the additional protocol as a universal standard for nuclear supply arrangements, while also limiting the spread of sensitive enrichment and reprocessing technologies.

“That is why we are working closely with the IAEA to ensure that the AUKUS partnership involving Australia, the UK and the USA meets the highest non-proliferation standard.

“Strengthening nuclear and radioactive material security is one of my Administration’s highest priorities and I look forward to working with the IAEA to continue our collective efforts to counter WMDs, thwart terrorism and improve nuclear and radioactive material security practices. The United States is committed to working with partners worldwide to secure these materials and further reduce the threats of nuclear and radiological terrorism.

“Our efforts to promote responsible nuclear stewardship stand in stark contrast to Russia’s recent reckless and irresponsible words and actions.

“After weeks of good-faith negotiations from the international community, Russia blocked consensus on a final document at the NPT Review Conference. Russia’s seizure of Ukrainian nuclear facilities casts doubt upon Moscow’s commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and undermines its credibility as a nuclear energy supplier. And the Kremlin has repeatedly made overt nuclear threats against Europe.

“My Administration reaffirms our support for Director General Grossi’s seven pillars of nuclear safety and security, and we call on Russia to immediately withdraw its troops from Ukraine — and cease military activity at and near Ukraine’s nuclear facilities. I am grateful for the professionalism and dedication of Ukrainian operators at Zaporizhzhya NPP and for their efforts to ensure the plant remains safe under difficult circumstances.

“In this time of great upheaval, we must provide unequivocal support — through our words and our resources — for the international non-proliferation regime and for the IAEA’s indispensable role in addressing global challenges.”

128. She added that the Biden–Harris Administration believed that the world’s collective climate security and energy security would grow alongside innovation and expansion in civil nuclear power. Nuclear currently offered the best source of carbon-free baseload power. It was safe, clean and reliable. Advances in nuclear technology would help increase global energy capacity to meet rising electricity needs without fossil fuels — clearing a pathway to a net-zero world. And for those countries held hostage by Russian fossil fuels, nuclear power, freed of Russian supply chains, was part of the solution to sever that dependence.

129. Under President Biden’s agenda billions of dollars were being invested at the US Department of Energy to ramp up the development and demonstration of next-generation reactors. Her country looked forward to showcasing its efforts at the 5th International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in

Washington DC, in October 2022. Of course, as it encouraged an expansion of civil nuclear power, the USA would also uphold the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation.

130. She concluded by reiterating the unwavering support of the USA for the Government and people of Ukraine, and its commitment to the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities amid the barbaric invasion by the Russian Federation.

131. Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia) said that the General Conference reflected the Agency's important role in promoting international cooperation with the goal of harnessing the Atom for Peace and Development. Welcoming the launch of several pivotal initiatives concerning nuclear technology and its regulatory aspects in Member States, Saudi Arabia appreciated the outstanding efforts led by Director General to promote the Agency's role in the use of nuclear technology to solve global challenges, in a safe environment free of nuclear threat.

132. Saudi Arabia firmly believed that peaceful cooperation between countries was essential for global prosperity and stability. It had therefore contributed US \$2.5 million towards ReNuAL2 to boost nuclear and radiological regulatory capabilities and provide resources and services to Member States to ensure the safe use of nuclear technology. In addition, it had contributed US \$1 million towards ZODIAC to help to prevent infectious zoonotic disease outbreaks and enhance preparedness and responsiveness.

133. Saudi Arabia's nuclear energy policy was focused on observing the highest levels of transparency, reliability and safety in the development of peaceful uses of nuclear technology, in accordance with its international obligations. As part of its national nuclear energy programme, his country was cooperating with the Agency to develop and implement national plans to include nuclear energy in the national energy mix and meet national development requirements.

134. For that purpose, it was also working closely with the Agency to develop programmes for building national human resource capabilities in nuclear technology and regulatory aspects, which had led to rapid growth in national capacities in order to meet the highest international standards. In addition, Saudi Arabia participated in, and benefited from, the Agency's various review missions and other services, including the Convention Exercises for developing national nuclear emergency response capabilities.

135. In the light of the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Saudi Arabia emphasized the importance of concerted international efforts to implement and universalize the Treaty. It was essential to avoid the politicization of non-proliferation issues and to preserve the rights of Member States to benefit from peaceful nuclear technology and their national natural resources in accordance with the relevant international treaties and agreements.

136. Saudi Arabia commended the Director General's role in maintaining the Agency's neutrality and upholding its safeguards responsibilities, especially in relation to monitoring Iran's nuclear programme, and affirmed the Board's important role in preserving the non-proliferation regime. Iran's nuclear activities threatened regional and global peace and stability and must be properly addressed. It was important to support the Agency and the Director General to resolve all outstanding issues concerning Iran. That country must comply fully with its safeguards agreement and provide technically credible answers to the Agency about nuclear activities at undeclared sites.

137. Renewing its support for the Agency with a view to harnessing nuclear technology for humanity, Saudi Arabia lastly called on the international community to cooperate constructively in nuclear technology development and firmly oppose any attempt to use nuclear energy in a way that was neither peaceful nor safe.

138. Ms MOSKWA (Poland), pointing out that she was Polish despite her unfortunate surname, said that, had it been a normal General Conference, she would be outlining her country's plans for developing NPPs in Poland — namely that, in 2033, the first reactor would start its operations and that, by 2043,

six reactors would be providing up to 15% of the country's total energy demand. Had it been a normal Conference, she would be reiterating the importance of the Agency's TC programmes.

139. But it was definitely not a normal Conference. While the general debate was taking place, a six-reactor power plant, the biggest in Europe, namely Zaporizhzhya in Ukraine, was being occupied by Russian troops and Rosatom officials. They had invaded Ukraine and invaded the plant.

140. The Director General and his staff had visited the site and their mission report clearly indicated that, during the Russian invasion, all 'seven pillars' for ensuring nuclear safety and security had been — and continued to be — severely violated. Russian artillery was shelling the facilities. The Chornobyl nuclear analytical laboratories had been looted. South Ukraine NPP was also in grave danger. Ukrainian personnel at Zaporizhzhya were being terrorized.

141. Those plants — and all nuclear facilities — must be immediately and fully demilitarized and de-Russified, meaning no Russian troops, no Rosatom officials and no Russian citizens should remain at any NPP in Ukraine. Zaporizhzhya NPP must be fully operational and fully connected to the Ukrainian grid. Any Russian attempt to steal energy from Ukraine must be strongly condemned.

142. The Agency was a strong organization; together the Member States were stronger than each individually. She called on all Member States to unite and force the Russian Federation to leave all Ukrainian NPPs immediately. If the Russians did not comply with the law, they should be suspended. If that step did not work, the Russian Federation should be expelled from what was a reputable organization. The Agency was about the safe and secure use of nuclear technologies. It was about freedom and solidarity. It was facing a credibility test. History would judge the Agency. It was time to act.

143. Mr MOLINA ORTIZ (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that his country recognized the Agency's fundamental role in promoting the peaceful and safe use of nuclear technology worldwide and helping to achieve the SDGs. Bolivia both identified with and contributed to the vision of Atoms for Peace and Development. The Agency's role had to be continuously consolidated through the active participation of the Member States.

144. Bolivia was equally mindful of the important contribution of the safeguards system administered by the Agency to nuclear non-proliferation, an objective to which it was deeply committed, having ratified the NPT as clear testimony to the responsibility it bore in that regard.

145. He therefore welcomed the opportunity to inform other Member States of the important progress being made in the application of nuclear technology in his country. As part of a continuous dialogue between the different sectors of the country, Bolivia had been implementing a nuclear programme as a means of promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science in the fields of energy and technology — pursuant to the country's 'Well-Being' policy.

146. A nuclear technology R&D centre was to be part of the country's nuclear programme. It comprised a cyclotron radiopharmacy preclinical complex, a multipurpose irradiation complex and a nuclear research reactor to be located 4000 metres above sea level, unique in its kind. At the same time, a network of nuclear medicine and radiopharmacy centres was being created, including three state-of-the-art centres for cancer treatment. Under the dynamic leadership and drive of President Arce, two of the three centres had already started functioning and, within weeks, the cyclotron radiopharmacy preclinical and irradiation complexes would also begin operating, contributing to national development and promoting scientific and technological research for the benefit of all Bolivians.

147. In order to ensure the appropriate institutional and legislative conditions for the establishment and operation of the facilities, a new independent regulatory body had been established, strengthening national capacities for controlling and monitoring the technology. Legislation pertaining to peaceful

applications of nuclear technology had been enacted and a number of international conventions and agreements had been signed. In that connection, Bolivia had worked closely and successfully with the Agency throughout the process and hoped to continue do so in the future.

148. He concluded by reiterating Bolivia's commitment to make every effort to comply with international agreements on the safe operation of nuclear facilities and to ensure nuclear safety at all of its facilities.

149. Archbishop GALLAGHER (Holy See), conveying the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis, thanked the Director General and the Secretariat for their dedicated work. He said that the Holy See especially appreciated the Director General's tireless efforts with regard to the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, to prevent what Pope Francis had recently called "a nuclear disaster."

150. Amid the dreadful conflicts and unrest witnessed in many parts of the world, and in face of the continuing escalation of the war in Ukraine — where words and actions risked leaving less space for diplomatic solutions — the search for dialogue must never be abandoned. It should be pursued with firm and unshakeable determination, and without restrictions. Dialogue could nourish critical, rational and objective thinking. It helped to counter false beliefs and prejudices. It was a process that allowed people to consolidate the foundations of human coexistence, to identify and promote the common good, in knowledge and full respect of differences. The Holy See appealed to all nations to foster, through collective and joint commitment, a culture of care, placing human life and dignity at the centre.

151. At a moment of great uncertainty, when the world seemed to be at a crossroads, and the threat with the use of nuclear weapons had come back to haunt all nations, the Holy See appealed to those nations to silence all weapons and eliminate the causes of conflicts through tireless recourse to dialogue and negotiation. As Pope Francis had warned earlier in the year: "Those who wage war [...] forget humanity" .

152. The Holy See had no doubt that a world free from nuclear weapons was both necessary and possible. That common goal had been underlined by Pope Francis, when he had emphasized that nuclear weapons existed in the service of a mentality of fear that affected not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. For His Holiness, international relations could not be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation and the parading of stockpiles of arms. WMDs, and in particular nuclear weapons, created nothing but a false sense of security. They could not constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must instead be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.

153. The Holy See had signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with the aim of moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world entirely free of nuclear weapons, affirming that nuclear weapons were arms of mass and environmental destruction. In the face of the very slow progress being made on the disarmament agenda, especially on nuclear disarmament, there was a possibility of losing hope. However, the international community must not be deterred by setbacks. It must press ahead with perseverance and determination in its common efforts to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons. Every effort must be made to avoid dismantling the international architecture of arms control, especially in the field of WMDs.

154. The world needed to find a way to prevent unleashing the destructive power of nuclear weapons while enabling all people to share in the great benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology — in health care, food production and many other areas. The Holy See recognized the important contribution of the Agency in helping to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. CSAs between the Agency and nearly 180 countries, many of which were also implementing additional protocols, helped to provide assurance that those countries were not working on clandestine nuclear weapons programmes. That built confidence and trust, while also serving the broader goal of nuclear non-proliferation. Moreover, it

helped create a foundation for international cooperation in peaceful nuclear technology and for sharing its benefits with developing countries.

155. The Holy See supported the Agency's work to verify and monitor compliance with nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. In addition it welcomed the continued and patient efforts of the international community to revive negotiations concerning the nuclear programme of the DPRK, which threatened the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. There could be no military solution to those issues. Safeguards were an essential contribution to promoting peace and security and helped to build a climate of confidence in place of mutual recriminations. The Agency's unique safeguards system constituted an important tool in moving towards the goal of nuclear weapons free world.

156. The climate change emergencies and COVID-19 pandemic had had not only environmental, but also ethical, social, economic and political consequences. They caused great suffering to the poorest and most vulnerable humans. The Holy See favoured a model of development and sustainability based on fraternity and the alliance between the human being and the environment. By helping developing countries use nuclear technology to treat cancer, grow more food and manage scarce water supplies, the Agency played a unique role in promoting integral development, enhancing stewardship of God's creation.

157. The Holy See welcomed the Agency's support to countries in using nuclear science and technology to monitor environmental pollution. Its expert assistance was helping the world to adapt to new climate realities, including food and water shortages and ecosystem losses.

158. In particular, the Holy See appreciated the Agency's work to enable low- and middle-income countries to develop comprehensive cancer control strategies and ensure that, in time, all patients would have access to radiotherapy and nuclear medicine.

159. Ms ŠĆEPANOVIĆ (Montenegro) said that, in the face of a substantially compromised global security regime, fuelled by the unjustified and unprovoked act of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Agency's important role as an impartial, independent and objective actor was greater than ever. The situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP was of great concern to her country. It called on the Russian Federation to implement, without delay, the March³ and September⁴ 2022 resolutions of the Board of Governors, and to immediately cease all actions against and at Zaporizhzhya NPP.

160. Montenegro fully supported the Agency's work in assisting Ukraine to ensure nuclear safety and security, and to maintain the safeguards on all nuclear materials and activities in all nuclear facilities within the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. Moreover, it supported the Agency's assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya and the initiative of the Director General to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the NPP.

161. Given the unprecedented and growing number of nuclear related crises, she commended the leadership of the Director General and the dedicated and tireless efforts of the Secretariat in maintaining international peace and security. Albeit a non-nuclear State, Montenegro was an avid supporter of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and a promoter of the application of nuclear science and technology. The Agency's engagement in that domain, and the assistance offered to its Member States, had been of paramount significance.

162. The Agency's mission in service of the progress of all humankind had been clearly demonstrated in its rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was reflected in projects such as ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, and the new Rays of Hope initiative. As a proud member of the Friends of ReNuAL

³ GOV/2022/17

⁴ GOV/2022/58

and a supporter of ReNuAL2, Montenegro stood fully behind those and other Agency endeavours and was firmly committed to doing its utmost for their successful implementation.

163. Montenegro greatly benefited from its fruitful ongoing cooperation with the Agency, through comprehensive and wide-ranging technical assistance programmes, in nuclear safety and security, human and animal health, biotechnology, water and research and environmental protection of the Adriatic Sea. It would be extending its cooperation shortly, with the signing of the new Country Programme Framework between Montenegro and the Agency for the period 2022–2027.

164. In particular, she thanked the Secretariat for its support — especially the capacity building assistance received — for the regional project to establish a South East European International Institute for Sustainable Technologies. The project offered huge benefits for the region in terms of help and support for people with malignant diseases, making it a prime example of collaboration between science, technology and industry in the spirit of science for peace and development.

165. Montenegro was fully committed to strengthening, fully implementing and universalizing the multilateral regime for disarmament and non-proliferation, and to promoting the universalization and full implementation of the NPT. Montenegro continued to be a responsible and reliable partner in efforts to achieve sustainable peace and security and, accordingly, had actively participated in the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, convinced that the Treaty was the very foundation of the global non-proliferation regime.

166. In the deteriorating global security environment, and in view of the potentially catastrophic consequences of nuclear incidents, it was of paramount importance to reaffirm international norms relating to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

167. She recalled that Montenegro was a State party to all major Agency conventions and other relevant international instruments, striving to meet the highest of standards when it came to nuclear safety and security. Additionally, it had invested significant efforts in the domain of protection against the harmful effects of ionizing radiation and radioactive waste management. It was tirelessly working on upgrading capacities in that area, determined to prevent any illegal use or mismanagement of radioactive materials and related knowledge and technologies.

168. Mr JACQ (France) congratulated the Director General and the Secretariat for having ensured the continuity of all core mandatory activities, despite the many crises the Agency faced, with a view to promoting and guaranteeing the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.

169. The main focus of the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference was a war that had been raging at the heart of Europe for over seven months. In addition to the considerable human and material damage already caused, the war had many consequences for neighbouring States, Europe and the international community as a whole. The tensions occasioned further weakened world economies that had already been severely tested by the health crisis.

170. France reiterated its strong condemnation of the unprovoked and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and its invasion of a sovereign country in violation of international law, including the UN Charter, seriously undermining European and international security and stability. France was gravely concerned that the Russian Federation was not complying with the resolution⁵ adopted by the Board of Governors earlier in September 2022 and continued to compromise the seven essential pillars of nuclear safety and security announced by the Director General — pillars derived from Agency safety and security standards.

⁵ GOV/2022/58

171. The actions of the Russian Federation posed serious and direct threats to the safety and security of Ukrainian nuclear facilities and prevented the Agency and the legitimate Ukrainian authorities from safely carrying out verification activities under Ukraine's CSA. France called on the Russian Federation to cease its aggression, unconditionally withdraw all its armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine and fully respect the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

172. France welcomed and fully supported the work being done by the Agency and its Director General to assist Ukraine in ensuring nuclear safety and security and enabling the application of safeguards in Ukraine in the context of the ongoing military conflict. France stood firmly alongside the Agency and the Ukrainian Government and was already contributing to the assistance plan coordinated by the Agency.

173. Turning to the NPT, he said that France regretted that, after seven years of consultations, the Tenth Review Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons had not resulted in the adoption of a consensual final document. One State bore full responsibility for blocking it: the Russian Federation. For its part, France complied — and would continue to fully comply — with its obligations under the NPT, the very pillar of the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regimes. He recalled that the Treaty was the leading authority in that regard.

174. As part of the fight against proliferation, France, in close coordination with Germany, the UK and the USA, had been engaged for more than 18 months in discussions to return to compliance with the JCPOA. The document that the coordinator had produced at the beginning of August 2022 — the best possible outcome — had offered an opportunity to halt dangerous escalation. Unfortunately, Iran had chosen not to take advantage of a decisive diplomatic opportunity but had continued to develop its programme far beyond any plausible civilian purpose.

175. Moreover, Iran's position on the Agency's investigation into the presence of undeclared material in the country was inconsistent with its legally binding international obligations. By introducing that issue in the context of the JCPOA negotiations, Iran was jeopardizing the prospects of restoring the Plan. France stood firmly behind the Director General in his implementation of safeguards in Iran. It expected Iran to return promptly to the implementation of its additional protocol and safeguards verification measures.

176. Global warming, together with current tensions in the energy sector, had confirmed the essential shift that States needed to make towards a sustainable energy transition and the security of energy supplies. France was pursuing an energy and climate policy with a view to ensuring security of supply while meeting its ambitious environmental and climate objectives. With the primary objective of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, energy independence and sovereignty were priorities for his country. The current situation in Ukraine and its consequences only made the situation more acute. For France, nuclear energy was a key technology for achieving those objectives; nuclear was not only one of the most carbon-free energy sources throughout its life cycle, but was also a stable and controllable means of production allowing reliable grid management and high security of supply.

177. President Macron had announced the launch of a new programme to build six EPR2 nuclear reactors, in addition to the continued development of renewable energy sources on a huge scale. As innovation in the nuclear field was also a key factor in the sustainability of the industrial sector, France was giving it strong backing, earmarking public funds totalling a billion euros for innovative reactors. The important construction of a demonstration NUWARD SMR was expected to begin in 2030.

178. France encouraged the Agency to continue its activities relating to the safety of innovative reactors, in particular by assessing the applicability of Agency safety standards to related technologies. His country supported and would be contributing to the Conference on Topical Issues in Nuclear

Installation Safety: Strengthening Safety of Evolutionary and Innovative Reactor Designs, to be held in Vienna in October 2022.

179. With a view to promoting nuclear safety and security, France likewise urged the Agency to pursue its efforts to achieve the universalization of the relevant international legal instruments. It welcomed in particular the success of the Conference of the Parties to the A/CPPNM, held in March–April 2022.

180. In conclusion, his delegation called on the Agency to continue its work on developing nuclear energy, while meeting the highest standards of safety and security, and to promote its strengths in all international forums. For its part, despite all the current challenges, France stood ready to share its expertise with other States that had chosen nuclear energy.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.