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President: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

Later: Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARASIA	Co-operative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
ASEANTOM	ASEAN Network of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
COMPASS	Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
GDP	gross domestic product

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

G20	Group of Twenty
GW	gigawatt
HEU	high enriched uranium
IMS	international monitoring system
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
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
LDCs	least developed countries
LEU	low enriched uranium
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the 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
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for Controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
PET	positron emission tomography
Quadripartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
QUATRO	Quality Assurance Team for Radiation Oncology
R&D	research and development

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEED	Site and External Events Design
SIT	sterile insect technique
SMART	system-integrated modular advanced reactor
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee (resumed)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the Chair of the Eastern Europe Group had informed him that Albania had presented its candidature for the remaining position of additional member of the General Committee. He took it that the Conference agreed to elect Albania.

2. It was so decided.

6. General debate and Annual Report for 2021 (resumed)

3. Mr DJIBO (Niger) recalled that his country, one of the world's biggest uranium-producers — with enormous unexploited uranium and thorium deposits — had joined the Agency in 1969 in the conviction that peaceful applications of nuclear science and technologies could contribute to countries' socioeconomic development.

4. He said that the Niger remained convinced that, thanks to its technical assistance mechanisms, cooperation with the Agency was promising in many areas: nuclear safety and security, health, food and nutrition, water and the environment, energy, mining and industry. He expressed his country's gratitude for its multifaceted support in those areas and welcomed the signing of its CPF 2022–2027, which defined the priority areas where it would count on the Agency's full backing.

5. In the field of energy, the Niger was committed to nuclear power as an option for supplying electricity to meet national demand, which was growing exponentially, and possibly that of the sub-region. The Niger had received its first INIR mission in April 2018 and implementation of its recommendations to the national technical committee would bring the first phase of the country's programme to a conclusion in 2023. The Niger would subsequently be able to move to the second phase and would depend heavily on the Agency to meet the deadline.

6. With regard to health, he said that cancer posed a real problem in the Niger owing to its prevalence and the number of deaths caused. With Agency support, in August 2011 a national cancer centre had been set up, where women could undergo cervical and breast cancer screening free of charge and be treated at State-run health facilities. In addition the Niger had a nuclear medicine department and a pathological anatomy laboratory. The technical cobalt therapy platform at the cancer centre would benefit from the acquisition and installation of a linear accelerator, thanks to Agency and Islamic Development Bank support. As part of the Rays of Hope initiative, which covered six African countries including the Niger, his country had already undertaken studies concerning the infrastructure that would house the PET camera and the cyclotron.

7. Turning to matters of water and the environment, he welcomed the implementation, with Agency assistance, of the RAF 7021 project on improving, planning, managing and the sustainable and rational use of water resources in the Sahel.

8. On the subject of nuclear and radiological safety and security, he announced that the Niger had set up a national nuclear security committee under the country's atomic energy authority. In addition, a national regulatory agency had been set up to oversee all nuclear and radiological activities.

9. Together with the rest of the international community, the Niger was concerned about armed escalations around Zaporizhzhya NPP in Ukraine. It called on the parties to the conflict to avoid any action that could jeopardize nuclear safety and trigger a nuclear disaster whose consequences for the rest of the world were immeasurable.

10. Mr OUATTARA (Burkina Faso) said that, in June 2022, his country had participated, as an observer, in the first conference of the States parties to the TPNW. In September 2022, Burkina Faso had signed the Treaty, confirming its commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and focused on civilian uses for nuclear energy to promote global peace, security and sustainable development.

11. On his Government's behalf, he thanked one of the champions of the peaceful uses of the atom, the Director General, and also all the Agency's staff, for all the support his country had received. He congratulated them on the progress made in implementing all the sectoral programmes in response to the resolutions adopted at previous sessions of the General Conference.

12. Burkina Faso congratulated the Director General on the tangible results achieved in strengthening gender balance in the Secretariat and hoped that he would draw on the same skill and enthusiasm to tackle the long-standing geographical imbalance.

13. His country welcomed above all the cross-cutting initiatives and projects launched by the Agency in recent years: NUTEC Plastics, ZODIAC and Rays of Hope — the last of which had indeed raised a lot of hope. Cancer plunged many families into mourning around the world and above all in Africa, and there was no doubt that the new initiative would allow low- and middle-income countries like his to deal sustainably and effectively with the disease. His delegation hailed the contacts already made with the Agency to that effect and looked forward to future benefits. In the meantime, it was pleased to participate fully in the Scientific Forum on the theme of "Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All".

14. Thanks to nuclear science and applications, it had become clear that the atom had an essential role to play in sustainable socioeconomic development. Accordingly, Burkina Faso reaffirmed the paramount importance of the TC programme, which led the way in the development of LDCs and contributed to the achievement of the SDGs.

15. His country's CPF 2017–2022 would soon end. Following extensive consultations with all stakeholders at the national level and with Agency technical officers, a new draft CPF with seven priorities had been drawn up and submitted to the Agency. His country was currently taking stock of the progress made in implementing technical cooperation and considering its development prospects. During the biennium 2022–23, it had focused on five priority areas.

16. Technical assistance from AFRA and the Agency had significantly upgraded the operational capabilities of Burkina Faso's regulatory authority in radiation protection, nuclear safety and security.

17. In the fight against cancer, thanks to Agency assistance, progress had been made, above all in the training and capacity-building of human resources in his country. Burkina Faso welcomed the long-term training scholarships enjoyed by a number of physicians in the country for specializations in radiotherapy and nuclear medicine.

18. With regard to agriculture and food, Burkina Faso had made tremendous progress in use of the SIT and lent its expertise to other countries in the sub-region. In application of resolution GC(65)/RES/11, his country was pleased to note that the Agency was giving substantial support to the Bobo-Dioulasso insectarium, which had enabled it to produce enough sterile tsetse males of the right quality to meet the needs of Africa's eradication programmes. Burkina Faso was proud that the insectarium's expertise had been acknowledged through its nomination as an IAEA collaborating centre.

19. Turning to the use of nuclear techniques to improve crop yields, he said that the Agency's technical and financial support had enabled Burkina Faso to create more than 120 high-yield rice strains, meeting the expectations of producers and consumers alike. They were currently being made available and trials were under way on farms.

20. Agency support for animal farming took the form of equipping the nutrition laboratory at the Nazi Boni University, Bobo-Dioulasso, and training its staff. The laboratory was already up and running and mainly assisted livestock farmers.

21. In the field of water resource management, in addition to doctoral sandwich scholarships, the Agency's regional Sahel project had resulted in stronger logistical capacities at Burkina Faso's authorities and improved knowledge of resources, along with an expanded network for monitoring the quality and quantity of water resources.

22. Overall, Burkina Faso had benefited from five TC projects in line with its socioeconomic priorities. As at 2 August 2022, the implementation rate had stood at 61.74%. Further efforts were needed, however, and his Government was determined to make them to achieve optimal implementation. Moreover, Burkina Faso welcomed the Agency's technical and financial support to AFRA, whose revised agreement it had accepted on 3 August. His Government was committed to supporting it through regular payments to its fund.

23. As previously, Burkina Faso stood ready to play its part to enable the Agency to achieve its objectives as set out in Article II of the Statute. In that regard, Burkina Faso was willing to host events organized by the Agency. Similarly, its research and training centres, laboratories and national experts could help to carry out activities in other Member States. As Burkina Faso was convinced that the budgetary contributions of Member States enabled the Agency to fully assume its mandate, it endeavoured to pay its annual contributions, including to the TCF, and trusted that all other Member States did the same.

24. In concluding, he gave an assurance that his Government would pay particular attention to the conclusions of the sixty-sixth regular session, which, it hoped, would bolster the Agency in its leading role in the research for and promotion of the peaceful applications of the atom for socioeconomic development and international security.

25. Mr BABA (Malaysia) said that his country was working with the Agency on developing its first borehole facility for the disposal of disused sealed radioactive sources. The facility highlighted Malaysia's efforts to build a robust nuclear safety infrastructure. He expressed appreciation for the Agency's support in ensuring successful implementation of the project.

26. Malaysia had already shared data from the environmental radiation monitoring system stations located in two states — Kelantan and Selangor — through the Agency's International Radiation Monitoring Information System. In addition, it was looking forward to the establishment of the nuclear response team simulation training centre in 2023. The facility would cater for emergency preparedness and response, nuclear and radiological accidents, and nuclear security incidents.

27. Malaysia served as a regional hub for nuclear security detection equipment under the partnership agreement on the establishment of a loaner pool for radiation detection equipment to enhance support for regional cooperation in the Asia and the Pacific Region. It called on other Asia-Pacific States to request the use of such equipment via the Agency. He added that Malaysia had agreed in principle to the Agency's proposal to use the equipment in support of Qatar at the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

28. His country appreciated the Agency's support in implementing the Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan. Malaysia would be hosting the revision of the International Nuclear Security Advisory

Service Mission in October 2023 — which would further assist Malaysia in completing the gap review for improvements to the existing security mechanisms.

29. Appreciative of the COMPASS initiative, Malaysia was fully committed to making progress on the COMPASS Work Plan 2021–2022. It welcomed the Agency’s support in developing safeguards documents to strengthen programme implementation and sustain its effectiveness.

30. Malaysia highly valued its long-standing cooperation under the TC Programme on safe and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. It would shortly be concluding its CPF 2022–2027, which reflected its future priorities for further strengthening national capabilities and capacity in a variety of applications of nuclear science and technology, including advanced reactor and nuclear fusion technologies. It would, moreover, be signing a Practical Arrangement with the Agency to provide training in radiation, transport and waste safety. Malaysia highly appreciated the Agency’s assistance in promoting nuclear science and technology.

31. Turning to international technical cooperation, he said that Malaysia was proud to be receiving Agency assistance in using radiation mutation breeding to develop a new paddy variety, IS21, that was resistant to extreme climate conditions. His Government believed that, together with innovative water and fertilizer management, the rice variety would help strengthen the country’s food security. Malaysia stood ready to share its experience and expertise with other Members States in order to achieve common goals.

32. Malaysia appreciated Agency assistance in a number of coordinated research projects to foster the exchange of scientific and technical information. Malaysia was also honoured by the Agency’s recognition as Agency Collaborating Centres in the fields of radiation processing, advanced non-destructive testing and plant mutation breeding. It therefore looked forward to renewal of the designation of Agency Collaborating Centres so that it could continue sharing its expertise with other Member States.

33. Malaysia applauded the new Rays of Hope initiative — which would help Member States to respond to the growing cancer burden and raised hope for better solutions for combatting cancer — and his Government stood ready to support the Agency’s efforts.

34. The world continued to face enormous existential challenges, not least the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic — which had caused unprecedented food and energy insecurity burdens. In addition, the serious political, security and economic repercussions of the conflict in Ukraine were being felt worldwide, including in Malaysia. The Zaporizhzhya NPP question demanded an urgent response from the Agency to guarantee the plant’s safety and security, and ensure that its nuclear material remained under the safeguards regime.

35. Everyone shared the same concerns and should play their part in overcoming the challenges the world faced. It had to be done together as one big family — the world family. Success relied on unity and collective strength in shouldering the common burden.

36. In conclusion, Malaysia appreciated the Agency’s continuous efforts to promote transparency, efficiency and accountability in nuclear technology applications for safe and peaceful purposes. Malaysia reiterated its firm commitment and continuous support to the Agency, including by making timely contributions to its budget.

37. Mr AL SABAH (Kuwait), thanking the Member States for having elected his country as President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Conference — in 2021 — highlighted the Agency’s pivotal role in knowledge transfer and capacity building to maximize the benefit of nuclear applications, enhance nuclear security and safety systems in Member States and apply safeguards under the NPT.

38. Kuwait remained committed to cooperating with the Agency in order to benefit from nuclear energy and build its national capacities and institutions to implement critical socioeconomic development projects, and to enhancing collaboration with all Member States to harness the atom for peace and development. In that context, Kuwait was pleased to note its contribution of \$200 000 to the final stage of ReNuAL 2 in early 2022, bringing its total contributions since the launch of the ReNuAL project in 2015 to \$1 700 000.

39. Noting the 2021 Annual Report, Kuwait expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation with the Agency in the specialized projects covering nuclear technology applications in the petroleum industry, the production of genetically modified crops, the study of freshwater in aquifers, cancer treatment and the feasibility of SMRs in power generation.

40. In addition to having hosted a number of national and regional events and activities in cooperation with the Agency during the preceding year, Kuwait would also host a number of regional activities later in 2022 in the areas of energy, agriculture, water, soil and food. It was participating in several important projects, including ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics. Kuwait looked forward to hosting the first training session under NUTEC Plastics at the beginning of 2023 to train Member States of the Asia and the Pacific region on sampling techniques using its new state of the art research vessel, Al Mostakshif.

41. On nuclear safety and security, Kuwait had submitted its national report to the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting at the beginning of August 2022. Kuwait's Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan formed the basis for its bilateral cooperation with the Agency and had proven its effectiveness and importance in recent years in guiding national efforts to create strong and sustainable nuclear security infrastructure. In addition, Kuwait looked forward to receiving an IPPAS mission in 2023.

42. The Director General and the Agency had made praiseworthy efforts to ensure the safety of all nuclear facilities, including those located in conflict zones. It was crucial that all concerned parties cooperate to prevent a nuclear disaster and protect the world from its devastating consequences should one occur.

43. Although Kuwait affirmed the right of all States to produce, develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the framework of the NPT, the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the light of current challenges and tensions posed a threat to international peace and security. Kuwait therefore called on the DPRK to comply with the relevant international treaties and UN Security Council resolutions.

44. In addition, underscoring the Agency's pivotal role in the application of the comprehensive safeguards system, Kuwait renewed its call to Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency in order to settle long outstanding issues. Iran should also comply fully with the JCPOA issued under Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and ratify and implement its additional protocol in order to enable the Agency to be in a position to provide credible assurances of the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities in Iran and ensure its continuity as a non-nuclear weapon State.

45. Kuwait affirmed its commitment to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, pursuant to the resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the outcomes of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. It was essential that Israel accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State and place all its nuclear facilities under Agency comprehensive safeguards.

46. Expressing disappointment that the 2015 and 2022 Review Conferences had been unable to find consensus on a final document, Kuwait noted that the efforts made by the Arab States had culminated in the adoption of UN General Assembly decision 73/546 on convening a conference on the

establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs as a process parallel to, but not replacing, the implementation of the outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference. As President of the current session of that conference, Kuwait affirmed its full commitment to working with the concerned States to establish such a zone and looked forward to furthering progress at the third session, to be held under the presidency of Lebanon in November 2022.

47. In closing, Kuwait confirmed its continued support for the Agency's effective leadership in capacity building to achieve sustainable development, address economic and food crises and strengthen nuclear security and safety systems and the application of safeguards in Member States.

48. Mr SEGOKGO (Botswana) commended the Director General and his team on their resolute commitment to the delivery of the Agency's mandate in spite of the many challenges currently bedevilling the world. The achievements attained by the Agency in 2022, above all in technical cooperation, nuclear safety and security, and safeguards, testified to a visionary leadership.

49. Over the years Botswana had leveraged the Agency's TC programme to deliver its own initiatives in agriculture, human health and nutrition, through the integration of nuclear techniques into national development programmes. That had yielded success, especially in the agricultural sector in the control of transboundary animal diseases, pest control and food safety.

50. Botswana was on track to put into operation the radiotherapy centre at a public hospital in pursuit of its national goal of ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all citizens. It was thanks to the Agency's unwavering support that Botswana had made that progress. It would continue to enlist the Agency's assistance in offering expert services and human capacity building for the successful running of the radiotherapy facility.

51. The subject of the 2022 Scientific Forum — "Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All" — was highly relevant for his country, as it resonated with the national aspiration of providing cancer care for all of its citizens.

52. Hoping to continue to benefit from technical cooperation, Botswana had just finalized its fourth CPF — for 2023–2028 — which it would sign before the end of 2022. Food safety, agriculture, human health and nutrition, radiation safety, water resources management, energy planning, and human resources development in nuclear science and technology continued to be a priority for Botswana. They were in line with the national transformational agenda and the aspiration of becoming a high-income economy by 2036. The uptake of the AFRA programme and other initiatives, such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the AFRA PhD Sandwich Fellowship Programme, would also make a significant contribution to his country's efforts to enhance human capital development in nuclear technologies.

53. Botswana remained committed to global nuclear security, abiding by all obligations under the conventions and agreements it had signed, and advocating for the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. Its plans for enhancing national measures on nuclear security, with a long-term view of establishing a self-sustaining nuclear security regime, were progressing well. In that regard, Botswana would be reviewing its Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan in November 2022, to further strengthen the national nuclear security measures and architecture. His country maintained a robust regulatory infrastructure for nuclear safety and security, and would continue to strengthen it in response to emerging technological uses.

54. Cognizant of the fact that all Member States had an obligation to ensure effective implementation of the Agency's mandate, Botswana would continue to honour its contributions to the budget.

55. In conclusion, he expressed sincere appreciation to the Agency for its continued support and firm commitment to ensuring that Botswana reaped the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

The contribution of nuclear technology to health and agriculture was evident in everyday lives. Lastly, he restated Botswana's assurance that it would work with the Agency to ensure that nuclear technology was used in a safe and sustainable manner.

56. Mr HUYNH (Viet Nam) said that his country appreciated the Agency's remarkable achievements and its tremendous efforts to fulfil its mission to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and to guarantee global safety and security, especially in the face of the many challenges posed by COVID-19. Viet Nam reaffirmed its commitment to promoting the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and for sustainable development, and above all to solve global problems through Agency initiatives and projects.

57. Viet Nam would be chairing the Ministerial-level Meeting to be held in September 2022 to mark the 50th anniversary of the RCA. Under the Agency's auspices, some 18 projects had been successfully implemented in the region. He acknowledged the Agency's valuable support through the RCA and looked forward to continuation of the Agency's close cooperation with RCA member States to further expand the RCA's mission and vision for another half-century.

58. He thanked the Agency for its cooperation and support through TC projects, which had helped Viet Nam to implement its new research reactor project and to make important achievements in the application of nuclear energy in health care, agriculture, industry, environmental protection, water resources development, the response to climate-change, radiation and nuclear safety infrastructure development.

59. The CPF 2022–2027 had been signed by both parties — it identified priority areas for nuclear technology transfer and technical cooperation to support Viet Nam's development goals.

60. Also under the TC Programme, Viet Nam had made efforts to effectively implement the Practical Arrangements for Triangular Cooperation with Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

61. In the field of nuclear security, Viet Nam had continuously affirmed its national commitment to atomic energy applications for peaceful purposes through implementation of the CSA and additional protocol.

62. In conclusion, he said that Viet Nam thanked all Agency staff for their dedication and efficiency performance. It sincerely thanked the Agency for its valuable cooperation and assistance. Under the Agency's mandate and the guidance of the Board of Governors, the Agency and its Director General could count on the full support of the Vietnamese Government.

63. Mr AHMED (Sudan) expressed sincere gratitude for the Agency's continued technical cooperation, which strengthened national technical capacities in the peaceful uses of atomic energy and supported national development plans for achieving the SDGs. The Agency's support in the area of food safety and security had enabled the Sudan to ensure domestic food safety and to plan for the export of animal and vegetable products in compliance with international standards, thereby boosting GDP.

64. Appreciative of the role played by the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture in food security, he highlighted the active participation of women in promoting the use of drip irrigation systems in dry lands and rural areas to grow highly nutritious crops, and sprinkler, drip and solar-pump irrigation systems for horticultural crops in water-scarce areas in eastern Sudan. With respect to the production of crops resilient to pests and environmental conditions, mutant varieties of sorghum, millet, groundnut, sesame and tomato had been approved by the national seed propagation committee. That work, carried out in rural areas in eastern and western Sudan, was moving from field testing to commercial production and had raised the income of small-scale farmers.

65. With the necessary support from all partners, the Sudan's agriculture and livestock sector had great potential to strengthen food security in African and Arab countries in the midst of the current global food crisis. His country looked forward to enhancing its partnership with the Agency in that vital area in the coming period.

66. With respect to energy, the Sudan highly appreciated the Agency's provision of support for its nuclear power infrastructure, which had culminated in an INIR mission in 2018 and had paved the way for his country to progress to the second phase of the roadmap approved by the Agency. The Sudan welcomed the fifth International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century, to be held in the USA in October; it was a cornerstone in the production of clean energy to support development and mitigate climate change resulting from global warming.

67. In the area of human health, the Sudan was grateful for the Agency's effective contribution in curbing the spread of the COVID-19 by providing three high-accuracy laboratories and quick results. It thanked the Director General for the new Rays of Hope initiative, launched at the 35th African Union Summit, to support Member States in the early detection, accurate diagnosis and safe treatment of cancer. Pleased that Rays of Hope was the theme of the 2022 Scientific Forum, the Sudan had sent a high-level delegation headed by the Minister of Health to participate and looked forward to further cooperation in that vital area. His Government affirmed its full commitment to satisfying all requirements to benefit from the important initiative.

68. The ZODIAC initiative to prepare for future health emergencies of animal origin was consistent with the Sudan's initiative to establish, during its presidency of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a regional centre for preparedness and response to health emergencies, which had been inaugurated in Khartoum in September 2022. The Sudan looked forward to working with the Agency for the success of that important regional initiative, which was intended to be a model for other regions.

69. Appreciative of the support provided by the Division for Africa in regional cooperation, the Sudan stood ready to participate actively in regional projects under AFRA and to share experiences and lessons learned with a view to strengthening relations among the parties. In addition, it looked forward to the outcomes of the high-level ministerial meeting to be held in Aswan, Egypt, in December, in which it would participate.

70. Committed to complying with its recently concluded modified SQP, the Sudan valued the equipment and experts provide by the Agency to support its national nuclear and radiological regulatory body and which had significantly boosted its performance. Moreover, the Sudan had updated its Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan, which continued to be satisfactorily implemented with the involvement of all stakeholders, and the national technical committee for nuclear and radiological emergencies continued to coordinate on EPR with the relevant State authorities. Lastly, the Sudan commended the Agency's cooperation with the Arab Atomic Energy Agency to support the Arab radiation monitoring network.

71. In conclusion, the Sudan remained ready to work with Member States to harness the atom for peace and development and overcome the great challenges facing humanity.

72. Mr HAMMADI (Qatar) commended the Agency and the Director General on the outstanding achievements in enhancing the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthening and broadening technical cooperation among Member States, as contained in the 2021 Annual Report. The Agency truly demonstrated what international multilateral action could achieve for humanity, and Member States should provide it with more support and assistance.

73. While only 32 countries were currently using nuclear power, all countries needed nuclear science, technology and applications to achieve the SDGs, especially in the areas of food, agriculture, water management, health, industry and environment. Sustainable development was crucial not only because it was beneficial for human well-being and environmental protection, but also because it was essential for restoring social stability and maintaining international peace and security. Qatar therefore called for intensified efforts to develop and disseminate nuclear technologies and applications and increase technical cooperation, especially in developing countries that needed such technologies to overcome the urgent challenges of hunger, malnutrition and other health problems.

74. Member States had high expectations of the Agency in innovation, nuclear technologies and applications, and national capacity building. Noting its contributions to the ReNuAL projects, Qatar thanked the Agency for its work to develop the nuclear applications laboratories at Seibersdorf to provide professionals of Member States with more effective training on the peaceful applications of nuclear energy.

75. Commending the Agency's efforts in enhancing nuclear security and safety worldwide, Qatar noted that it continued to strengthen its national strategy on nuclear and radiation safety and security in accordance with its international obligations, ensure the security and safety of its citizens and preserve the environment of its region. It looked forward to participating in the Joint Eighth and Ninth CNS Review Meeting, to be held in March 2023, in order to work with the rest of the parties towards strengthening nuclear safety standards and guidelines, in particular strengthening and sustaining the implementation of Article 16(2) of the CNS.

76. Qatar was implementing a long term comprehensive economic, technical, social and environmental programme to boost growth and develop its infrastructure, which included the development of institutions concerned with the peaceful applications of atomic energy in the areas of food, agriculture, human health and the environment. Qatar was participating in 35 TC projects with the Agency, including 10 national projects, 24 regional projects and 2 international projects. Under its new CPF, signed in April 2022, Qatar would carry out projects continued from previous TC cycles and three new national projects approved for the 2024–2025 cycle and would participate in regional projects through ARASIA. It would continue to boost and diversify its cooperation with the Agency in the coming years.

77. More aware than anyone of the dangers of nuclear weapons and the need for progress towards nuclear disarmament, the peoples of the Middle East considered the establishment of an NWFZ in the region an essential step towards that goal. It was regrettable that the Director General had been unable to make progress in fulfilling his mandate pursuant to General Conference resolution GC(65)/RES/14 on the application of Agency comprehensive safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East. The Agency should be more active in persuading Israel to implement the relevant international resolutions, accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under the Agency's safeguards regime. Israel's accession to the NPT and the application of comprehensive safeguards to its nuclear facilities would prepare the ground not only for the establishment of the NWFZ, but also for a just and lasting peace in the region.

78. Lastly, Qatar thanked the Agency for its cooperation on security for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, including the installation of radiation detection gates at all border ports. All Member States were invited to attend the event, which would be a chance to promote dialogue, build bridges of communication between peoples, bring different cultures closer and enjoy Qatari hospitality.

79. Mr SANTANA NÚÑEZ (Cuba) recalled that 26 September — the previous day — was International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, an event originally proposed by his country and supported by the NAM. He said that Cuba was firmly committed to disarmament,

multilateralism, world peace, sustainable development and the right for all to enjoy a healthy and balanced environment, as set forth in the 2019 Constitution.

80. The current session of the General Conference was taking place against a complex international backdrop. Untold resources were being wasted on the development and modernization of nuclear weapons, while development aid commitments were not being honoured and funds earmarked for eradicating hunger and poverty were insufficient. The lack of true political will to advance towards a nuclear-weapon-free world had again come to light in the regrettable failure of the Tenth NPT Review Conference. Fortunately, the successful first meeting of States parties to the TPNW and the adoption by consensus of the Vienna Plan of Action had marked an undeniable milestone on the road to nuclear disarmament. Cuba urged all States to ratify the instrument so that it could quickly enter into effect worldwide.

81. The Agency had a key role to play in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Cuba welcomed its timely initiatives to tackle global health and environment problems — ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope — in which ARCAL had played a fundamental role in supporting countries in the region.

82. Cuba's technical cooperation with the Agency had been affected in recent months by COVID-19, which had slowed down work on a number of projects. Nonetheless, he highlighted the achievements of the Department of Technical Cooperation and its staff in charge of national programmes, along with their national counterparts and liaison offices, who had adapted to the conditions and found alternative means to meet targets.

83. Moreover, Cuba appreciated the Agency's support in the many seminars, courses, workshops and other training activities that had taken place in a virtual manner. Specialists had been offered self-taught courses for installing equipment and spare parts, new platforms had been developed and integrated for carrying out knowledge management activities, while cooperation between institutions and exchange networks, both national and regional, had been strengthened.

84. Cuba attached great importance to nuclear and radiological safety and safeguards, as demonstrated by the approval of new national laws that reinforced those principles and stepped up action taken by the national regulatory authority. Cuba had been recognized for its safety culture when submitting its second national report to the Seventh Review Meeting of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management Documents. It had recently submitted its first national report under the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

85. The fact that for 15 consecutive years it had upheld the double certification established under the Safeguards Agreement and its additional protocol, together with the satisfactory results obtained during Agency inspections, proved that Cuba was committed to the use of nuclear energy for strictly peaceful purposes.

86. Cuba highlighted the work done by FORO — what it had achieved together with the Agency had helped to improve nuclear and radiological security and safety in the Ibero-American region and the rest of the world. His Government welcomed the recent publication by the Agency of the Spanish version of the technical document on *Safety culture in organizations, facilities and activities related to the use of ionizing radiation sources*.

87. Cuba emphasized the importance of raising the levels of safety and security culture in connection with nuclear applications, which were fundamental for national development. In Cuba, the nuclear security implementation plan had been updated and plans had been laid for a new stage, making use of capacities that Cuba was willing to share with other countries in the region.

88. In an increasingly polarized world — facing new security, health, economic and environmental challenges — Cuba faced a worsening of the economic, trade and financial blockade that had hit the country for more than 60 years. He reiterated Cuba's rejection of that unjust, criminal and illegal policy, one that hindered the full exercise of its inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The embargo had not only maintained but had aggravated the difficulties faced by the Agency in acquiring scientific equipment needed for projects involving Cuba. Companies from the USA or those with investments in that country could not sell equipment to Cuba because of the risk of being sanctioned. That situation limited Cuba's involvement in important projects, significantly increased the cost of acquiring equipment and capacities, and delayed the execution of his country's TC projects.

89. Cuba stood alongside all countries subjected to unilateral coercive measures restricting their sovereignty and development. True to its tradition of solidarity, it put at the disposal of all countries, especially developing nations, its human resources and all the capacities acquired over years of successful cooperation with the Agency aimed at enhancing the global development of uses of nuclear technology for peace and sustainable development.

90. Ms FUENTES (Chile) said that, at a particularly difficult time for the international community, her country reiterated its full commitment to multilateralism, disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Chile recognized the importance of the Agency's role in promoting and facilitating R&D and the practical application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, and in nuclear security in accordance with the Statute. The same was true of its work on health, agriculture and food, in line with the 2030 Agenda goals.

91. Chile adhered to the principle of the indivisibility of international security, since all States, regardless of their size or power, had a responsibility to contribute to the consolidation of a global order based on multilateralism, cooperation and international law, including international humanitarian law. Chile therefore regretted that the Tenth NPT Review Conference had not achieved tangible results, given that the Treaty was the fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime, which in turn was essential for maintaining a stable, healthy and lasting global peace system. Without the Treaty's existence, the conditions of collective security would undoubtedly have evolved very differently.

92. Chile's foreign policy was based on a strong commitment to non-proliferation. She was pleased to announce that, since December 2021, the TPNW had been fully in force in her country. Her Government believed that the Treaty was a pillar of the international disarmament, non-proliferation and security architecture, strengthening the cornerstone that was the NPT, and fully compatible with it despite misplaced attempts to state otherwise. Chile called on all countries that had not yet done so to accede to the Treaty for the benefit of humankind. It also called for the entry into force of the CTBT, which would become a foundation stone, alongside the TPNW and the NPT, in the international legal regime for disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

93. Chile shared the concern expressed by the Director General about the nuclear facilities located in Ukraine and joined calls made to the parties to show constraint and not to carry out military actions that could endanger the security and integrity of those plants. Her country supported the Director General's initiatives, in particular, the creation of a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP to protect its physical integrity and respect the seven pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict to guarantee nuclear security and safety at all nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

94. Her country was concerned about the serious humanitarian effects that damage to facilities could cause as it could lead to the release of radioactive material with all its negative implications. It could not be ruled out that an error leading to a huge catastrophe might be committed, with irreversible effects on lives, health and the environment, not only for Ukraine, but also for the region and the rest of the world.

95. Chile was deeply concerned at the conclusions drawn in the Director General's latest report that the Agency could not guarantee that Iran's nuclear programme was exclusively peaceful. Her country urged Iran and the Agency to deepen their dialogue to advance compliance with verification and inspections in Iran, in light of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), and to continue working together until the matter was fully resolved. Chile called on the Agency and Iran to continue on the path of dialogue and cooperation, in order to overcome situations that could endanger international peace and security.

96. Chile highly appreciated the role played by FORO in ensuring nuclear and radiological safety and security in its member countries with a focus on strengthening cooperation with the Agency. Her Government wished to send a congratulatory message to the body, which, in July 2022, had celebrated 25 years of promoting safety and security in all activities using radioactive materials in the Ibero-American region.

97. In the same vein, Chile recognized the cooperation between the Agency and national specialized agencies, such as the Chilean Nuclear Energy Commission, which had offered to host the coordination meeting of the ARCAL Technical Coordination Board in Santiago in 2023.

98. Chile firmly believed that the future of nuclear science, technology and applications lay in their use for strictly peaceful purposes. It therefore highly valued the Agency's flagship initiatives such as NUTEC Plastics, which was of special interest for her country, as it had a long oceanic coastline. Moreover, Chile's agricultural health agency was taking part in ZODIAC, which would strengthen national capacities for detecting zoonotic diseases. Chile set great store by Rays of Hope, the subject of the 2022 Scientific Forum, which initially covered African countries but would before long, it hoped, be extended to the countries of Latin America, including Chile.

99. The contribution made by women was fundamental in science, technology and nuclear applications, and all activities connected to the Agency's mandate. The organization should ensure their participation at the highest level and step up the compilation and dissemination of up-to-date statistics on the issue. Moreover, it had an important role in ensuring parity on discussion panels and supporting civil society organizations for female nuclear scientists. Chile highlighted the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme and the fact that a Chilean woman had been selected in December 2021 under the Programme to pursue postgraduate studies. Her Government hoped that other women would have the same opportunity in the next cycle of the Programme.

100. In the period 2021–2022, Chile had received an inspection from the Agency and kept up the provision of information in accordance with its obligations and commitments, thereby ensuring the non-diversion of nuclear material to other non-peaceful uses and undeclared activities. In accordance with the additional protocol, Chile had regularly sent the Agency the declarations required. Information on the accounting and control of nuclear materials had also been sent in a timely manner, in accordance with the Safeguards Agreement and the provisions of the Subsidiary Arrangements.

101. Lastly, for Chile the TC programme was fundamental for capacity building and training, the strengthening of national radiation safety infrastructure, human health — with emphasis on cancer and pathologies with a high impact on health and quality of life, water resources, marine and coastal areas, and food security. There were ongoing TC projects in Chile involving all such areas.

102. Mr ZANANAVIČIUS (Lithuania) reiterated his country's condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the Russian Federation's deliberate and unprovoked war in Ukraine. Its unjustified invasion of a peaceful neighbour grossly violated international law, undermined global security and had shaken the foundations upon which the United Nations had been built. His Government demanded that the Russian Federation immediately and unconditionally cease its military actions and withdraw all its

troops from the entire territory of Ukraine. Moreover, Lithuania condemned Belarus for its support for the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

103. Russian military actions were threatening to cause yet another — nuclear — disaster. All seven nuclear safety and security pillars that the Director General had outlined at the beginning of the armed conflict had been violated at Zaporizhzhya NPP and other nuclear facilities by Russian military forces. The occupation of Zaporizhzhya NPP by Russian military forces and the presence of Russian military equipment, along with the Rosatom personnel on site, undermined its security, increased the risk of a nuclear disaster and put the operating staff under immense pressure. The shelling and occupying of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, or their use as a shelter, was unprecedented and needed an adequate response.

104. Lithuania welcomed the mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP and supported its efforts to establish a long term Agency presence at the site. It fully supported the Director General's recommendation to establish urgently a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP. But recent shelling at South Ukraine NPP showed that it was not enough to protect only Zaporizhzhya NPP; nuclear safety could be ensured only by the unconditional withdrawal of all Russian armed forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine.

105. The aggressor must be held accountable. The Russian Federation's brutal violation of international laws and regulations, including the Agency Statute, was totally indefensible, and it was completely unacceptable that the Russian Federation continued to exercise its privileged role at the Agency and its bodies.

106. Russian aggression against Ukrainian civil nuclear facilities showed the inadequacy of existing international mechanisms to address armed attacks against any nuclear installation devoted to peaceful purposes. It was important to improve existing international mechanisms to protect nuclear sites devoted to peaceful purposes in the context of war and include a strict mechanism of rule enforcement and accountability.

107. Lithuania was deeply concerned about the unsafe and irresponsible development and operation of the Belarusian NPP near the borders of the European Union. There remained many unresolved safety issues concerning the project, such as the impact on the neighbouring countries' environment and population, guarantees of a safety culture, and implementation of international standards and recommendations. Lithuania had warned against the unjustifiable rush to commission the Belarussian NPP in violation of international obligations regarding environmental protection and the highest safety requirements and standards, resulting in repeated equipment failures and prolonged outages. In the context, the lack of transparency and openness was also an issue of the highest concern. Lithuania remained of the view that the Belarusian NPP had been constructed in violation of the international nuclear safety standards and should not be in operation.

108. Lithuania strongly supported international efforts to bring about the full denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula — until such a time, sanctions must remain in place and be fully implemented. His Government called on the DPRK to cease all destabilizing actions, abide by its international obligations under a number of Security Council resolutions and re-engage in a credible and meaningful dialogue with the international community. In the same vein, it strongly urged Iran to reverse all activities inconsistent with the JCPOA and return, without any further delay, to its full implementation, including of all transparency measures. Timely and full cooperation with the Agency was more crucial than ever.

109. In May 2022, an ARTEMIS mission had been successfully carried out in Lithuania. The mission had concluded that the country was strongly committed to ensuring safe and effective management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, currently and in the future, and had invested in minimizing the

generation of waste from decommissioning by applying appropriate processes. The mission had made several recommendations and suggestions as to how to further improve radioactive waste management.

110. His Government was pleased to receive such recommendations and suggestions as they would help Lithuania overcome future challenges and explore opportunities in the decommissioning of Ignalina NPP and the management of radioactive waste. It was important for all countries to invite such Agency missions when they were due, but even more importantly to implement all the recommendations and suggestions diligently and without delay.

111. Lithuania was continuing with the decommissioning of Ignalina NPP in accordance with an immediate dismantling strategy while maintaining the highest level of nuclear safety. It had reached a significant milestone in Ignalina NPP decommissioning — both units had finally been successfully defueled. It was one of the biggest achievements in the decommissioning process to date and marked the end of the ‘post-operation stage’ and the beginning of ‘classic’ decommissioning.

112. Mr AMBRAZEVICH (Belarus) said that the current regular session of the General Conference was taking place against the backdrop of a highly acute geopolitical crisis, the challenges of modernity and a number of transnational threats — negative factors that were affecting almost all international organizations. It was happening largely because a number of countries were politicizing discussions and forums at specialist, technical bodies. His Government was convinced that there was no benefit in such action; political problems must be addressed in the appropriate political arenas.

113. Belarus had been calling for a global security dialogue for many years. Organizing that dialogue in the true spirit of San Francisco was the key to resolving geopolitical turmoil. The specialized international bodies, including the Agency, must stay away from global politics and be strictly guided by their specific mandates. The Agency should continue to act as the main international mechanism to help States access the benefits of the peaceful atom. Moreover, in the implementation of that task, the Agency played an important role in achieving the SDGs.

114. Turning to cooperation between Belarus and the Agency, he said that there had been real progress, and their interaction had expanded since the launch of his country’s national nuclear energy programme. Belarus highly appreciated the support provided in 2021: vocational training for staff at the Belarusian NPP along with other steps taken to improve operational safety. The first refuelling of spent nuclear fuel had been completed at the first power unit and measures related to the completion of preventive maintenance were being carried out. At the second unit, commissioning work was nearing completion, a safety review was being carried out to obtain the necessary permits for commercial operation and, in the near future, the Belarusian NPP would be fully commissioned.

115. His country’s experience testified to the practical benefits of the Agency’s tools and services for supporting States that were developing nuclear energy. Belarus had carried out all the key Agency missions recommended for countries building their first NPP. Of the three missions held in 2021, two were repeat missions directly related to nuclear safety issues — a follow-up IRRS and a follow-up pre-OSART. The recommendations and proposals of international experts were important guidelines for implementing a national nuclear energy programme, while improving the safety and operational reliability of the plant. Plans approved at the end of the missions had either been implemented or were close to completion, as had been confirmed by international experts. They had also taken note of his country’s strict commitment to maintaining nuclear and radiation safety.

116. Belarus wished to draw everyone’s attention to the fact that the missions recommended for newcomer countries were no less relevant for countries that had abandoned nuclear energy and were engaged in decommissioning their NPPs for the first time. The placement of facilities for the management and disposal of radioactive waste, along with the withdrawal and dismantling,

needed international expert support, including through the Agency's well-proven tools: SEED and OSART missions.

117. Belarus invariably endeavoured to maintain a constructive expert dialogue on nuclear safety issues, and was open to it for all involved and interested parties. Moreover, it was ready to share all information, experience and knowledge. In fact, Belarusian experts were already actively involved in the work of the Commission on Safety Standards and its subcommittees and in the preparation of the Agency's technical documents, including those related to the creation of a regulatory infrastructure for nuclear and radiation safety in connection with the construction and operation of new NPPs.

118. Belarus considered the NPT to be one of the fundamental elements of the international security and strategic stability system. Accordingly, it fully supported the Agency's safeguards system and attached great importance to its further strengthening. It was of utmost importance that, in the process of such improvement, the safeguards mechanism remained clear, objective, depoliticized and based on the rights and obligations of the parties in accordance with their safeguards agreements.

119. Belarus regularly paid its contributions in full to the TCF, convinced that securing funding for the Agency's TC activities was the key to its effective work in such an important area. It condemned the calls by individual States to restrict the participation of some countries in the TC programme. Belarus had no doubt that such politicized approaches would only undermine the effective operation of the Agency and the foundations of the global non-proliferation regime.

120. In the context of international cooperation, Belarus drew special attention to the fact that it fulfilled all its obligations regarding the Agency, including the safety of NPPs. Despite unprecedented economic sanctions imposed by Western States and other external pressures, Belarus would continue to meet those obligations. But the detrimental role of those actions and their impact on the entire safeguards system should be clearly understood by all Agency members.

121. His Government stood ready to cooperate with Lithuania on the issues of the Belarusian National NPP as the Lithuanian Government was well aware. On that score too, Belarus called for other States not to exploit the Agency forum for political reasons. It was far better to use bilateral channels to resolve such issues.

122. He concluded by announcing that, under its chairmanship of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2023, Belarus planned to organize a thematic event in Minsk on the protection of critical infrastructure, including nuclear facilities. His Government counted on the involvement of the Agency and all interested States, including neighbouring countries.

123. Ms CARVALHO (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, in 2022, full competence for nuclear issues had been handed over to the Ministry of People's Power for Science and Technology, in recognition of the cross-cutting role played by nuclear matters in a variety of sectors, leveraging macro-projects involving a number of institutions and benefiting the population more widely.

124. In addition, Venezuela had decided to create a national regulatory body, the Atomic Energy Superintendence, and was drafting a bill to regulate activities related to nuclear energy while framing a set of regulations on physical, radiological and technological security.

125. Venezuela hoped accordingly to boost the use of nuclear applications in priority sectors such as health and food, and harness nuclear science and technology, at the political and technical decision-making levels, and in the academic and scientific sectors, with a strategic and global vision in mind. Her Government was confident that it could continue to count on the Agency's support and assistance in the future.

126. Venezuela had benefited from the implementation of TC and ARCAL projects in water resource management, health, food security and agriculture, and hoped to enhance cooperation with the Agency as a result. Nuclear technology had proved central to capacity building, the introduction of diagnostic methods, staffing at a number of laboratories and the training of professionals.

127. As the Agency's technical assistance was essential for countries' development and prosperity, it must not be subject to political, economic or any other type of pressure that ran counter to the provisions of the Statute or the principles of international law. Venezuela had denounced before a number of international bodies the imposition of unilateral illegal, illegitimate and immoral coercive measures by a group of countries that had taken advantage of their economic power and imposed on other countries measures that violated the UN Charter and international law. Protected by those illegal measures, they blocked bank accounts, prohibited transfers and sequestered funds, preventing her country from making contributions to the Agency and other multilateral cooperation mechanisms, while violating Venezuelans' rights to health, education, development and well-being.

128. Among the many other adversities that the Venezuelan people suffered owing to the imposition of those unilateral measures, her country faced a difficult situation in terms of cancer treatment, given that the companies providing services for radiotherapy equipment faced illegal sanctions when they conducted their business in Venezuela. Similarly, her country faced limitations when acquiring, installing and maintaining equipment or supplies under the TC programme. She thanked the whole TC team for their efforts to overcome those obstacles and bring nuclear technology to Venezuela for peaceful purposes.

129. Venezuela recognized and appreciated the Director General's leadership when it came to promoting the development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, facilitating its transfer and launching projects and initiatives aimed at meeting the needs of developing countries, along with assistance provided in global emergency situations.

130. Her Government welcomed the Rays of Hope project in the firm hope that it could assist the Venezuelan people. In addition to ZODIAC her country was taking part in NUTEC Plastics and was making available an experimental research station located on the Isla de Aves, an island strategically located at a part of the Caribbean where several marine currents met, making it ideal for the study of marine plastics pollution.

131. Turning to safeguards, she said that, as the Agency was the only competent authority in the field of verification, its work must be independent and based exclusively on objective technical considerations, free from political pressure. Venezuela placed positive value on the negotiations between Iran and the other parties concerning the JCPOA, and encouraged the expeditious conclusion of the accords needed to restore the Plan's economic, financial and technical balance. Her country supported the ongoing cooperation between Iran and the Agency and called for it to continue.

132. Earlier in 2022, the first meeting of States Parties to the TPNW had been held in Vienna. A historic meeting, it had brought together countries committed to the purpose of bringing about a world free of nuclear weapons. Her country was a party to the Treaty and attached great importance to nuclear disarmament.

133. Her country reiterated its defence of the inalienable right of developing countries to reinforce their technological platforms and knowledge, so that they could apply the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Moreover, Venezuela reaffirmed its pacifist vocation and its attachment to the defence of the principles of comprehensive and non-discriminatory disarmament — and in particular its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

134. Mr BAYRAKTAR (Türkiye) began by thanking the Director General and the Secretariat for their intense diplomatic efforts to stabilize nuclear safety and security in conflict zones.

135. He said that Türkiye felt strongly that Agency played a central role in international nuclear cooperation. For example, the Agency's critical peer reviews and advisory services would ensure the successful and safe commissioning of his country's first nuclear reactor at the Akkuyu NPP. Türkiye had already hosted five Agency review missions. There had recently been an IRRS mission and a phase-3 INIR mission would be concluded in 2023.

136. Turning to nuclear safeguards, he said that Türkiye was part of the Agency's COMPASS initiative and appreciated the Agency's efforts to provide his country with assistance and services tailored to its needs.

137. Later in 2022, the NHSI would be launched, providing an excellent opportunity to harmonize global standards for new NPP designs. The initiative was a unique occasion to bring together nuclear industry stakeholders for the safe and effective deployment of SMRs. Türkiye was committed to the initiative and stood ready to contribute.

138. Maintaining energy security and implementing sustainable energy policies were Türkiye's main priorities in the field of energy. Nuclear energy would play a significant role in providing clean energy to achieve sustainable development and meet carbon neutrality goals. Türkiye was a newcomer but was already making concerted efforts to establish the country's nuclear energy infrastructure. The simultaneous construction of four units was making progress at Akkuyu NPP. His country was determined to work closely with the Agency to apply the highest standards in nuclear safety, security and safeguards to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

139. Having ratified the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in July 2022, Türkiye was a party to all international conventions in the nuclear field and submitted compliance reports on a regular basis to promote transparency and confidence building.

Mr Shoja'aadin (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

140. Mr HANDOKO (Indonesia) welcomed the progress made by the Agency in its vital contribution to strengthening disarmament and the non-proliferation regime and promoting international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. His delegation was concerned, however, about current global tensions and the security situation. The gap between nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament remained wide, and the number of nuclear weapons continued to increase at an alarming rate. More needed to be done, and collective endeavours needed to be strengthened, in order to bring about nuclear weapon free zones around the world.

141. The NPT Review Conference, postponed until 2022, had taken place without reaching consensus on an outcome, a failure that threatened to create a major trust deficit between nuclear weapons States and non-nuclear weapons States. Nevertheless, Member States must continue to step up global efforts to achieve general and complete disarmament in keeping with Article VI of the NPT. In addition, confidence had to be restored in nuclear safety, security and safeguards. Indonesia attached great importance to international cooperation and, within the framework of ASEANTOM, his country continued to support the Agency's current and future endeavours to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, through endorsement of the Plan of Action of the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone.

142. The Agency played a key role in overseeing the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and addressing current global challenges, for example by assisting Member States in achieving their development goals, promoting clean energy, addressing the problems of plastic waste and strengthening cooperation in the fields of food safety and health. Indonesia was appreciative of the Agency's ZODIAC

initiative, as part of its contribution to international efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath; it would help the world respond to and prevent future zoonotic disease outbreaks.

143. Indonesia recognized and supported the Agency's central roles in assisting Member States to fulfil their obligations regarding nuclear safety, security and safeguards. Strengthening nuclear security must not hamper international cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear activities, nor undermine the established priorities of the Agency's TC Programme.

144. As a State party to the CNS and the Joint Convention, Indonesia was committed to maintaining a high level of safety by establishing fundamental safety principles in the operation of its research reactors. His country was also committed to the immediate implementation of its national radioactive waste management road map.

145. Indonesia welcomed the Agency's efforts under the NHSI to promote the development of global standards for nuclear energy infrastructure using advanced reactor technology, while prioritizing safety and security standards at the highest level, along with the transfer of technology to all Member States. Indonesia stood ready to offer full support to that end and had already nominated experts to serve in the working groups set up under the initiative.

146. The President of Indonesia had established a National Research and Innovation Agency, whose roles, among others, were to frame policies on how to strengthen, improve and accelerate capacity building in science and technology development. One of its main objectives was achieving development goals through science, technology and innovation, including nuclear science and technology. Furthermore, one of the strategic plans was the establishment of a human resources capacity building programme, for areas including advanced nuclear technology. It was planned that the agency would develop an integrated nuclear complex including SMRs, a cyclotron and electron beam machines. He invited all Member States to collaborate with the new national agency, including in the development and use of the integrated complex.

147. Indonesia appreciated the Agency's assistance under the TC framework in addressing plastic waste problems and initiating a pilot project for the transfer of knowledge, expertise and technology in that field. The initiative would contribute to global efforts in addressing marine and environment challenges.

148. In the context of Indonesia's Presidency of the G20, his country highly appreciated the Agency's support in the field of nuclear energy, including the provision of expertise and assistance to the Energy Transition Working Group. The contribution of new and renewable energies, including nuclear energy in the national energy mix, to securing the energy supply and supporting the transition to clean energy was essential. Indonesia had therefore initiated several measures, with Agency support, before taking any decision on using nuclear power. Indonesia welcomed all Member States that wished to take part in nuclear application programmes that would increase capacity building initiatives, enhance nuclear infrastructure, accelerate the technical preparation for nuclear applications in industry and health, and foster innovation.

149. His delegation had been closely following the discussions on naval nuclear propulsion since the NPT Review Conference. Indonesia noted with appreciation the working paper of the NPT President on the final document, which reflected the interests of the States parties to the Treaty in the topic and suggested that non-nuclear weapon States should engage with the Agency in an open and transparent manner. It was his delegation's view that the Agency should continue discussions on those matters, in order to find a solution or technical answers to the current developments as foreseen by the existing legal framework. Efforts in that direction were important for addressing the on-going and any similar programmes in the future, in view of the fact that implementation of nuclear naval propulsion programmes by non-nuclear weapon States would set a global precedent.

150. Mr NURMAGANBETOV (Kazakhstan) said that his country fully complied with its obligations under the NPT and its safeguards agreement. The Agency's safeguards system was an important and effective tool that supported the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The 2007 Additional Protocol had given fresh impetus to the interaction between the Agency and Kazakhstan with regard to uranium mining. Since 2009, additional access to uranium mines had been given to Agency inspectors every year. Upon issuance of the inspection results, the declared data had been confirmed.

151. In cooperation with the Agency and different States, his country had successfully met the challenges related to application of comprehensive safeguards. For several years, integrated safeguards had also been applied in Kazakhstan.

152. Kazakhstan was a party to all the fundamental international treaties concerning nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of atomic energy, and fully complied with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In 2019, Kazakhstan had become the 26th State to ratify the TPNW, thereby making an important practical contribution to global efforts to build a nuclear weapon-free world.

153. Kazakhstan had made serious efforts to create a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, the only one covering additional protocol issues. It hoped that the experience would be beneficial for other regions of the world. Kazakhstan had consistently been supporting the CTBT and the strengthening of its verification regime.

154. In 2022, Kazakhstan was celebrating the 30th anniversary of its national nuclear centre, which operated five IMS stations and ran the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site; its Director General was chairing CTBTO Working Group B on verification issues. His country was also celebrating the 65th anniversary of the establishment of its Institute of Nuclear Physics, where since 2016 the WWR-K research reactor had been commercially operated on low-enriched fuel.

155. Since independence, Kazakhstan had resolved a number of vital issues facing its nuclear industry and strengthened nuclear security as a result. With the closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, Kazakhstan had demonstrated to the world the power of transparency in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Since the closure — the first legal prohibition of nuclear testing in history — a nuclear weapon-free world had become an essential goal for his country.

156. In 2021, a comprehensive environmental survey had been completed for the entire area of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the results had been highly valued by Agency experts. Kazakhstan appreciated the detailed survey of the nature, features and formation mechanisms of the radiation situation. Moreover, it had obtained an impartial evaluation of the radioactive contamination scale and degree. That information had made it possible to develop a scientifically substantiated plan for rehabilitation of the test site area, scheduled for the near future.

157. Kazakhstan was rapidly developing radiation oncology and nuclear medicine. In the near future, it would be introducing proton therapy, the best method for treating paediatric oncological diseases.

158. His country was an active participant in ZODIAC, an initiative that would enable the Agency to apply the experience and knowledge gained in the nuclear and radiation fields.

159. With regard to the goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and the predicted electric power shortage, Kazakhstan was considering the development of safe and green nuclear energy. In that connection, it was considering tested reactors for the construction of its first NPP. At the same time, SMR technology and its application in electricity generation was on the table for discussion among nuclear industry representatives. Following the technological breakthrough in recent years, the use of SMRs seemed increasingly reasonable and economically feasible. Subsequently, Kazakhstan was interested in SMR technology and saw it as a promising area for the future development of

nuclear power in the country. Kazakhstan was about to decide whether to construct its first NPP. It was expecting an INIR follow-up mission in the near future and expressed its appreciation for the technical assistance provided by the Agency.

160. Since 2019, the Agency's LEU Bank had been operating in Kazakhstan. It played an important role in implementing the provisions of the JCPOA. The unique project was a contribution by Kazakhstan and a number of donor countries — Kuwait, Norway, the UAE and the USA, along with the European Union and the Nuclear Threat Initiative Foundation — to the peaceful use of nuclear power and the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In view of the tense international situation, the Bank had taken on special importance. Agency support for the nuclear power industry and NPP users would prove crucial in view of the complicated economic situation facing the world and would assist with the implementation of the Agency's mandate under the NPT.

161. In the framework of non-proliferation support and ensuring nuclear security, Kazakhstan continued to convert its research reactors to LEU fuel and develop fuel disposal technology. On 5 May 2022, the physical start-up of the IVG.1M reactor with new LEU fuel had been performed. Commissioning of the IVG.1M — an upgraded high-temperature research reactor — with LEU fuel was scheduled for 2023, following experiments to determine the necessary characteristics of the new core. The spent HEU-fuel was being unloaded from the reactor and would be reprocessed. Operations had already been completed for the dilution of fresh or unirradiated graphite HEU fuel from another research reactor in Kazakhstan, the impulse graphite reactor. For the disposal of irradiated fuel from that reactor, Kazakh specialists had developed a dry mixing technology, which in the future would solve the problem of the disposal of irradiated graphite fuel. The Agency played an important role in promoting those unique technologies not only in Kazakhstan, but also in other countries involved in similar HEU-fuel minimization programmes. It was another important contribution to the strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

162. Turning to the important matter of the sovereign equality of Agency Member States, he said that, since joining the organization in 1994, Kazakhstan had become the world leader in uranium mining, producing about 46% of the world's uranium in 2009, and the world's leading exporter of natural uranium. A consistent supporter of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the host country for the Agency's only LEU Bank, like another 30 'homeless States' Kazakhstan was still deprived of the opportunity to be the member of any elective body or take part in Agency's decision making process.

163. Kazakhstan had submitted a draft resolution, with the aim of resolving the long-standing issue of restoring the sovereign equality of all Member States. The idea was to 'put the first brick in the wall' by adopting the necessary measures to assign the Member States not yet listed in regional areas into appropriate geographical areas. That would pave the way to facilitate initial steps — namely for the States to identify the geographical area they wished to belong to. Kazakhstan had gone through its own designation process and, according to its geographical location, determined that it belonged to the Far East area.

164. The amendment to Article VI of the Statute, yet to enter into force, would be an important milestone in the restoration of the sovereign equality of all Agency members. Kazakhstan had therefore ratified it and stood ready for its entry into force as soon as possible. The resolution accordingly complemented the amendment, enabling Kazakhstan to be in the Far East area. He called on all Member States to vote in favour of the resolution.

165. In conclusion, he recalled that all Members States pursued one and the same objective — to make the world a more sustainable and safer place. Firmly committed to the Agency and its work to strengthen non-proliferation, further develop nuclear power in peaceful purposes and enhance international security, Kazakhstan appreciated all of the Agency's activities.

166. Mr BALŠEVIC (Latvia) said that his country was deeply concerned over the nuclear safety and security risks caused by the Russian Federation in its unjustified invasion of Ukraine. The Russian Federation's dangerous actions include seizing control of nuclear facilities, endangering and even damaging those nuclear facilities, their safeguard systems and other infrastructure elements, thereby significantly raising the risk of a nuclear accident that would endanger both the local and international communities.

167. Latvia highly valued the rigorous work of the Director General and the Agency since the beginning of the Russian Federation's brutal invasion in sustaining global nuclear safety and security. Closely monitoring Ukraine's nuclear facilities, implementing safeguards and conducting expert missions to Ukraine, while providing the required technical support and assistance, the Agency had taken considerable steps to reduce the risk of a severe nuclear accident.

168. Latvia attached great importance to the fact-based information provided by Agency about the nuclear safety situation in Ukraine, as it reduced misinformation and improved public understanding. Agency access to nuclear facilities in Ukraine was critically important. Its mission to Zaporizhzhya had proved beneficial, but showed that the situation was grim. Latvia was thankful to the Agency for ensuring constant monitoring through its experts.

169. The uniquely grave situation in Ukraine underscored the Agency's value and expertise. It was not only a core component of the global non-proliferation regime thanks to its safeguards under the NPT, but it also had the leading role to play in upholding nuclear safety and security.

170. Turning to the Agency's wider role in preserving safeguards under the NPT, he drew attention to the regrettable lack of an outcome document at the recent NPT Review Conference, owing to the Russian Federation's dislike of reality — in particular, the acknowledgement of its reprehensible actions at Zaporizhzhya and the reminder that the world had not forgotten the Budapest memorandum.

171. Latvia remained confident of the utility and benefits that the JCPOA provided. Despite international efforts, Iran had continued to reduce its commitment to the Plan. His Government condemned Iran actions as detrimental to international non-proliferation — for example, Iran had prohibited full Agency verification and reporting in the country.

172. Similarly, Latvia condemned the continued provocations and nuclear rhetoric coming from the DPRK and called on that country to move towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, as its nuclear programme and arsenal were in clear violation of Security Council resolutions. Latvia appreciated the Agency's readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme.

173. Furthermore, Latvia highly valued the Agency's role in strengthening global nuclear safety and security, while facilitating peaceful uses of nuclear technology and advancing nuclear research. Those efforts must be kept up to prevent nuclear terrorism and sustain peaceful uses of nuclear technology that enabled breakthroughs in energy, medicine and other fields.

174. Latvia thanked the Department of Technical Cooperation for its invaluable support to Member States, in particular its guidance for adjusting regulatory frameworks to ensure high standards.

175. In May 2022, the Agency review mission had carried out an audit on QUATRO in the largest radiotherapy centre in Latvia. He thanked the Agency experts who had ensured the audit mission and shared recommendations on improving radiotherapy practices.

176. Earlier in 2022, Latvia had started three new TC cycle projects, including one to strengthen the regulatory framework for radiological emergencies and radioactive waste management. His country appreciated the opportunities offered by the TC programme. In the 2024–2025 cycle, Latvia planned to improve the quality management system of its radiation safety centre, the quality assurance procedures

in diagnostic radiology and measures in radiotherapy at one hospital and the radiation safety control system at the radioactive waste disposal repository.

177. He concluded by reminding the General Conference of Member States' collective responsibility to uphold international law and norms, which was crucial in their efforts to achieve a cleaner, healthier and safer future for all.

178. Mr DE CARVALHO NETO (Brazil) said that the current regular session of the General Conference was taking place at a time of growing awareness about the central role of both power and non-power applications of nuclear technology for sustainable development. The Agency must therefore continue to play its key role in assisting Member States in the pursuit of the benefits of nuclear technology.

179. Nuclear power was an essential part of Brazil's strategy to ensure energy security and energy transition to a low carbon future. Nuclear power generation would play a growing role in the country's economic development: long-term energy planning foresaw a growth in nuclear generation of between 8 and 10 GW over 30 years. Brazil's priorities included the conclusion of a third NPP, Angra-3, to be operational by 2026, and the construction of the Brazilian Multipurpose Reactor. The most relevant challenges to new nuclear power capacity in Brazil were related to the scale and complexity of projects, along with safety and security requirements.

180. Brazil saw SMR technology as a promising option for new projects, and was willing to acquire expertise through cooperation with interested partners. His country had a dynamic nuclear sector, fully safeguarded, and in compliance with the highest standards of nuclear safety and security, thanks to continuous efforts at self-evaluation, including national legislation and technical expertise.

181. In terms of regulatory aspects, a new national nuclear safety authority was being established by splitting up the National Nuclear Energy Commission, ensuring the necessary separation of regulatory and operational functions.

182. Earlier in 2022, Brazil had ratified the A/CPPNM. The key principles and obligations of the amended Convention had already been included in the domestic regulatory framework.

183. Moreover, the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage was under consideration by the Brazilian Congress. Its ratification would further demonstrate his country's commitment to nuclear safety.

184. For 25 years, nuclear and radiation safety in Brazil had greatly benefited from the exchange of regulatory experiences and cooperation among Ibero-American countries, facilitated by FORO.

185. In 2021, the ABACC had celebrated its 30th anniversary. ABACC was not only a reference for the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, it was also an example of good practices in the area of safeguards, according to the highest standards of transparency.

186. In May 2022, Brazil had initiated discussions with the Agency on an arrangement for Special Procedures for the use of nuclear material under safeguards in nuclear propulsion and in the operation of submarines and prototypes. Brazil was committed to working with the Agency to reach an appropriate technical arrangement, in line with the NPT and the country's safeguards obligations. Nuclear naval propulsion was a legitimate use of nuclear energy, not prohibited by the NPT or any other international agreement.

187. In the case of Brazil, the legal framework for the verification of nuclear material to be used for naval propulsion was clearly laid out in Article 13 of the Quadripartite Agreement between Brazil, Argentina, ABACC and the Agency, approved by the Board of Governors in December 1991.

Brazil would continue to work on the basis of its applicable commitments. Preconditions on the exercise of such rights were not acceptable, and the creation of new instances where they would be discussed anew were unwarranted.

188. Brazil had consistently expressed its grave concern about the implications for nuclear safety, security and safeguards of the conflict in Ukraine. Avoiding a nuclear incident must be a priority for all parties. His country continued to support the Director General's efforts to ensure the observance of nuclear safety and security standards and the continued application of safeguards in Ukraine. Ensuring the safety and security of nuclear installations in Ukraine was an objective better served by measured action, focused on technical aspects. Restraint should be observed in order to avoid any action that may put Ukraine's nuclear activities at risk. Brazil reiterated its call for the immediate and comprehensive cessation of hostilities.

189. Concerning nuclear activities in Iran, Brazil hoped that viable diplomatic solutions to the issues currently faced by the JCPOA could be promptly found and implemented. Brazil counted on the collective commitment of the JCPOA's original participants to immediately resume full compliance with their respective obligations under the Plan. Pending the conclusion of those negotiations, Brazil urged all parties to refrain from any further actions that might jeopardize a possible agreement. It reiterated, its call on Iran to enhance its cooperation and engagement with the Agency and fully comply with its relevant CSA obligations, so that all outstanding issues related to safeguards could be resolved.

190. Regarding the DPRK, he said that dialogue was the only means to address the long-standing challenges blocking the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Brazil urged the DPRK to fully comply with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, to return to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to sign and ratify the CTBT.

191. Brazil applauded the role the Agency had played in the remarkable democratization of access to peaceful uses of nuclear technology in recent decades. In Latin America and the Caribbean, ARCAL had played a pivotal role in strengthening technical cooperation. The development and application of the SIT was an important element of Brazil's cooperation with the Agency. The Agency's assistance for countries in the region in the application of the SIT technique was crucial in the control of disease-transmitting mosquito populations and as a component of area-wide integrated vector management.

192. His Government was writing a new chapter in the history of nuclear energy and applications in Brazil. It counted on the Agency's continued support and cooperation along with those of international partners in achieving those goals. He concluded by reiterated Brazil's trust in the Director General's leadership in all areas of responsibility of the Agency and pledged its full support for his endeavours.

193. Mr GUILLERMET FERNÁNDEZ (Costa Rica) said that his country attached special importance to the Agency's mandate, as it was closely in line with many of the aspirations of its own foreign policy, in terms not only of the pacific uses of nuclear energy for development, but also the maintenance of peace and security through safeguards. The Agency could respond to a vast array of global needs: above all, it had played a key role during the COVID-19 pandemic — and the same was true of its daily actions in the fight against cancer, pest control, increasing crop resistance and other worldwide challenges, thanks to its robust TC programme.

194. Achieving the SDGs would undoubtedly be made easier if developing countries could have greater access to nuclear applications, for example in the fight against plastic pollution. Costa Rica's ecological principles and values were being mirrored in initiatives such as NUTEC Plastics — it was in keeping with his country's blue agenda for the protection of the seas and their biodiversity. Costa Rica had made an urgent call for practical actions for the conservation, governance and sustainable use of the

oceans during the UN Ocean Conference, held in Lisbon, in June and July 2022, where the potential contribution of nuclear technologies and applications had been demonstrated. In Lisbon, Costa Rica had expressed an interest in hosting the 2025 Conference, jointly with France, and hoped that the Agency would participate.

195. Naturally, Costa Rica acknowledged the Agency's central role in the promotion and maintenance of the global nuclear safety regime. His country was making good progress at the domestic level: in 2019, it had formalized its integrated support plan for nuclear security and its implementation plan, which were being rolled out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

196. He thanked the Department of Nuclear Safety for all the assistance provided to Costa Rica during the FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup, held in San José, in August 2022 — including the loan of equipment and the visit of high-level experts who had given training workshops to build national capacities for the detection of and protection against radiological and nuclear threats at major public events. The lessons learned would be shared at a side event in celebration of 18 years of the Agency's security programme.

197. Costa Rica had paid close attention to the first Conference of the Parties to the A/CPPNM, held in Vienna from 28 March to 1 April 2022. It welcomed the progress in the implementation of legal instruments relating to nuclear security and the support provided to Member States to facilitate their accession. In addition, it would actively participate in the Regional Workshop to Promote the Universalization of the A/CPPNM, in November 2022.

198. Costa Rica was a proud party to the TPNW in the belief that the most effective way to prevent nuclear proliferation was a total weapons ban. The entry into force of the Treaty on 22 January 2021, and the holding of the first meeting of States Parties in Vienna, effectively met the demands of all States that wanted a world free from the inherent threat and intimidation arising from the possible use of nuclear weapons.

199. The obligation to nuclear disarmament enshrined in the NPT remained unfulfilled and the commitments made were increasingly far from being honoured, as had been witnessed at the Tenth Review Conference, held in New York in August 2022. It was clearer than ever that tools like the TPNW were needed to advance the global agenda and to complement and strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime with the NPT as its cornerstone. Costa Rica could not remain silent as it watched inequalities deepen around the world while military budgets soared. Such a situation was an affront to present and future generations,

200. Turning to nuclear security in Ukraine, he said that Costa Rica appreciated the Agency's efforts and actions and the central role it was playing. It was crucial to have Agency staff on site to provide neutral, impartial and technical first-hand information on the nuclear safety and security situation in Ukraine. Of particular concern was what had been reported about the fragile state of the 'seven pillars' to guarantee nuclear security and safety at all nuclear facilities with regard to Zaporizhzhya. His Government deplored the risk to which nuclear material and the operation of nuclear facilities had been exposed, and also the conditions to which NPP operating staff were being subjected. The physical and emotional toll exerted by the military presence inevitably increased the possibility of human error.

201. Costa Rica once again called for an immediate cessation of all actions against Zaporizhzhya NPP and any other nuclear facilities in Ukraine, so that the competent authorities could regain full control of all nuclear facilities within the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine.

202. Turning to Iran's nuclear programme, he reiterated his country's call on the Iranian authorities to provide the information required by the Agency, while adding its voice to international concerns stemming from Iran's persistent action to increase its inventories of enriched uranium and to raise

enrichment levels to percentages that only added to doubts about the veracity of its peaceful nuclear programme for peaceful uses.

203. After the current session, Costa Rica would again be a member of the Board of Governors. He reiterated his country's commitment to work with all States in building an agenda of peace and non-proliferation, strengthening the safeguards tools and enhancing the protection of different nuclear applications.

204. Lastly, Costa Rica again called for improved geographical representation on the Agency's staff, full gender parity at all levels of the Secretariat and greater use of the Spanish language in the Agency's work, in recognition of the value of multilingualism.

205. Mr CASTRO (Panama) thanked the Director General and the Secretariat for their hard work in such complex times. The demands of the international situation continued to throw up challenges but the Agency still demonstrated its relevance by providing effective instruments to promote peace and international cooperation through the use and application of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes.

206. Panama aligned its policies with the 17 SDGs; its CPF for 2020–2025 focused on those where nuclear applications and technologies were making significant contributions. For example, the production of cocoa for export used isotopic techniques, resulting in a high-quality organic product to be enjoyed by all consumers around the world.

207. In his country, cancer cases were rising year after year, causing pain and distress to patients and their nearest and dearest. It was encouraging, therefore, to see people recovering from the disease, thanks to innovative treatments, advances in medicine and the efforts of medical personnel — and, ultimately, the contributions made by the Agency. Consequently, his Government appreciated the launch of Rays of Hope and Cancer Care for All — and the Agency's cooperation with the WHO on the publication *Setting Up a Cancer Centre: A WHO–IAEA Framework*, which would provide experts in various countries with the skills they needed to expand cancer care capabilities and improve nuclear medicine. Efforts must be stepped up, however, to narrow the huge gap in patient survival between high-income countries and Latin America and Africa.

208. The TC programme had become an extremely important instrument for technology transfer and further demonstrated the great value of the Agency. Panama highlighted the latter's rapid response to deal with fusariosis (banana fusarium wilt or TR4), which blighted banana plantations and threatened the food security of millions of people in the region. In addition, it recognized the valuable contribution of ARCAL to strengthening of national capacities. Moreover, Panama welcomed ZODIAC, which should prepare the world to respond better to future outbreaks of zoological diseases and prevent another pandemic.

209. The world's two largest oceans — on either side of the Isthmus of Panama — were wonderful sources of life, food, sustenance and transport, but were currently threatened by pollution produced by human waste, especially plastics. In 2021, his Government had managed to protect 30% of its marine space, complying with the 30 by 30 global initiative nine years before the agreed date. Moreover, Panama promoted a national oceans policy aimed at guaranteeing the sustainable use of the seas. Continuing with those efforts, in March 2023, his country would be hosting the Eighth Our Ocean Conference, to work on further initiatives to protect the oceans and all essential water sources that guaranteed life.

210. Panama was an enthusiastic supporter of NUTEC Plastics, as addressing the global problem of marine plastic pollution — through recycling using radiation technology and marine monitoring by means of isotopic tracking techniques — would make an invaluable contribution to addressing

environmental issues more widely. Furthermore, it exemplified the effectiveness of the use of nuclear technology in so many areas.

211. Panama was in favour of strengthening the integration of all sectors of society in all initiatives. It therefore maintained a firm position in favour of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It applied that principle in every project and policy and reiterated it at every summit, forum or meeting. His Government would repeat it until more women sat at the table, more women participated in politics and more women took part in decision-making. His country therefore welcomed the Agency's progress in increasing the proportion of women in its Professional category and the Secretariat's efforts to reach the target of 35 per cent. In short, more women must play a role in the nuclear field.

212. He concluded by saying that the meetings currently taking place would define the future of the international system. Panama was a staunch supporter of peace, multilateralism, cooperation, respect for human rights and environmental protection. It was no longer a matter of rights, however, and had become a matter of obligations. No stone should be left unturned in the attempt to build a better world. Only through justice and respect for international commitments would the Agency and all Member States guarantee a better future and only by taking action would the international community be able to hold its head up high.

213. Mr CUTAJAR (Malta) said that the sixty-sixth regular session was taking place at a very challenging time for diplomacy and international relations: the war in Ukraine and the threat of nuclear catastrophe, the failure of the international community to reach an understanding at the recent NPT Review Conference, the DPRK's ballistic missile tests and the lack of agreement among JCPOA partners. In the words of the UN Secretary General: "Our world is in big trouble, and the divides are growing deeper". As the international community faced the biggest challenges of the age, multilateralism remained the only answer.

214. The unprovoked and unjustified Russian war of aggression on Ukraine had not only brought war back to Europe while grossly violating international law and the principles of the UN Charter, but it was also severely undermining global security and stability. The Russian war had brought the looming threat of a nuclear incident that could have devastating effects on millions of people. Moreover, it had resulted in senseless threats and blackmail about the use of WMDs. Those threats must stop. The Russian Federation bore full responsibility and its illegal war of aggression must end before it was too late.

215. The Agency's support and assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya and the setting up of a continued presence at the NPP confirmed the Agency's central role in nuclear safety and security worldwide. The military activity and shelling close to Zaporizhzhya and South Ukraine NPPs continued to highlight the severe risks to nuclear safety and security as a result of the Russian war in Ukraine. It could result in a major nuclear incident, seriously affecting the lives and livelihoods of large populations.

216. Malta therefore welcomed the initiative of the Director General to set up a protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP, and trusted in the Agency's continuous monitoring of the situation, while encouraging the use of all available Agency instruments to ensure the safety and security of all facilities in the region. At the same time, Malta seriously believed that the only lasting solution was for the Russian Federation to stop its illegal war of aggression in Ukraine, withdraw its troops and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders.

217. Another area under threat was the non-proliferation regime — an invaluable instrument contributing to international peace and security. For the second time in a row, the international community had missed the opportunity to reach consensus on an outcome document at the NPT Review Conference in August 2022. It was not only a failure of diplomacy but also a serious failure

to register any progress in global nuclear disarmament and in terms of the threat posed by nuclear weapons to humanity. That, coupled with the recent alarming rhetoric on the use of nuclear weapons, was why Malta believed that the TPNW was an essential element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture; it strengthened the Agency's NPT-based safeguards system and would help the world move towards the shared goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. Those weapons are no guarantee of security and had to be eliminated before they eliminated humankind.

218. The current stalemate in negotiations on renewing the JCPOA was not tenable. Iran's repeated actions when it came to its nuclear programme, including the severe proliferation implications that were inconsistent with the JCPOA, were worrying. Malta therefore joined other Member States in calling on Iran to immediately implement its JCPOA commitments and cooperate fully with the Agency. His country supported the efforts being made by the Joint Commission and the JCPOA Coordinator in working towards full implementation of the Plan by all stakeholders.

219. Malta equally condemned the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile activities. The DPRK should seek to comply with its international obligations and engage with relevant partners to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The silver lining in the very bleak picture of the international situation was that the Agency existed and continued to carry out exceptional work in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and safeguards. He therefore commended the Agency, under the able leadership of its Director General, and the Secretariat for their valuable and tireless work to address all the challenges currently facing the world, including to avoid another nuclear catastrophe in Europe.

220. The Agency's work did not stop at safeguards. Its TC Programme had assisted countries globally to improve technical knowledge, which had resulted in an improved quality of life for the thousands of people. Malta thanked the Agency and the Department of Technical Cooperation for its provision of assistance and expertise year after year on projects related to cultural heritage conservation, water treatment, radiation therapy techniques for medical purposes, and cancer treatment. The TC Programme truly continued to be one of the Agency's most direct ways of assisting Member States in addressing key development goals.

221. A more recent Agency initiative — which Malta was very proud to support — was the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. As the initiator of the International Day of Girls in Science, Malta had a particular interest in seeing the advancement of girls in STEM, and in achieving gender parity within the ranks of the Agency. It was therefore proud to be funding a scholarship for a female student from the Mediterranean region as part of the Fellowship. Through that experience, many more women could play a key role in the application of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

222. Any multilateral efforts that did not uphold the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States would falter. Malta therefore reiterated calls made by other Member States to ensure that the principle was respected, especially on the issue of the 'homeless' States, along with similar issues within the different regional groups. Furthermore, Malta recalled Article VI of the Statute, which called for the enlargement of the Board of Governors in order to reflect the ever-growing, distinctive membership of the Agency. Malta urged Member States that had yet to accept the amendment to consider doing so.

223. He concluded by saying that the following two years would be of great significance for his country. Malta would be taking its seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, standing ready to work with other member States to make sure that the divides mentioned by the UN Secretary General were eliminated. The Agency and its Member States had a central role to play and Malta would continue to lend its full support to the Director General and the Agency's work.

224. Mr OH Tae-seog (Republic of Korea) said that, for promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, his Government had again decided to contribute US \$ 1 million to the ZODIAC initiative. It was also

considering making contributions to Rays of Hope and the NHSI, key initiatives to which it was committed as a responsible member of the Agency.

225. In an effort to respond to the intensifying climate crisis, countries around the world were working hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality. Accordingly the new Government of the Republic of Korea had been framing and implementing a new set of energy policies, with a view to expanding the nuclear share in the country's energy mix and to assisting the country on its journey towards carbon neutrality. His country would therefore resume construction of Shin-Hanul NPP Units 3 and 4 and continue the operation of existing nuclear reactors while making safety the utmost priority.

226. His country would also participate in overseas nuclear projects to share its expertise in the safe design, construction and operation of NPPs and its experience of the successful international marketing of its nuclear technologies. In addition, the Republic of Korea was making progress with more advanced SMR models in view of its experience of developing the existing model SMART. It was establishing regulatory frameworks and technologies for SMR safety verification. The Republic of Korea looked forward to closely cooperating with other Member States.

227. In order for nuclear energy to play a practical role in enhancing energy security and addressing climate change, the Republic of Korea recognized that the concerns regarding spent nuclear fuel needed to be properly tackled. To that end, his Government called for closer technical cooperation among the Member States and efforts to find feasible solutions for spent nuclear fuel treatment.

228. The Japanese Government continued to implement measures to dispose of contaminated water from Fukushima Daichi NPP into the sea by approving plans for a marine discharge of facilities in July 2022 and by subsequently allowing their construction. As it would be the first case in history where contaminated water created as a result of nuclear accident was released into the sea, it was of paramount importance to share information transparently, seek the understanding and cooperation of the international community and ensure thorough safety verifications. As a country that shared marine ecosystems with Japan, the Republic of Korea had been repeatedly conveying the Korean public's concerns regarding the discharge of contaminated water into the sea, and had continuously requested that Japan take responsible measures to address them. Japan must fully comply with international laws and standards in disposing of the contaminated water and do so in a scientifically and objectively safe manner.

229. The Republic of Korea was highly appreciative of the Agency's efforts and hoped that the Agency would continue to play an active role in the entire monitoring process of disposal from an independent and objective standpoint. As Japan's closest neighbour, the Republic of Korea would continue to actively participate in Agency's verification process, including the analysis of radioactivity in the contaminated water. It was willing, moreover, to discuss measures to strengthen monitoring from the perspective of marine environmental protection with the Agency and interested Member States.

230. The DPRK's nuclear programmes posed a serious threat to the international non-proliferation regime and were a clear violation of several Security Council resolutions. Earlier in 2022, his Government had proposed an 'audacious initiative', with pledges of support measures to dramatically improve the DPRK's economy and the livelihood of its people. It was conditional on the DPRK's willingness to halt its nuclear development and make substantive progress towards denuclearization. His Government sought unwavering support for its efforts to achieve denuclearization and establish sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

231. The Republic of Korea joined other Member States in expressing grave concerns over the situation in Ukraine, where the safety of nuclear facilities, including Zaporizhzhya NPP, was under serious threat. Furthermore, the facility had failed to fully comply with the 'seven indispensable pillars'

announced by Director General for ensuring the safety of NPPs, let alone the Agency's existing regulations and safeguard nuclear safety and security. The Korean Government was highly appreciative of the efforts of the Director General and Agency staff members to ensure the safety of NPPs in Ukraine and fully supported the Agency's proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP.

232. It was crucial to ensure that nuclear energy contributed safely to peace and prosperity. The Republic of Korea therefore urged all Member States to unite in protecting the global environment and all human life, while ensuring that the nuclear non-proliferation regime was firmly maintained. His country vowed to lead the way forward together with the Agency and its Member States.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.