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President: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(66)/INF/14

¹ GC(66)/17

Abbreviations used in this record

| | |
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| CSA | comprehensive safeguards agreement |
| Euratom | European Atomic Energy Community |
| NPP | nuclear power plant |
| NPT | Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons |
| UK | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| UN | United Nations |
| USA | United States of America |

22. The safety, security, and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine

(GC(66)/1/Add.5)

1. The PRESIDENT recalled that the item had been included in the agenda of the General Conference pursuant to a request made by Canada and Poland, contained in document GC(66)/1/Add.5.
2. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada) said that his country had joined Poland in requesting that the item be added to the agenda of the General Conference because it was essential for Member States to consider the situation in Ukraine.
3. Mr ŠRÁMEK (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and San Marino aligned themselves with his statement.
4. The European Union condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine in gross violation of international law, notably the UN Charter. Such action threatened peace and security in Europe and around the world. The Russian Federation's aggression had caused immense human suffering to the Ukrainian population and massive destruction of civilian infrastructure and had led to severe global consequences for food and energy security. It had significantly increased the risk of a nuclear incident or accident, with potentially grave radiological consequences for human health and the environment in Ukraine and beyond. The European Union condemned the Russian Federation's behaviour and the nuclear safety and security threats it posed.
5. Such an unprecedented situation required a strong response from the Agency, as a multilateral body with a Statute based on the UN Charter. The European Union therefore welcomed the resolutions adopted by the Board of Governors on 3 March 2022² and 15 September 2022³.
6. As documented by the Director General in his recent reports, each of the seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict, derived from the Agency's safety standards and nuclear security guidance, had been compromised since the Russian Federation had launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and illegally seized control of the Chornobyl Exclusion Zone and Zaporizhzhya NPP. The Russian Federation's actions continued to pose serious and direct threats to Ukrainian nuclear facilities and had impeded the Agency from fully and safely conducting safeguards verification activities in Ukraine.
7. The European Union strongly supported the Agency's work to assist Ukraine, notably the support and assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya and the Agency's continued presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP. It also supported the Director General's proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the plant, the modalities of which still needed to be agreed.
8. The European Union again emphasized that there was only one sustainable solution: the Russian Federation must stop its illegal war of aggression against Ukraine and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, in

² GOV/2022/17

³ GOV/2022/58

particular Zaporizhzhya NPP, and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. Zaporizhzhya NPP must be returned to the full and exclusive control of the Ukrainian authorities and remain connected to the Ukrainian electricity grid. The European Union was grateful to the Ukrainian regulator and operators carrying out their work in the most critical circumstances.

9. The European Union would never recognize the results of the illegal sham referendums, which had no legal validity or effect, and remained unwavering in its support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

10. Ms KROIS (Poland) said that the first Board of Governors resolution on the safety, security and safeguards situation in Ukraine as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression had been proposed at a time of great uncertainty. The Board had adopted two resolutions on the situation in Ukraine, which had been ignored by the Russian Federation. The current agenda item was being taken up at a time when much more was known and in the light of the valuable and detailed report produced by the Agency in its typically professional manner. Most importantly, the report clearly indicated the threats that could be posed by military operations at and around Zaporizhzhya NPP: unacceptable radiological consequences and death or injury to the plant's operating personnel.

11. Despite Russian misinformation, the Agency had confirmed the widely known presence of Russian military personnel and equipment at Zaporizhzhya NPP, including military trucks in the turbine hall. The report referred to the seven 'pillars', all of which had been compromised by the Russian Federation's actions. The factual analysis of the hazards facing the plant was based on those 'pillars'.

12. The Agency's report presented only the direct causes for the violation of individual 'pillars', such as the shelling of the plant, and provided adequate recommendations for corrective actions. Pursuant to the best practices for accident prevention at NPPs — also routinely used by the Agency — root causes must be eliminated in order to prevent recurrence; only the removal of the root causes could guarantee that an event would not recur. Eliminating the immediate cause, on the other hand, ensured only that exactly the same event would not recur, but events of a similar type could easily take place. Judging by the Agency's report, the presence of Russian troops on the premises of the NPP was the source of the threat to all seven 'pillars'. The presence of troops directly affected six of the 'pillars'. Solely in the case of Pillar 5, concerning supply chains, did the presence of troops have only an indirect effect, as the threat sprang from other sources as well: Pillar 5 was affected by the military conflict as a whole and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the plant would not solve the problem, as supply routes would continue to come under threat and supplies would remain uncertain.

13. Although the report did not explicitly mention the need for Russian troops to withdraw from the plant, it frequently indicated the threats to individual 'pillars' posed by their presence, including the threats posed by military operations at and around the NPP, potentially resulting in unacceptable radiological consequences or in the death of personnel; the difficult working conditions for plant staff owing to the presence of troops and Rosatom employees; the physical protection of the facility having been taken over by the Russian army, although it remained the responsibility of the plant manager; the access of operating staff to the cooling reservoir on the river being restricted by military personnel; supplies of diesel fuel for generators to power the plant being limited, including because of the presence of Russian troops; and plant employees' restricted access to the emergency crisis centre owing to its occupation by Russian troops.

14. Such threats arose directly out of the presence of Russian troops on the premises of Zaporizhzhya NPP. It was also worth noting that any Member State aid sent via the Agency might not go to the NPP's employees, as the vicinity of the plant was controlled by Russian troops.

15. The Agency's report focused on the cessation of military activity at and around the plant, without indicating its direct connection to the presence of Russian troops at the NPP. In addition, the report mentioned the difficult working conditions of the plant's staff, who were constantly supervised by Russian troops and Rosatom representatives, but the Agency did not refer to the threat posed by the mere presence of military personnel on the NPP site. The lack of comprehensive knowledge about the facility and the skills to operate it posed a threat to nuclear safety. There should be no unauthorized personnel on the premises of the plant — their presence did not increase safety, but diminished it.

16. Since the publication of the Agency's report, Russian forces had continued to shell Zaporizhzhya NPP. Shelling on 20 September 2022 had affected one of the plant's spray cooling ponds, part of the facility's heat removal system. A pipe had been damaged, taking the pond out of service. Renewed shelling on 21 September 2022 had damaged cables providing electricity to one of the six units, temporarily forcing the reactor to rely on emergency diesel generators for the power required for essential safety functions. Zaporizhzhya NPP's six reactors were all currently in a cold shutdown state but still required power for cooling and other vital safety functions. Moreover, on 19 September 2022, Russian shelling had caused an explosion near South Ukraine NPP, affecting power lines and some structures at the site. The General Conference must react to the Agency's findings.

17. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), expressing appreciation for the inclusion of the item on the General Conference's agenda, said that her country continued to strongly condemn the Russian Federation's unprovoked, illegal and barbaric invasion of Ukraine. The Russian Federation's actions against Ukraine's nuclear facilities, including its continued control of Zaporizhzhya NPP, were the cause of the nuclear safety and security concerns in Ukraine and were endangering the safety of the millions who would be affected by a nuclear incident.

18. Her country fully supported the Agency's efforts to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine and paid tribute to Ukrainian staff who continued to work in such challenging circumstances. The UK also expressed gratitude to the Director General and his staff for their efforts in Ukraine, including ongoing work to sustain a continuous presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP.

19. Concerns had been voiced that political issues should not be allowed to affect the work of a technical body such as the Agency. The UK was convinced that it was entirely appropriate to discuss the issue of the Russian Federation's illegal sham referendums at Agency meetings because of the potential impact on nuclear safety and security at Zaporizhzhya NPP. Her country's stance was clear: it would not recognize the result of any sham referendums conducted by the Russian Federation within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. The result of such referendums and any illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory by the Russian Federation would have no legal or political effect on the status of Zaporizhzhya NPP or the areas surrounding it.

20. The UK maintained the view that the only way to ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine was for the Russian Federation to cease all actions against the country's nuclear facilities and withdraw all its forces and personnel so that the competent Ukrainian authorities could regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

21. Mr SADLEIR (Australia) said that his country again condemned in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine. Australia remained deeply concerned by the nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications of the Russian Federation's reckless actions there.

22. Australia called on the Russian Federation to fully comply with the Board of Governors resolutions of 3 March 2022 and 15 September 2022. The Russian Federation must immediately return control of all of Ukraine's nuclear sites to the Ukrainian authorities to enable them to independently undertake vital safety and operational functions and carry out their duties free of duress. Such a step was

also critical in ensuring that the Agency and Ukraine could implement safeguards on all nuclear facilities in the country, consistent with their commitments.

23. Australia was pleased to have funded the Agency to support its efforts to address nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. His country had been among the first to deliver radiation monitoring equipment and personal protective equipment for use by Ukrainian operators through the Agency's response mechanism, and it was committed to supporting the Agency in its efforts to uphold the integrity of the 'seven pillars'.

24. The Agency's commitment to monitoring and responding to the situation at Ukraine's nuclear facilities, including the recent establishment of a continuous presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP, was welcome. Australia endorsed the Director General's recommendations concerning the re-establishment of nuclear safety and security at Zaporizhzhya NPP and wished him every success in his tireless endeavours. All steps taken should be consistent with Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

25. The most effective way to guarantee the integrity of the Director General's 'seven pillars' would be for the Russian Federation to withdraw immediately from Ukraine, in accordance with the legally binding decision of the International Court of Justice.

26. Mr SUBRAMANIAN (India) said that his country attached high importance to the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Any accident involving nuclear facilities could have severe consequences for public health and the environment. India was carefully following developments regarding the safety and security of Ukraine's NPPs, including the regular updates provided by the Director General and his report of September 2022 on nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine⁴.

27. His country valued the Director General's efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security at Ukraine's nuclear facilities and supported his 'seven pillars', derived from the Agency's safety standards and nuclear security guidance. Appreciative of the recent visit of the Agency's expert team, led by the Director General, to Zaporizhzhya NPP, India noted that the Agency had established a permanent presence at the plant, with the Director General calling for a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the facility to be established as a matter of urgency.

28. His country reiterated its call for strict mutual restraint so as to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities and their staff. Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine, India had consistently called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violence, emphasizing that dialogue and diplomacy were the only way forward. His country would continue to follow the Director General's updates on the matter.

29. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan) said that his country was gravely concerned by the situation at nuclear facilities in Ukraine, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP. Japan condemned the Russian Federation's actions in the strongest terms and called upon that country to immediately cease all actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine, in accordance with the two Board of Governors resolutions.

30. The Secretariat's continuous efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine on the basis of the 'seven pillars' were commendable, and Japan would continue to support the endeavours of the Director General and his team.

31. Mr ELER (Türkiye) said that his country strongly supported Ukraine's sovereignty, political unity and territorial integrity. From the outset, at the highest level, Türkiye had called for an urgent ceasefire

⁴ GOV/2022/52

and the conclusion of a peace agreement, and had hosted several meetings to that end. His country would pursue such efforts.

32. Türkiye highly appreciated the Agency's close monitoring of the status of nuclear facilities and material in Ukraine, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP, and the Director General's active involvement in the process. In that connection, Türkiye had been pleased to host several meetings attended by the Director General in Istanbul.

33. Strongly opposed to any acts jeopardizing the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities and material, his country welcomed the Director General's call for the immediate establishment of a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP.

34. Mr SOBRAL DUARTE (Brazil) said that his country commended the Director General and his team on their endeavours to ensure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and to provide support for the conduct of safeguards verification activities.

35. Brazil had consistently expressed its deep concern at the nuclear safety, security and safeguards implications of the conflict in Ukraine, which was gravely endangering the country's NPPs and other facilities housing radioactive material. Avoiding a nuclear incident must be a priority for all parties.

36. As Brazil had previously stated, guaranteeing the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine was an objective better served by measured action that focused on technical aspects, in order to avoid further escalation. Restraint should be observed so as to avoid any action that might jeopardize Ukraine's nuclear activities.

37. Brazil continued to support the Director General's efforts to conduct important nuclear safety, security and safeguards activities in Ukraine, and reiterated its call for the immediate and comprehensive cessation of hostilities in that country.

38. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America), recalling the statement issued following the high-level meeting hosted by France in New York in September 2022, on the safety and security of civil nuclear facilities in armed conflicts, said that the situation in Ukraine was grave. The unprecedented nuclear safety and security risks caused by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine must be dealt with. More than seven months previously, the Russian Federation had launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine and had immediately seized the still-contaminated site of the 1986 Chernobyl accident, using it as a staging area for its intended assault on Kyiv. Days later, the Russian Federation had seized Zaporizhzhya NPP, treating Ukraine's civilian infrastructure as a military trophy, seeking to deprive Ukraine of control over its own energy resources and putting Europe's largest NPP in the line of fire. From the very start, the Russian Federation's actions had put at risk the safe operation of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, placing their staff and the surrounding population in harm's way.

39. The USA applauded the Agency's persistent efforts to help maintain the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP. By outlining the 'seven pillars', the Director General had focused international attention and mobilized assistance to forestall a potential disaster. In his report of September 2022, the Director General had stated that events at the Zaporizhzhya NPP site had significantly compromised the 'seven pillars' and risked a severe nuclear accident with potentially grave radiological consequences. Her country thanked those Member States that had responded to Ukraine's requests for help and the Secretariat for helping to coordinate the assistance offered.

40. In particular, the USA applauded the Agency's support and assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya and the work of its experts to assess nuclear safety and security and to continue applying safeguards at the plant. Their continued presence helped to provide transparency and was critical to the plant's safety and security. Noting the exceedingly difficult conditions at and around Zaporizhzhya NPP, she

underscored the need for the continued safety and well-being of the Agency's staff and the Ukrainian personnel at the plant to be ensured.

41. The USA supported Ukraine's proposal to demilitarize a zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP and for all Russian personnel — military and civilian — to be withdrawn from that zone. Appreciative of the similar objectives underlying the Director General's proposal for a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP, her country looked forward to further elaboration of the proposal in a way that fully respected Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

42. The USA was pleased that the Agency had been able to conduct essential safeguards activities in Ukraine and continued to find — as the Director General had stated in his report of September 2022 — that there was no indication of the diversion of declared nuclear material or any indication that would give rise to a proliferation concern. In applying safeguards in Ukraine, the Agency must act in accordance with Ukraine's CSA and additional protocol.

43. The sham referendums recently held in Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine were entirely illegitimate, had no basis in law nor legal effect and would in no way alter Ukraine's internationally recognized borders. Zaporizhzhya NPP and the power it produced rightfully belonged to Ukraine. The USA appreciated the Agency's commitment to respect Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and trusted that it would continue to do so.

44. In the long term, the only solution to the problems created by the Russian Federation's invasion was for the Russian Federation to withdraw and to return control of Ukraine's nuclear facilities to the competent Ukrainian authorities, which were their rightful owners and remained best equipped to maintain their ongoing safety and security, having done so for decades.

45. It was gratifying that so many delegations had agreed to support a joint statement on the item, which would be delivered later in the meeting. Member States must continue to hold the Russian Federation accountable for its actions.

46. Mr ULYANOV (Russian Federation), expressing appreciation to Canada and Poland for suggesting the item's inclusion on the agenda of the General Conference, said that the issue of nuclear safety and safeguards in Ukraine was exceedingly timely. The General Conference could not avoid it, especially as it had not been fully discussed by the Board of Governors in September 2022.

47. He welcomed the fact that, with the Russian Federation's active cooperation, an Agency mission had been able to visit Zaporizhzhya NPP. It had not been easy, as there had been far too many attempts to prevent the visit, but it had successfully taken place. More objective information was beginning to be available on the situation at the plant, though there were attempts to interpret even the Director General's report in a remarkable way to find information in it that was not in fact present.

48. The Russian Federation was in full agreement with the report's main conclusion that by far the most pressing problem was the plant's physical integrity, as it continued to be regularly shelled by the Ukrainian armed forces. Careful reading of the Director General's entire report showed that the issues in implementing all 'seven pillars' arose either predominantly or entirely from systematic assaults on the physical integrity of the facilities of the largest NPP in Europe.

49. The primary issues were with power supply and the psychological state of the plant's operating personnel, who had to discharge their professional duties under constant Ukrainian shelling and unrelenting psychological pressure from the Ukrainian intelligence agencies, who were literally terrorizing the plant's staff and their friends and relatives with phone calls and messages on social media. According to information from the Russian Ministry of Defence, over the previous two and a half months the Ukrainian armed forces had shelled the plant and its infrastructure over 30 times, fired more than 120 artillery shells and used no fewer than 16 kamikaze drones. Enerhodar, the satellite town where

the plant's staff and their families lived, had been shelled more than 70 times in the same period, 10 times by drones and more than 60 by conventional artillery and multiple-launch rocket systems; causing death and injury to NPP staff and the city's population.

50. Ukraine — supported by Poland — contended that the Russian Federation had itself been shelling Zaporizhzhya NPP for the past two and a half months. They could have thought of something more convincing. The Ukrainian regime had not ceased to attack the plant, even with Agency representatives present for more than a month: on 20 September 2022 the Ukrainian armed forces had carried out an artillery strike near the plant's cooling spray ponds. Following shelling on the night of 20–21 September 2022, the piping for the pond at Unit 5 and the main connecting line of Unit 6 at the NPP were no longer operational. It was cynical that shelling had continued even during the current General Conference session. According to the Director General's latest update, No. 106, on 26 September 2022 shelling had taken place at around 5 p.m. local time near the facility's electrical switchyard, a few hundred metres from the plant's training centre. Such was the unique salutation to the General Conference from Ukraine.

51. At meetings of the Board of Governors in September 2022, his country had repeatedly asked representatives of the many countries making unsubstantiated allegations regarding the Russian Federation's purported persistent, violent actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine to provide proof of what they were saying. Sadly, no sensible reply had been received beyond well-worn platitudes that were totally untenable, as the Agency finally had a permanent presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP and could assess the situation in real time. Many Member States would be in no doubt that the rocket and artillery strikes on the plant and attacks using military drones and saboteur reconnaissance groups were being carried out by the Ukrainian armed forces, but the fact that none had acknowledged it publicly was encouraging Ukraine to continue its strikes.

52. For three days before the issue had been discussed before the Board in September 2022, all had been quiet around the plant. The Ukrainian armed forces had stopped shelling. Almost immediately after the adoption of the resolution drafted by Canada and Poland, however, shelling had resumed. Clearly, the Ukrainian armed forces had taken the Board's resolution as free rein to continue their demented acts. If the countries of the world — and particular those in the West — were seriously worried at the prospect of a nuclear disaster, they should call on Ukraine directly to desist, but it was clear to all present that they had decided not to do so. They were avoiding the issue, as they had avoided it in the draft of the Board's resolution. To judge from the text of that resolution, everything was going well at the plant and there were no threats of an immediate nuclear emergency as a result of shelling — of which, curiously, there was no mention at all.

53. The Russian Federation fully supported the Director General's goal of creating a protection zone at and around Zaporizhzhya NPP in order to avert a potential nuclear disaster and agreed that the plant should not become a military objective or battleground, which was totally unsuitable for an NPP. He hoped that sooner or later Ukraine would also acknowledge that it was unacceptable to shell an NPP and would cease such extremely dangerous activity.

54. The General Conference had heard calls to demilitarize the plant and create some kind of demilitarized perimeter around it. His country had already said before the Board that such demands were unrealistic: it was impossible to demilitarize what had never been militarized in the first place. The Russian Federation's sole military units at Zaporizhzhya NPP belonged to its national guard, which was a protective rather than offensive body. There were also experts present, together with a limited number of soldiers from radiation, chemical and biological protection units. The national guard was therefore required in order to secure the plant, and the radiation protection experts were indispensable to managing the consequences of potential emergencies, including radiation emergency situations, that might arise from constant Ukrainian shelling. There was no heavy weaponry or technology on the plant's territory

and never had been, as the two Agency staff members based at the plant — who had full access to the entire area — could confirm on a daily basis. There were no military targets that could serve as a pretext for Ukrainian shelling and attacks on the NPP. With regard to the presence of trucks at the plant, referred to by Poland, there were indeed such vehicles present; they belonged to the national guard. What threat did they pose to nuclear security? The plant was very large, and the security forces needed to move around it.

55. There was a real risk of a nuclear emergency — it was neither the time nor the place for playing politics. In spite of its deep disagreements, the international community must put delicacy aside and not try to cover up Ukraine's foolhardy actions against Zaporizhzhya NPP. The position taken by his country's Western counterparts — or former counterparts — was totally irresponsible. Western countries should use their influence to stop the shelling of the plant, and Ukraine should stop shelling it as a matter of urgency.

56. Ms HERNÁNDEZ MEDINA (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country thanked the Director General for his dedication and engagement in ensuring compliance with the Agency's mandate and the nuclear safety and security of NPPs in Ukraine. Venezuela also commended the technical staff who had visited Zaporizhzhya NPP and remained at the plant to monitor safety and security.

57. All parties should take the necessary measures to protect nuclear facilities and other sites housing nuclear material and radioactive waste in order to avoid a nuclear accident or incident. Her country remained alarmed that the ongoing shelling continued to represent a constant threat to nuclear safety and security with potential impact on critical safety functions that might have far-reaching radiological consequences. Venezuela called on all parties involved — including those sustaining the conflict economically, militarily and in the media — to de-escalate the crisis. For her country, peace was the only option, and it agreed that an international commission should be established to facilitate dialogue.

58. Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Mexico) said that his country commended the Director General on his important work at the head of the mission that had been present at Zaporizhzhya NPP since 1 September 2022 and reiterated its strong support for the Agency's efforts to ensure the safety of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Mexico supported the Director General's endeavours to stabilize the situation using the Agency's own tools and technical capabilities, including guaranteeing that its support and assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya could work unhindered.

59. Discussions of the situation in Ukraine in the context of the Agency must take place in full compliance with its mandate. Several General Conference resolutions had reaffirmed that any attack or threat against peaceful nuclear facilities constituted a violation of the principles of the UN Charter and international law. His country supported the 'seven pillars' and the Director General's proposal to pursue negotiations for the urgent establishment of a safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP. There was a need to work together to reach that goal, and Mexico called on everyone to achieve it.

60. Mr KORIKOV (Ukraine), expressing gratitude for the support received from Ukraine's friends and partners, said that everything in the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation was an outright falsehood. The Russian Federation was lying about its bloody and barbaric war against Ukraine.

61. The unprecedented circumstances in which the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference was taking place marked a turning point in Member States' approach to ensuring nuclear safety and security. The Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine had revealed a number of vulnerabilities in the nuclear safety and security paradigm. Nuclear security had changed more over the previous seven months — since the Russian Federation had launched its invasion of Ukraine — than in the preceding five decades. Member States considering or

embarking on a nuclear power programme must strive to improve or strengthen their national physical protection regime on the basis of Ukraine's experience.

62. Never before had nuclear risks and threats come directly from a nuclear-weapon State. The Agency's role was to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of nuclear security systems worldwide by developing a new nuclear security paradigm to address new and evolving threats arising in the context of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, which had seen threats that nuclear weapons would be used, alongside the threat of using peaceful nuclear applications for military purposes. The Russian Federation had attacked Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhya NPPs, carried out missile strikes against and shelled South Ukraine NPP and the Kharkiv Institute for Physics and Technology, bombed radioactive waste storage facilities, and fired missiles over other NPPs in Ukraine, clearly demonstrating that the Russian paradigm of waging war involved a scenario in which every nuclear facility could be used like a pre-installed nuclear bomb. The Russian Federation's total disregard for international norms and rules in the nuclear field only heightened the need to re-evaluate approaches to nuclear safety and security.

63. Equally important was a reform of working methods for the implementation of Agency safeguards on the basis of the experience already gained following the Agency's missions to the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhya NPPs. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine had repercussions that went far beyond an infringement of international law and a violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Its neglect of international nuclear obligations constituted an even more serious breach: violation of the non-proliferation regime established under the NPT. The Russian Federation's utter disrespect for legally binding agreements in the nuclear field, such as CSAs, undermined the effectiveness of the overall safeguards mechanism established, thereby calling into question the Agency's ability to provide comprehensive conclusions.

64. It was important to take such threats seriously. Since the occupation of Ukraine's territories in 2014, and in particular since the full-scale invasion in 2022, the Russian Federation had been constantly disrupting the international non-proliferation regime. The spectre of Russian violations in the occupied territories of Ukraine ranged from unauthorized activities involving small amounts of radioactive material to the destruction of nuclear facilities as a whole. It was difficult to see how the existing safeguards mechanism could survive or resolve the situation when it was clear that the Russian Federation had no intention of respecting existing treaties. The Board of Governors resolutions adopted on 3 March 2022 and 15 September 2022 were being ignored by the Russian Federation. The risk of the total collapse of the non-proliferation and safeguards implementation regimes had risen significantly and there was a need to react accordingly.

65. Representatives of the personnel service of Rosatom had arrived at Zaporizhzhya NPP earlier that day — illegally — and announced that the President of the Russian Federation would soon issue a decree concerning the annexation of Zaporizhzhya province and its incorporation into the Russian Federation. From that time, according to the Rosatom representatives, Zaporizhzhya NPP would belong to Rosatom and all employees of the plant must therefore submit an application for employment at Rosatom within two weeks. The audacious and cynical Kremlin regime was about to commit another international crime.

66. Ukraine urged the Agency to firmly repudiate the Kremlin criminals, whose plans were bringing the world to the brink of nuclear disaster. The Russian Federation would be remembered for generations as the only country that had seized and occupied peaceful nuclear facilities and the sovereign territory of another Member State. Such acts of the Russian Federation — a Member State of the Agency and a nuclear-weapon State — constituted a blatant violation of international law, including the UN Charter and the Statute of the Agency. The Russian Federation was responsible for the crisis and must be held accountable for its complete disregard for the norms of international law and, in particular, for its violation of the Statute, Article XIX.B of which stated: "A member which has persistently violated the

provisions of this Statute or of any agreement entered into by it pursuant to this Statute may be suspended from the exercise of the privileges and rights of membership by the General Conference acting by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting upon recommendation by the Board of Governors.”

67. Ukraine encouraged Member States to react appropriately at the national level by imposing sanctions on Russian State players, including authorities and individuals involved in illegal acts at and against Ukrainian nuclear facilities. The entire Agency community must spare no effort to stop Russian nuclear blackmail and prevent a nuclear catastrophe from occurring.

68. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada) said that he was making a joint statement on behalf of the following delegations in addition to his own: Albania, Australia, Austria, the Bahamas, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Uruguay and Euratom.

69. The 50 delegations underlined their grave concern at the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine that had resulted from the Russian Federation’s invasion. They reaffirmed General Conference decision GC(53)/DEC/13, adopted unanimously in 2009, which recognized the importance attached to the safety, security and physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities and noted General Conference resolutions GC(XXIX)/RES/444 and GC(XXXIV)/RES/533. They also recalled the resolutions on the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine adopted by the Board of Governors in March and September 2022.

70. They deplored the Russian Federation’s persistent violent actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine and emphasized that the Russian Federation’s seizure of Zaporizhzhya NPP was the root cause of the current threats to nuclear safety and security at the plant. The risk of nuclear incidents would remain dangerously high as long as the Russian Federation was present at the site. Zaporizhzhya NPP must stay connected to the Ukrainian electricity grid as an integral part of the country’s energy system. Any sham referendums conducted by the Russian Federation within Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders would have no political or legal effect on the status of Zaporizhzhya NPP or the areas surrounding the facility.

71. Expressing firm support for the efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat with regard to nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine under very challenging circumstances, the 50 delegations welcomed the Director General’s work to follow up on his visits to Ukraine on the basis of his two summary reports, issued on 28 April 2022 and 6 September 2022. They also welcomed the three Agency expert missions to Ukraine led by the Director General, including the support and assistance mission to Zaporizhzhya, and gave their backing to the continued physical presence of Agency technical experts at Zaporizhzhya NPP in order to support Ukraine, stressing the importance of their continued safety and well-being.

72. The 50 delegations emphasized the importance of nuclear safety and security in connection with peaceful nuclear facilities and material in all circumstances, including armed conflict. In that context, they recognized the importance of the Director General’s ‘seven pillars’, derived from Agency safety standards and nuclear security guidance. The delegations intended to continue to support the Agency’s work in helping to facilitate the implementation of those principles in Ukraine, while fully respecting Ukrainian sovereignty. They looked forward to further elaboration of the Director General’s proposal

to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone at and around Zaporizhzhya NPP in a manner that protected Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

73. The 50 delegations once again called on the Russian Federation to immediately cease all actions against and at nuclear facilities in Ukraine in order for the competent Ukrainian authorities to regain full control over all nuclear facilities within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders, to ensure their safe and secure operation, and in order for the Agency to fully and safely conduct its safeguards verification activities in Ukraine.

74. Ms KROIS (Poland), speaking in exercise of the right to reply and responding to the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation concerning the Board of Governors resolution drafted by Canada and Poland, emphasized that the Board had adopted two resolutions on the issue under consideration, in March 2022 and September 2022, by a majority of 26 Member States in favour to 2 against in each case.

75. She added that, of some 40 Member States that had taken part in the Conference's discussion, it was curious that only the Russian Federation had a different understanding of the situation in Ukraine, seeing itself as the protector of a stolen NPP. When Zaporizhzhya NPP had been controlled by Ukraine, it had been safe, secured and properly safeguarded by the Agency. When the Russian Federation had invaded Ukraine, safety and security standards had been violated and the plant had needed to be shut down. The Russian Federation should leave both the plant and the country it was occupying.

76. Mr ULYANOV (Russian Federation), also speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that he had been looking forward to the joint statement delivered by the representative of Canada, as he had been most interested to find out whether its backers would have the courage to act seriously and avoid political intrigues in calling for an end to the shelling of Zaporizhzhya NPP. Many countries that had aligned themselves with that statement were well aware that the shelling was being carried out by Ukraine, but none of the statement's supporters had ventured to call on Ukraine to cease such reckless actions. Their stance was actually encouraging Ukraine to continue shelling. The position taken by the statement's backers was irresponsible — it was wholly unacceptable to play political games with nuclear safety.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.