

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the Second Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Monday, 26 September 2022, at 3.05 p.m.

President: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

Later: Mr JOHNSON (Ghana)

Later: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

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Abbreviations used in this record

A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
ABACC	Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFCONE	African Commission on Nuclear Energy
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
AUKUS	enhanced trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CNESTEN	National Centre for Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Technology
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISSAS	IAEA State System of Accounting for and Control of Nuclear Material Advisory Service
IWP	Integrated Work Plan
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

LEU	low enriched uranium
NDT	non-destructive testing
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
NPCs	national participation costs
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
NRA	Nuclear Regulatory Authority
NSTDC	Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
ORPAS	Occupational Radiation Protection Appraisal Service
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PCR	Programme Comprehensive Report
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PET	positron emission tomography
PET-CT	positron emission tomography-computed tomography
R&D	research and development
RASIMS	Radiation Safety Information Management System
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
SESAME	Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
SQP	small quantities protocol

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

SRA	State or regional authority responsible for safeguards implementation
SSAC	State system of accounting for and control of nuclear material
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

5. Arrangements for the Conference (resumed) (GC(66)/2)

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

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day and recommended that the agenda for the sixty-sixth regular session should consist of all items listed in document GC(66)/1 and of all supplementary items set forth in documents GC(66)/1/Add.1 to 5. With regard to the allocation of items for initial discussion, it had recommended that all items be taken up for discussion as indicated in documents GC(66)/1 and Add.1 to 5. With regard to the order of items contained in documents GC(66)/1 and Add.1 to 5, the General Committee had recommended that the order should be as set out in those documents.

2. It was so decided.

(b) Closing date of the session and opening date of the next session

3. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had recommended that the Conference should set Friday, 30 September 2022 as the closing date of the sixty-sixth regular session, and Monday, 25 September 2023 as the opening date of the sixty-seventh regular session.

4. It was so decided.

25. Examination of delegates' credentials (GC(66)/18)

5. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a Credentials Committee to examine the credentials of the delegation of Myanmar, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 5 of its report contained in document GC(66)/18.

6. Ms ABIDA (Jordan) said that her country wished to raise a reservation about the credentials of the delegation of Israel, which had been issued from Jerusalem, in violation of international law and UN resolutions.

7. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference was prepared to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 5 of document GC(66)/18.

8. It was so decided.

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

9. Mr REES-MOGG (United Kingdom) expressed his Government's gratitude for the phenomenal work of the Director General and the Secretariat over the previous year. Their commitment, resilience and professionalism in responding to threats to security and stability had shown, once again, the Agency's value to the global community.

10. The UK firmly believed that the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies were essential to resolving some of the most pressing challenges of the times. That meant boosting energy security through safe and secure nuclear power production to address climate change and food insecurity. Those who threatened that vision could not be ignored; the UK continued utterly to condemn the Russian Federation's unlawful invasion of Ukraine and its reckless actions against nuclear facilities, including at Zaporizhzhya NPP. Russia's wicked actions threatened the safety of millions and undermined the use of nuclear technology.

11. The UK supported the Agency's work to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, including Zaporizhzhya. However, it was clear that the only way to resolve the nuclear safety issues in Ukraine was for the Russian Federation to end its unprovoked invasion, and unconditionally withdraw all its troops and personnel from Ukraine's nuclear facilities and from all land inside Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

12. While the Russian Federation had acted alone to block consensus at the recent NPT Review Conference, the UK would play its part to advance its commitments under the Treaty. That included sustained dialogue and engagement on peaceful uses, through which the UK — alongside 30 partners — aimed to continue expanding access to nuclear technologies, so that more countries could benefit from them, through medical, environmental and energy applications.

13. It was a matter of deep concern that Iran had chosen not to seize the critical diplomatic opportunity to restore the JCPOA and instead continued to escalate its nuclear programme. The JCPOA could not in any way be used to release Iran from its legally binding safeguards obligations that were essential to the non-proliferation regime and international security. The only way the issues could be resolved was through Iran providing technically credible explanations to the Agency's outstanding questions.

14. Despite those threats to the global non-proliferation architecture, sight must not be lost of the opportunities offered by advanced nuclear technologies. That was why, earlier in 2022, his Government had published the British Energy Security Strategy setting out its intention to boost deployment of civil nuclear up to 24 GW by 2050, including through the development of SMRs. Meanwhile, the Government was improving its plans for decommissioning and developing a geological disposal facility to dispose of the most hazardous radioactive waste safely and securely.

15. In addition, the UK was leading global efforts to make fusion energy a reality. By investing in the best research, his Government planned to build a prototype fusion power plant that would put energy on the grid by 2040 — demonstrating fusion energy's commercial viability.

16. Furthermore, it was more important than ever to have resilient international supply chains for uranium and nuclear fuel. The UK had many decades of experience of making fuel for its own reactors and for export to the rest of the world. It would continue to build on that experience, ensuring that its supply chains and capabilities were ready to help fuel the energy security future.

17. It had to be recognized that challenges — ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to the Russian Federation's illegal war in Ukraine — had highlighted the importance of working together to strengthen

the nuclear safety, security and safeguards frameworks. The Agency could count on his Government's full support in its efforts to strengthen those systems, including through its work with Australia and the USA on naval nuclear propulsion; the three partners were committed to meeting the highest standards of non-proliferation.

18. The UK remained committed to working with other contracting parties to strengthen Agency conventions, in particular through the valuable peer review processes, and to maintaining robust emergency response arrangements. An effective and robust safeguards system remained an essential enabler for the peaceful uses of nuclear. The UK urged those countries that had not yet done so to ratify CSAs and additional protocols. Only fully implemented and ratified agreements, matched with high security standards for nuclear material and sites, would earn the public's confidence in nuclear technologies and provide assurance that they were safe, secure and safeguarded.

19. Lastly, he applauded the Agency's significant contribution to science and research and the Director General's unwavering commitment to nuclear for development. He was happy, therefore, to announce that his Government was pledging £3.4 million to the TCF. The technologies under development were needed to solve the most pressing global challenges of the time, and should be delivered to those most in need.

20. Mr LANDA ARROYO (Peru) said that his country actively promoted the peaceful use of nuclear energy, mindful of the important contribution of nuclear technologies for medical uses, in keeping with its commitment to the SDGs and to nuclear non-proliferation. Peru attached great importance to the development of nuclear techniques, which explained its solid and dynamic relationship with the Agency, making it possible to implement high-impact projects for the benefit of the Peruvian people.

21. For example, Peru had the Agency's backing for improving its nuclear research reactor and for making La Molina Agricultural University an important Collaborating Centre, with a view to positioning Peru as a regional hub in the sustainable use of nuclear energy. Agency cooperation had been valuable in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and also with the oil spill that had occurred at the beginning of 2022 along the country's coastline — after which the Agency had sent a mission of technical experts to assess the emergency and determine actions to be taken in the future. Those experiences highlighted the importance of two Agency projects: NUTEC Plastics and ZODIAC.

22. Peru would continue implementing and consolidating ARCAL, whose presidency his country held until 2023. The Agreement played a leading role in South–South cooperation, and was an effective mechanism for promoting the application of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes, reflecting Latin America's positive record in the execution of nuclear projects.

23. Peru welcomed and supported the efforts of the Director General and the Board of Governors to promote a safer international environment for the use of nuclear energy, which entailed effectively addressing delicate situations such as those in the DPRK, Iran and Ukraine. During the two years in which his country had served on the Board, Peru had contributed to Agency efforts concerning the effective application of safeguards, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the integrity of NPPs, while helping to avoid accidents that jeopardized international peace, security and stability. He congratulated the Director General on his visit to Zaporizhzhya NPP in Ukraine, the largest in Europe, and the report he had presented. The Plant's safety and security were threatened by the conflict raging in that country and Peru supported the Agency's proposal to establish a protection zone around the Plant's perimeter.

24. Strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime was a task for the entire international community. Peru therefore welcomed the entry into force of the TPNW, as a complement to the NPT and the CTBT. Every State had a responsibility to achieve the universalization of those treaties in order to pursue a nuclear-weapon-free and safer world for all.

25. In that connection, he recalled the Joint Statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon States — China, France, the Russian Federation, the UK and the USA — on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. Issued in January 2022, the Statement had emphasized the importance of fulfilling commitments, including the States' obligations with respect to nuclear disarmament, to which the entire international community aspired. The leaders had affirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". Universal commitment was necessary because the nuclear threat would not go away as long as States failed to take sustained action to achieve programmatic, transparent and verifiable nuclear disarmament.

26. In conclusion, he urged all States to resolve their conflicts peacefully and in strict compliance with the rules of international law. In particular, they should continue to cooperate with the Agency and comply in all transparency with its verifications and safeguards. Together the Member States must help to bring about a peaceful world where nuclear energy was an engine for development and not a threat to global peace and security.

27. Ms VAN DER STRAETEN (Belgium) said that she could not outline her country's priorities regarding the safety and security of its nuclear installations without first denouncing and deploring the dramatic upheavals caused by the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. At that time, it had been unimaginable that Zaporizhzhya NPP, Europe's largest, could be on a front line and that the Russian war of aggression would cruelly jeopardize the safety and security of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, preventing Ukrainian regulators from fulfilling their safeguards obligations unhindered.

28. The only lasting solution was a complete withdrawal of the Russian armed forces and the restoration of Ukraine's sovereign control. As an interim measure, a nuclear safety and security protection zone should be established to prevent accidents or incidents. She paid tribute to the courage of the Ukrainian nuclear authorities and experts, who continued working under extremely trying conditions, and the relentless efforts of the Director General and his team carrying out their work day after day, in Vienna and in Ukraine.

29. The terrible conflict in Ukraine served as a practical reminder that nuclear safety and security could not be compromised. Belgium would continue to maintain the highest safety standards, in collaboration with the Agency and international partners. Four peer review missions had been requested in 2022 and for 2023.

30. Every day, Belgium was investing in the development of a robust nuclear safety culture, by ratifying legal instruments or taking specific initiatives. Her country welcomed the conclusions adopted at the Conference of the Parties to A/CPPNM and the request to convene another conference.

31. Belgium's federal nuclear regulator, in cooperation with the USA, continued to call for an international working group to raise awareness among States about 'insider threats'. A training course on the topic had just been held in her country, with Agency support, involving instructors and participants from 70 countries.

32. Belgium had decided to support the NSTDC, as a donor and member of the Friends of the NSTDC. The centre would help to diversify the training and assistance on offer to Member States in the field of nuclear security.

33. Her country possessed excellent nuclear know-how and enjoyed a leading reputation in the sector. Research and innovation had always been top priorities for its institutions and companies, not least the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK•CEN) and the Institute for Radioelements. The Belgian Government supported their research for innovative solutions in the fields of the environment and human health, while motivating young people, especially women, to choose a career oriented towards nuclear technologies and help preserve Belgian know-how.

34. Specifically, Belgium had decided to invest in innovative SMRs. Elite researchers at the SCK•CEN would be studying whether sustainable nuclear energy was technically feasible. The study of lead-cooled SMRs could also benefit the development of MYRRHA, the world's first research reactor driven by a particle accelerator. MYRRHA was not an SMR but had a lot in common with such reactors, which meant that lessons learned from developing MYRRHA could be transferred to the process for innovative SMRs. SCK•CEN was working on a long term project to begin operating the powerful Belgian Reactor 2 (BR2), using LEU, by 2026.

35. Belgium welcomed the Director General's decision to make the fight against cancer — and access to radiotherapy services for all — one of the Agency's top priorities through the Rays of Hope initiative. In her country, nuclear medicine had made a breakthrough thanks to the development of highly promising radioisotopes, such as lutetium-177, which could make a difference not only in medical imaging, but also in targeted therapies. Progress had been made possible thanks to national and international partnerships with the public and private sectors, which were essential for securing the supply chain and winning the race against time between the production of radioisotopes and the provision of care for cancer patients.

36. Turning to non-proliferation, she said that Belgium was gravely concerned at the alarming expansion of Iran's nuclear programme and the knowledge it had acquired. She called on Iran to return to its international commitments, adhere to the additional protocol and cooperate fully with the Agency.

37. As the DPRK continued to defy the international community, all States had a duty to respond firmly and maintain international pressure on the country's regime, through the strict implementation of sanctions.

38. She concluded by reiterating Belgium's untiring support for the Agency's work in all its facets. Her country met its obligations each year, contributing in full and on time to the Agency's regular budget. Going beyond its core obligations, it made voluntary contributions to the tune of nearly €2 million every year, to the TCF and specific projects. Despite the difficult budgetary context facing all States, Belgium would be contributing more than €900 000 to Agency projects in 2022, for safeguards, human health — through the Rays of Hope initiative — smart farming and research — namely, the renovation of the Seibersdorf laboratories.

39. Mr BECCARI (San Marino) said that, since 2021, there had been several disease outbreaks: not only was COVID still present on the whole planet, but monkeypox had also been declared a public health emergency of international concern and West Nile fever had reappeared around the world. Those emergencies, among others, made the Agency and its work and assistance ever more relevant.

40. The acute and fragile situation at Ukraine's nuclear plants represented the greatest concern, however. San Marino condemned the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of States was a fundamental principle enshrined in international law. His Government hoped that peace would be restored as soon as possible through dialogue and diplomatic efforts. He commended the Director General and all his staff for their immediate, effective and practical approach to all those emergencies. The international community was in good and capable hands. His country trusted the work of the Agency and other international organizations operating in those fields.

41. San Marino commended the Agency for its work in increasing nuclear safety and security throughout the world, and for continuing to foster peaceful nuclear applications in cancer research, human and animal health, agriculture, climate change and water quality. It highly appreciated the activities carried out in the Seibersdorf Laboratories, including those relating to ZODIAC. Agency scientists cooperated around the world to ensure that everyone was better prepared for future challenges.

His country again stood ready to pledge a symbolic contribution to the TCF, which had proven to be of valuable support to everyone.

42. San Marino continued to believe that the system of safeguards was fundamental for international security and called on all countries to allow the Agency to perform its inspections and to support all Member States in the observance of their agreements. It reiterated its concern, however, about the lack of willingness to cooperate shown by a number of countries and appealed to them to comply with their commitments.

43. His country deeply regretted the fact that it had not been possible to reach an agreement on the joint final declaration at the end of the Tenth NPT Review Conference, held in August 2022. Such texts were very important for progress towards the reduction of nuclear weapons.

44. Noting that 26 September was the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, he said that San Marino was a State party to the TPNW and had participated in the first meeting of State parties earlier in 2022. His country was convinced that, together with the NPT, the TPNW could bring the world closer to the final elimination of nuclear weapons and the threat of use of nuclear weapons, a threat everyone had hoped would never present itself again.

45. Lastly, he said that San Marino continued to support all education, cooperation, dialogue, negotiation and trust building activities aimed at achieving peace and a world free of WMDs.

46. Ms FAJON (Slovenia) said that, in relation to the Russian Federation's war on Ukraine, which had had significant ramifications for global nuclear safety and security, her country condemned in the strongest possible terms that act of unprovoked and unjustified military aggression. The Board of Governors had acted decisively in that regard and she encouraged the Russian Federation to stop disregarding the demands set by the Board. Moreover, the seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security must be fully respected.

47. She commended the Director General and his team for their dedication, professionalism and impartiality in addressing the pressing situation regarding nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. Russian occupation of Zaporizhzhya NPP — the largest in Europe — remained a major risk factor. The presence and activities of Russian personnel at Zaporizhzhya created an unacceptable nuclear safety risk. The Russian Federation should immediately withdraw its entire staff from the NPP.

48. The situation at Zaporizhzhya had been reflected at the Tenth NPT Review Conference. She deeply regretted that, despite intense negotiations, consensus on the outcome document had not been achieved. In particular, Slovenia deplored the fact that the Russian Federation did not see the situation in Zaporizhzhya as a matter of concern, and had blocked the adoption of appropriate language.

49. Slovenia had repeatedly expressed its support for the JCPOA, and its concerns regarding Iran's decision to halt the implementation of transparency measures as envisaged in it. The nuclear deal was a vital part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and needed to be preserved. She therefore called on Iran to refrain from any further escalatory steps, to reverse all activities inconsistent with the JCPOA and to return to its full implementation.

50. Slovenia was concerned at the lack of substantive cooperation by Iran with regard to outstanding safeguards issues. Even after the decisive action of the Board of Governors in June 2022, Iran had not provided technically credible answers to the Agency's questions on the undeclared locations. Everyone needed to be assured of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Convinced that progress was possible, she called on Iran to start cooperating immediately and fully with the Agency to resolve all outstanding safeguards matters.

51. Slovenia commended the transparent manner in which Australia, the UK and the USA had approached the potential acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear powered submarines by Australia — by informing all relevant forums. The AUKUS partners would no doubt continue to pursue their goals in concert with the Secretariat and in full respect of their international obligations.

52. As a country benefiting from nuclear energy, Slovenia deeply appreciated the Agency's work related to nuclear safety, security and safeguards. Her country promoted sustainable development through its support for Agency activities with regard to a broad range of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including as a clean and reliable energy source. Accordingly, Slovenia was proud to have been able to financially support the renovation of the Seibersdorf Laboratories.

53. Cherishing the activities of the Secretariat in pursuit of gender equality and gender balance, Slovenia had made a donation to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme. Moreover, she sincerely hoped that the Board of Governors would support the only female candidate for Chair of the Board — the Slovenian candidate. Of course, gender was not the only reason to support her. Slovenia had significant experience in steering international forums, including the Board of Governors, which it had chaired twice previously. Slovenia had a keen interest in supporting the important work done by the Agency. That had been true 30 years earlier when Slovenia had joined the Agency and remained true in the difficult times currently facing the international community.

54. In parallel, under the motto “Building trust — Securing the future”, Slovenia was running for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2024–2025. It had proven many times in numerous forums that it could bring to the table the perspectives of a small State, mindful of contemporary security challenges and strongly supportive of effective multilateral cooperation at the global and regional levels.

55. She concluded by expressing the wish that effective multilateralism would result in a less turbulent future, starting with a successful conclusion of the General Conference.

56. Mr ARKAB (Algeria), reiterating his country's commitment to the Agency's work under the NPT, called for further efforts to achieve a balance among the Treaty's three pillars, namely, the promotion of peaceful uses, nuclear safety and security, and safeguards. Despite the many steps being taken to rid the world of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, that goal was far from being achieved. Global challenges required global solutions and multilateralism remained the best tool for attaining nuclear disarmament.

57. Noting that the TPNW provided appropriate answers to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use, Algeria welcomed its entry into force in 2021 and the successful holding of the first Conference of States Parties in June 2022. Algeria was a signatory of the TPNW, which had been concluded under its presidency of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. Furthermore, it was a party to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and the CTBT, which contributed effectively to bolstering regional and international peace and security, strengthening the non-proliferation regime and achieving nuclear disarmament objectives.

58. Algeria reaffirmed the importance and validity of the resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. If that demand could be prioritized by the international community it would help to strengthen regional and international peace and security.

59. Turning to Agency initiatives, Algeria welcomed the Director General's choice of theme for the 2022 Scientific Forum: “Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All”. His country was fully committed to supporting the Agency's efforts under Rays of Hope and stood ready to fund the long term training of four nuclear medicine technicians from Benin under the initiative's first training course, to be held in

Algeria. Noting that the AFRA regional designated centre for training in nuclear medicine in Algiers made a valuable contribution to the Agency's efforts to strengthen the capabilities of African countries in nuclear medicine, Algeria looked forward to the Agency designating it as a regional Collaborating Centre under Rays of Hope.

60. In addition, Algeria had appointed its national ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics coordinators and laboratories and commended the Agency's work under those initiatives and in all phases of ReNuAL.

61. Stressing the importance of its CPF for the period 2018–2023 as a tool for deepening its technical cooperation with the Agency, Algeria highlighted its close coordination with the Secretariat to prepare the subsequent CPF — for the period 2024–2029 — for signature in 2023. The good implementation level and important results achieved under its current TC programme would not have been possible without the dedication of the staff of the Department of Technical Cooperation, especially the Division for Africa, and their expert Algerian counterparts leading project implementation. Algeria's TC programme for the 2022–2023 cycle, prepared in coordination with the relevant national sectors, covered human health, livestock production, water resources and nuclear safety and reflected the national priorities identified in the CPF.

62. At the regional level, Algeria was pleased that the Agency continued to prioritize Africa in many areas. It actively implemented regional activities through its AFRA regional designated centres and hosted regional events. Moreover, Algeria supported the initiatives under AFCONE's strategic plan and welcomed collaboration with AFRA to enhance the optimal and safe peaceful uses of nuclear energy at the regional level.

63. Algeria welcomed and would participate in the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Energy in the 21st Century, to be held in Washington DC in October 2022, and commended the Agency's commitment to highlighting the contribution of nuclear energy in addressing climate change during the high-level panel discussions at the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in 2021.

64. Algeria was in the very advanced stages of decision-making on developing a coherent national strategy to integrate nuclear power, and on taking steps to strengthen the national legislative and regulatory system in line with nuclear technology requirements and international obligations. It had enacted its nuclear law in 2019, and its national nuclear safety and security authority had begun working in 2022 to ensure compliance with nuclear safety and security procedures and radiation protection rules. Algeria looked forward to working closely with the Agency to support the authority to achieve its objectives.

Mr Johnson (Ghana), Vice-President, took the Chair.

65. Mr TOUKAN (Jordan), highlighting his country's continuous efforts to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in order to achieve the SDGs, said that the national nuclear programme had notched up a series of achievements. The Jordan Research and Training Reactor continued to produce medical radioisotopes such as iodine-131 and had started to produce holmium-166 for detecting and treating liver cancer, with work under way to license and produce technetium-99m.

66. The industrial radioisotopes unit had achieved ISO 9001 certification for the production of iridium-192 for use in NDT, and technology for neutron transmutation doping in pure silicon crystals was being used for industrial purposes. In view of the status of the research reactor as a scientific and industrial centre of excellence in the Middle East, Jordan would be hosting the International Conference on Research Reactors: Addressing Challenges and Opportunities to Ensure Effectiveness and Sustainability, to be held in November 2023, with wide participation from countries around the world with operating and planned nuclear research reactors.

67. As for the NPP project, the Jordan Nuclear Regulatory Commission was developing the use of SMRs. It had completed the technical and economic evaluation of several advanced technologies and was preparing a technical and economic study on options for electricity generation or desalination using SMRs.

68. With regard to his country's uranium extraction project, he said that the Jordanian Uranium Mining Company had been operating a pioneering yellowcake extraction plant since the start of 2021 and had produced 20 kg of yellowcake with high efficiency from 160 tonnes of processed uranium ore. Production would be expanded in the coming months in accordance with international standards.

69. SESAME continued to transform advanced scientific research in the Middle East with its three operational beamlines — the X-ray spectroscopy beamline, the infrared spectroscopy beamline and the materials science beamline. A soft X-ray spectroscopy beamline had been launched in June 2022, and a tomography beamline was expected to be operational in early 2023. To date, SESAME had been used for 134 laboratory research projects, which had resulted in 57 publications in reputable international scientific journals.

70. Jordan sought to expand the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in medicine, water and agriculture as part of a solid strategy to boost its socioeconomic development and counted on the Agency's technical support through national, regional and interregional projects. The visit of the Deputy Director General and Head of the Department of Technical Cooperation in May 2022 had clearly demonstrated the depth of technical cooperation between his country and the Agency. Jordan was pleased to announce that its CPF for the period 2023–2027 would be signed on the margins of the General Conference and would outline the national needs and priorities to be supported through the TC programme in order to achieve its national sustainable development objectives.

71. Underscoring the importance of joint and sustainable international efforts to strengthen the comprehensive nuclear security regime in line with regional and international obligations, Jordan reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and using nuclear energy only for peaceful applications that benefited all countries and peoples, in accordance with the spirit of the NPT.

72. Jordan would continue to make positive contributions to nuclear disarmament efforts, especially towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. It renewed its call to all countries in the region, including Israel, to join the NPT and to place all their nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards so as to universalize the Treaty in the region and facilitate the establishment of that zone.

73. Mr ALMONTE (Dominican Republic) thanked the Director General for his great work at the helm of the Agency in exceptional circumstances and against an increasingly turbulent international backdrop. The Dominican Republic reaffirmed its support for his leadership and saluted his ability to create spaces for dialogue to settle differences.

74. He said that the world found itself in a geopolitical situation of great complexity. Current threats to the international order required the international community to be more proactive in strengthening the mechanisms of multilateral cooperation born of dialogue and diplomacy. Given the circumstances, States must prioritize nuclear safeguards and radiological protection, along with the environment, food sovereignty, technological advances in agriculture and improvements to health systems. Those actions would make the world a safer place.

75. While advances in non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy had to be acknowledged, the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture called for a balanced implementation of the three pillars of the NPT. It was therefore a matter of concern that disarmament

had made less progress in recent decades. The Dominican Republic therefore reaffirmed its historic commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

76. With the assistance of the Agency's Department of Technical Cooperation, his country had participated in the ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics initiatives. Agency support would soon enable it to set up a secondary dosimetric calibration laboratory in Santo Domingo, to improve the quality and reliability of cancer treatment. In addition, his country was currently assessing the Rays of Hope project. All those measures would help to build the capacities of the Dominican Republic in its fight against cancer.

77. On the subject of capacity building, his Government reiterated its gratitude to the Department of Technical Cooperation for the levels of collaboration achieved in strategic areas such as courses, workshops, audits and projects along with the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

78. Noting that institutions could turn forward-looking visions into reality by efficiently implementing plans and programmes, he acknowledged the work done by the open-ended working group on the Medium Strategy 2024–2029, which had led to the adoption of that important document. Earlier in the year, the Dominican Republic had signed its CPF for the period 2022–2027 with the Agency. It was a great opportunity to harness the significant contributions that nuclear science and technology could make to the fulfilment of his country's main development goals.

79. The Dominican Republic would be joining the consensus on Kazakhstan's proposal for the restoration of sovereign equality in the Agency. It supported the initiative because it was based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States and guaranteed all the rights and benefits resulting from Agency membership.

80. He concluded with the words recently spoken by President Luis Abinader at the UN General Assembly: "The Dominican State reaffirms its commitment to the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations: peace, human dignity, justice, social progress and freedom".

81. Mr SALGADO (Honduras) said that his country recognized the Agency's contribution to peace, development and security and lauded the admirable efforts and leadership of the Director General and his entire team. Like all Member States, his country was promoting the peaceful use of nuclear applications to address the challenges it faced. Those applications could play a vital role in the economic development of small countries like Honduras.

82. Honduras was currently in a precarious condition, like all poor countries affected by the severe effects of climate change. As President Xiomara Castro Sarmiento had said in her address to the UN General Assembly on 17 September 2022, the notion of third or fourth category countries could no longer be tolerated. She had sounded a cry for the self-determination of all peoples and for cooperation to be understood as a sovereign act.

83. Honduras appreciated the support it had received in recent years from the Agency. On behalf of the people and Government of Honduras, he expressed particular gratitude for technical cooperation — thanks to that assistance it had built national capacity in the safe use of nuclear applications, above all in health, agriculture, isotopic hydrology and radiation safety.

84. His Government had declared that human beings had to be the focus of all social activity. For that reason, as a sovereign country Honduras aspired to use nuclear energy for strictly peaceful purposes. His country was in a region of the world that was free of nuclear weapons and must remain so. Yet every day it suffered from the greed and ambition of nations that sought to impose their civilizational criteria on it. Echoing the words of the Honduran President, he asked for respect while offering his country's own respect to all participants in the General Conference. He invited everyone to visit Honduras, an open country that many people could probably not pinpoint on a map.

85. Mr CAFIERO (Argentina) said that, in recent times, the nuclear threat had once again risen to levels that had seemed consigned to the history books. Indeed, global safety and well-being were facing a whole series of threats. Every day, the war being waged in Ukraine, in the wake of the invasion by the Russian Federation, served as a reminder that the world could be on the brink of a greater tragedy.

86. Concerns were two-fold: not only the security of nuclear plants but also the possible use of nuclear warfare, once again a topic of both diplomacy and news coverage. After decades of agreement on stockpile reduction and widespread acceptance of the principles of non-proliferation, there must be no place even for speculation about the use of nuclear weapons.

87. Argentina called for the avoidance of any action that could endanger nuclear facilities or expose populations to unfathomable risks on account of radioactive material. His Government thanked the Director General for his countless efforts and technical updates, congratulating him on his dedication — and most recently the Agency's assistance and support mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP in Ukraine.

88. In the same spirit of collaboration, he called for prudence and expressed concerns about global risks ahead — on behalf of his country and the wider region it belonged to. Argentina currently held the presidency pro tempore of CELAC, which was not merely a geographical area but also the world's most densely populated peace zone. It was a region that was well aware that integration in any form was a tool for peace-building. It also knew that human dignity depended on development and social justice and not on exploits on the battlefield. Moreover, each member State realized that the daily fight against inequality, exclusion and marginalization had to be fought as a community by each country shoulder to shoulder with its neighbours.

89. Peace was not a pipe dream, but a political decision nourished by a logic of cooperation. Argentina reiterated its commitment to the global security agenda, determined to play its part to ensure that the General Conference would make a substantive contribution to global nuclear safety and security. In doing so, it would contribute to international peace and security, which fully depended on collective efforts.

90. Similar challenges were related to scientific development, the environment and productive output in a world that was undergoing exponential transformation. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy were a safe and sustainable solution that could be applied in different spheres of daily life, such as medicine, climate change, energy and the food crisis. Through cooperation Argentina actively promoted secure and universal access to those technologies, mindful that all nations needed them to climb the development ladder on an equal footing.

91. Argentina had accumulated more than seven decades of experience in the field of peaceful nuclear activities and safely operated its own civil nuclear facilities. His country's experience had taught it that safety and security, along with the application of safeguards, were crucially important for the development and promotion of nuclear energy. Having made its nuclear programme a long term policy, Argentina had become a leading actor in various international forums. Moreover, for decades, it had been an exporter of responsible nuclear technology and extended its ties of cooperation with countries around the world, most of which were attending the General Conference.

92. Thanks to that collaboration and a strong emphasis on technology transfer for the benefit of all parties, those decades of unrelenting effort had resulted in a number of outstanding national projects. His country was a pioneer in the field of SMRs through its development of the CAREM reactor, the first SMR fully designed in Argentina, thanks to a high participation rate by the domestic nuclear industry. SMRs were vital for the future of nuclear energy and universal access to its peaceful use.

93. He also drew attention to Argentina's multipurpose research reactor — RA-10. The project involved the design, construction, assembly and operation of a reactor that would ensure the medical

radioisotope supply for national and regional markets and for scientific research in the reactor facilities. In addition, Argentina was building capacity under its national nuclear medicine plan. For example, the Argentine Proton Therapy Centre, currently under construction, would serve not only his country but the whole of Latin America.

94. As part of Argentina's commitment to the promotion of R&D in nuclear science and technologies and their applications, he highlighted his country's leading role in the initiatives launched by the Agency — ZODIAC, Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics — designed to offer practical solutions to the challenges facing humanity.

95. His country's coordination with Brazil in the creation and operation of ABACC had been underpinned by integration, peace and political decision-making. Over the three decades since the signing of the protocol, ABACC had proved itself to be a world leader thanks to a binational safeguards system implemented by a team of highly qualified inspectors. Working closely with the Agency, ABACC offered best practices in terms of nuclear safeguards and non-proliferation verifications within the United Nations and, in particular, under the NPT.

96. Argentina advocated the inalienable right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy enshrined in Article IV of the NPT. The Agency therefore continued to play a central role in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy worldwide, bearing in mind the seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security. No leader with any notions of history could possibly think that the world would be better off after a nuclear war. Wherever conflicts took place, they inevitably had a global impact.

97. Documents dating from 1982, the year of the South Atlantic conflict, had revealed that the UK had transported nuclear material to the area. Four decades later, not only Argentina but the whole international community was still waiting for accurate information about the facts. His country also urged compliance with UN Resolution 2065 (XX) of 1965, which called on the UK to negotiate with Argentina and resolve the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas (Falkland Islands), South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

98. Lastly, he reiterated Argentina's unswerving commitment to multilateral cooperation in pursuit of a world where nuclear technology would be solely at the service of peace and harmonious development.

99. Speaking on behalf of the 33 member States of CELAC — representing more than 600 million inhabitants in a region that faced huge socioeconomic inequalities and national asymmetries — he said that any policy that failed to take those realities into account or did not set out to change them, was both unethical and unworkable. In view of a situation that demanded solutions, nuclear energy and its peaceful applications could be seen as a reliable, safe and economical means of tackling new challenges and providing practical solutions to a variety of productive, economic, social, environmental and health problems.

100. CELAC member States had remained strongly committed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and its applications for many decades. Forming a zone of peace, free of nuclear weapons, they fervently believed in the inalienable right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and its applications, without discrimination. Their political commitment to continue down that avenue was clearly demonstrated in the fulfilment at the regional level of the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

101. In the 21st century, nuclear technologies for civilian use had become a central plank of South–South cooperation. CELAC member States cooperated, both horizontally and regionally, to foster technical capacity building and to transfer the equipment needed to develop the application of nuclear techniques in different fields: above all, the safe production of food and the fight against disease.

That had a direct effect upon the productive matrix of the member States, in particular the millions of small- and medium-sized producers that sustained their economies.

102. The Agency had highlighted the many medicinal uses of nuclear energy — above all for combating and preventing cancer. A heavier burden of new cases of diseases such as cancer had fallen upon low- and middle-income countries, whereas they received only a tiny percentage of total spending. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean was crying out for increased access to the equipment and treatment needed.

103. As a region of huge expanses and diverse landscapes, Latin America and the Caribbean was suffering from the negative impacts of climate change — the island States of the region were especially badly hit. For that reason, CELAC was closely monitoring the contributions that nuclear energy and technology could make in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The different ways of applying nuclear technologies to social innovation were a priority for the Latin American and Caribbean region, as they could contribute to socioeconomic development and directly to the fulfilment of Agenda 2030.

104. As a community of nations capable of reaching consensus on all issues of common interest, CELAC believed in the importance of promoting joint actions to help science, technology and innovation boost human development for all peoples in the region. It would continue working in depth, in close cooperation with the Agency, to enhance the peaceful applications of nuclear energy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Joint efforts would undoubtedly result in huge benefits for the socioeconomic development of the region.

105. CELAC was committed to peace and security — including nuclear safety — at the national, regional and universal levels; its commitment was both fraternal and practical. At a time of uncertainty and anxiety, the international community had to stick together. The greatest test of multilateralism was the ability to produce results, so that human beings could live a little better every day.

106. Mr ELMARKABI (Egypt) reaffirmed the inherent and inalienable right of all States to enjoy the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to carry out R&D and cooperation activities to enhance their benefit from such uses for development. He said that Egypt supported the Agency's role in disseminating those uses — the main pillar of its work and the primary reason for its establishment in 1957, in accordance with Article I of the Statute.

107. The Secretariat had made commendable efforts to promote nuclear energy and its applications as an important component in the implementation of the SDGs, especially in combating and adapting to climate change. Noting the Director General's keen interest in participating in climate change summits, Egypt looked forward to his contribution at the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Sharm el-Sheikh to review the growing potential of nuclear energy in tackling climate change.

108. Many countries had not benefited from the tremendous developments during the preceding decade in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In Egypt's view, that was primarily attributable to unjustified restrictions on nuclear technology exports that went beyond the provisions agreed in the NPT, and to weak financial support for peaceful uses and the reluctance of many regional and international finance institutions and development funds to invest in the nuclear energy sector — a situation exacerbated by the TCF's limited resources.

109. Although the TCF was the main tool through which the Agency provided its assistance to more than 140 Member States, its annual budget of less than €100 million was dwarfed by the scale of problem. A solution must be found urgently to provide sufficient, sustainable and predictable resources to keep pace with the growing ambitions of many countries to maximize their benefit from peaceful nuclear technology. That should be done through partnership between donor and recipient countries,

without conditions, to enable the implementation of Agency activities and initiatives, in particular Rays of Hope, in which Egypt was keen to participate to support development efforts in Africa.

110. Egypt emphasized the importance of upholding the comprehensive safeguards system and supported the Agency's efforts to enhance the system's effectiveness and efficiency with objectivity, impartiality and neutrality towards States and reliance on purely technical standards, and without any politicization or circumvention of States' legal obligations. Underscoring the voluntary nature of the additional protocol, which complemented CSAs, Egypt believed that attempting to impose further legal obligations and restrictions on non-nuclear-weapon NPT States Parties as a prerequisite for benefiting from peaceful uses would only consolidate the current imbalance in the non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, it would not help to enhance the effectiveness of the safeguards system, which required States to work in good faith to universalize CSAs. Egypt therefore called on the Director General to give high priority to that issue in implementing the General Conference resolutions on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards and on the application of safeguards in the Middle East.

111. The universalization of the comprehensive safeguards system was an essential step towards establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East. To that end, Egypt would again propose a draft resolution on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East in a continued effort to rid the region of nuclear weapons. Egypt looked forward to a proposal from the Director General setting out a new vision for progress on the implementation of the resolution in the light of regional and international developments.

112. In that context, Egypt welcomed the convening of the first and second sessions of the UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction and looked forward to the third session, to be presided over by Lebanon in November 2022. The conference had gained increasing momentum as an important negotiating track for implementing the resolution of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. It was not intended to isolate any State in the region but was a sincere attempt to negotiate a treaty on ridding the Middle East of WMDs that would address the concerns of all parties while observing the principle of consensus.

113. According great importance to promoting nuclear security, Egypt was keen to enhance its cooperation with the Agency and donor countries on the physical protection of its nuclear facilities, noting that such security was solely the responsibility of States and should not be used to influence their fundamental right to peaceful uses. Nuclear security projects, moreover, should be funded through voluntary resources, especially given that TC activities — one of the Agency's main areas of work — were not funded through the Regular Budget.

114. Regarding Egypt's peaceful nuclear programme, the ambitious project to construct the four-unit El-Dabaa NPP to meet national development needs in accordance with Egypt's 2030 vision was making good progress. The granting of permission in July 2022 to build the first reactor unit and start the first concrete pour had been an important milestone that put his country among those with NPPs under construction. Egypt was committed to implementing the project while observing the highest standards of nuclear safety and security and meeting its legal obligations.

115. Mr KALLAS (Estonia) said that his country condemned in the strongest possible terms the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine. It was extremely concerned about the threats that the Russian military invasion posed to safety, security and safeguards. Nuclear facilities in Ukraine remained at the highest risk. Estonia therefore strongly supported the resolution on the situation in Ukraine recently adopted by the Board of Governors.

116. Estonia welcomed the Director General's call for the establishment of a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP and called on the Russian Federation to immediately withdraw its military and other personnel from the site. Russia's occupation of Europe's largest NPP

must end immediately. Estonia thanked the Director General and the Agency for closely monitoring the situation and keeping the international community informed.

117. The General Conference was taking place in a complex international security environment. The Agency's role in ensuring that nuclear material and technology were used only for peaceful purposes had become vital. The NPT was the foundation of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and Estonia supported its universal and effective implementation. His country deeply regretted that the Tenth NPT Review Conference had been unable to achieve consensus on a final outcome document because of opposition by the Russian Federation.

118. Estonia continued to support the JCPOA and the Agency's long term mission of verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear related commitments. Iran's timely and full cooperation with the Agency remained crucial.

119. His Government was committed to the fight against global climate change and must consider all options for sustainable energy production in the future. In early 2021, it had established a nuclear energy working group to analyse the potential of using SMRs in Estonia beyond 2030. In order to make an informed and transparent decision, his Government was working in close cooperation with the Agency, relevant stakeholders and international partners. It had asked the Agency to conduct an INIR mission in the country in the second half of 2023, after which the working group would submit its final report.

120. Estonia already benefitted from the diversity of nuclear science and technology in medicine, industry and education. It valued highly the cooperation and support that the Agency had provided through its expert missions and TC programme. In March 2022, Estonia had been the first country to host the Agency's pilot Advisory Mission on Radiation Protection and Safety in Medical Exposure.

121. Estonia was proud to be signing a new CPF agreement with the Agency. Its priority areas in cooperating with the Agency, along with nuclear medicine and cancer treatment, included ensuring long term management of radioactive waste by building a disposal facility in Estonia by 2040. In addition, it needed assistance from the Agency in increasing its knowledge about safe uses of nuclear power.

122. Estonia appreciated and supported the Agency's ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics initiatives and looked forward to their implementation, which would benefit Member States.

123. In concluding, he emphasized that any failure to face up to the Russian Federation would mean legitimizing illegal aggression against another sovereign State and accepting a grave violation of international law, the UN Charter and the Agency's Statute. Irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and threats must be addressed through joint action. The international community must hold the Russian Federation to account. It was the right time to show that multilateralism worked and to demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine.

124. Mr PIMENTEL MATA (Guatemala) recalled that the challenges the world currently faced were not new to the Agency's work and that, despite the trying circumstances, the Agency had performed its functions as an international centre for nuclear cooperation and had discovered new mechanisms to continue supporting Member States in the face of adversity.

125. As Guatemala had benefited from the Agency's prompt action in response to the needs that had arisen in the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies, it valued the Agency's capacities, not least its TC programme, which made that type of cooperation possible. It recognized the resilience of the Secretariat and the performance of the Director General, whose commitment and professionalism in carrying out their functions enabled the Agency's mandate to be fulfilled.

126. One exemplary international cooperation project using nuclear applications developed by the Agency was the El Pino centre, a Mediterranean fruit fly production and sterilization facility in

Guatemala, thanks to which the peaceful uses of nuclear energy were harnessed for the achievement of the SDGs. It was a tripartite project, involving Guatemala, Mexico and the USA, and its results benefited not only those three countries, but also the region as a whole.

127. His country welcomed the Director General's initiatives to promote the Agency's important work on developing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy through nuclear applications: Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics. Thanks to them, the Agency was transferring to the Member States know-how and good practices that offered their populations solutions to the complex challenges they currently faced.

128. Guatemala was particularly grateful to the Agency's TC Division for Latin America and the Caribbean for its assistance and guidance resulting in the signing of its CPF for the period 2022–2027, which reflected that his country's priority areas of cooperation were directly linked to 9 of the 17 SDGs. Key areas were human health and nutrition, and priority would be given to projects related to the fight against cancer, along with radiodiagnosis, nuclear medicine, radiotherapy, oncology and medical physics.

129. As Guatemala recognized that the uses of nuclear energy must be applied responsibly, it would continue to make progress in the areas of nuclear safety and security. Nuclear security should not obstruct, restrict or prejudice the inalienable right of access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, especially in developing countries such as Guatemala.

130. Throughout 2022, Member States had witnessed the Agency's importance as an independent, professional and technical body that met its objectives in an impartial manner, especially when applying and verifying compliance with safeguards — a fundamental pillar of the non-proliferation regime. That had to be respected, without excuse or pretext or any discrimination between Member States. Guatemala reaffirmed its support for and collaboration with the Agency in the application of the safeguards regime within the framework of COMPASS — the IAEA Comprehensive Capacity-Building Initiative for SSACs and SRAs — thanks to which significant progress had been made at the national level.

131. Guatemala believed that the only absolute guarantee against the threat posed by nuclear weapons was a comprehensive ban and their total elimination. Only in that way could collective security be achieved and all societies around the world be preserved. Moreover, his country was mindful of the grave humanitarian consequences that could result from the testing and detonation of nuclear weapons.

132. Mr SOLIDUM (Philippines) said that the General Conference was once again meeting in person — but against the backdrop of a fragile and highly uncertain environment, with ongoing COVID-19 cases, an economic slowdown, the reversal of development gains, the adverse impacts of climate change and geopolitical tensions. The Agency, with its motto of Atoms for Peace and Development, had a very important role to play.

133. His country attached great importance to the Agency's R&D activities on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Those applications, when deployed to Member States, supported their respective development efforts — be it providing clean and reliable energy, ensuring food and water security, detecting and managing diseases or supporting industrial development.

134. With the valuable support of the TC programme, the Philippines continued to strengthen its capacity in a variety of nuclear applications. It looked forward to signing a new CPF on the margins of the General Conference later in the week — it would continue to guide his country's cooperation with the Agency over the coming six years.

135. In the field of food and agriculture, the new CPF would focus on food authenticity, plant breeding, and soil and water management. Through plant mutation breeding and other nuclear and isotopic techniques, the Philippines hoped to develop crops that were high yielding and resistant to different

biotic and abiotic stresses, enhance agricultural practices to augment soil fertility and increase food production, improve food safety for human consumption and support agricultural exports.

136. In the field of natural resources and the environment, his country hoped to improve the management of pollution and radioactivity in the ridge-to-reef environment, covering terrestrial and marine ecosystems. It would use nuclear and isotopic techniques to identify sources and monitor transport of pollution and contaminants.

137. In the field of human health and nutrition, the Philippines hoped to increase radiopharmaceutical production; improve nuclear medicine services for better management of patients with non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and heart diseases; improve medicine services for nuclear and radiation emergencies; enhance national capacities for the control of disease-carrying mosquito vectors; and improve scientific inputs to reduce stunting and malnutrition among children under five. It had started construction of a Nuclear Medicine Research and Innovation Centre that would house a medical cyclotron and a PET–CT imaging facility, to make cancer staging and management more accessible to the Filipino people. His country had established a biodosimetry facility that aimed to monitor radiation risk in the population.

138. In the field of energy and industry, the Philippines looked forward to improving national capacities in energy planning, taking into consideration the potential integration of nuclear power. It also looked forward to the operation of the Philippine research reactor, PRR-1 SATER, commissioned in June 2022. The research reactor would support education and training in nuclear science and technology in the Philippines, and enhance national capacity in R&D and innovation.

139. In addition, the Philippines looked forward to strengthening national capacity in nuclear and radiation safety, including radioactive waste management, and in nuclear security, to protect people and the environment from the adverse effects of ionizing radiation. It appreciated the Agency's issuance of guidance and technical documents, its provision of advisory and peer review services, and its conduct of training events on the safe and secure use of nuclear science and technology. Likewise it appreciated the Agency's support on various nuclear safety and security matters, including through RASIMS and INSSP. It congratulated the Agency on the successful hosting of the Conference of the Parties to A/CPPNM in March 2022.

140. The following week, the Philippines would be welcoming a team of 11 Agency experts for the conduct of the ORPAS to check the legislative and regulatory infrastructure and practical implementation of the country's occupational radiation protection programme.

141. As part of its efforts to broaden public understanding and confidence in nuclear science and technology, the Philippines celebrated its annual Atomic Energy Week every second week of December, to develop national consciousness of the benefits of peaceful uses, especially among the youth. The year 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the celebrations.

142. The Philippines attached great importance to the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology for Asia and the Pacific, which was also celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022. Under the RCA, Asia–Pacific States jointly promoted and coordinated R&D and training projects in nuclear science and technology, with the Agency's support.

143. The Philippines appreciated the Agency's continuing efforts to identify nuclear applications to address the world's most pressing developmental challenges, leading to the development of flagship initiatives such as ZODIAC, ReNuAL 2, NUTEC Plastics, Rays of Hope and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

144. The Philippines considered the Agency's safeguards and verification function to be the backbone of the global nuclear non-proliferation agenda, as it provided the international community with assurances that nuclear material, facilities and activities remained exclusively under peaceful uses. It reiterated the paramount importance of States' compliance with their respective obligations under the relevant safeguards agreements, and the provision of full cooperation to the Agency as it fulfilled its independent and impartial work.

145. The Philippines reiterated its principled position that the world should be free of nuclear weapons, and that their total elimination was the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

146. Lastly, the Philippines underscored the importance of international cooperation and capacity-building. Enhancing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation on peaceful uses offered opportunities to transcend geopolitical divides and work together for peace and development.

147. Ms BENALI (Morocco) said that the General Conference was taking place in an international security context marked by a growing need to make optimal use of nuclear applications for peaceful purposes and to guarantee international standards of nuclear and radiological security and safety. It was an important moment for all Member States to renew their political commitment to the safe and secure use of nuclear technology applications, in line with the Agency's vision of Atoms for Peace and Development.

148. Morocco fully supported all the efforts made by the Agency, in particular through the TC programme. Having presided over the previous regular session of the General Conference in 2020, her country had highlighted the importance of the use of nuclear applications and the development of radiotherapy in the fight against cancer. All those involved needed to strengthen their synergies, dynamics and complementarity in the fight against cancer, above all in Africa. Morocco therefore actively supported the Rays of Hope initiative, launched by the Director General in Addis Ababa on the sidelines of the 35th African Union Summit, with a view to guaranteeing cancer care for all, and to alleviating the lack of radiotherapy in developing countries, especially in Africa.

149. She was pleased that, during the Director General's visit to Morocco in June 2022, an MoU had been signed between the Moroccan Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Agency. The agreement, which established new areas of cooperation, would further strengthen that cooperation in the fight, in Africa, against cancer and zoonoses such as COVID-19, Zika and Ebola. Similarly, the MoU would lead, within the framework of Rays of Hope, to a strengthening of Morocco's contributions to establishing regional centres to address the lack of cancer care, especially in Africa, where more than 70% of the population had no access to radiotherapy, an essential tool for curing cancer.

150. Thanks to Agency support, Morocco had developed domestic expertise in the promotion of the peaceful use of applications and technologies in a safe, secure and sustainable manner. It had done so in the fields of health, nuclear medicine and medical physics, nutrition, water, agriculture, industry, environment, energy, education and training, safety and security, and nuclear safeguards.

151. The National Centre for Nuclear Energy, Sciences and Technology (CNESTEN) trained around a hundred professionals every year and held scientific and technical events, while deploying expertise missions and laboratory analyses. Together with the Hassan I University in Settat and the Mohammed V University in Rabat, it also offered an academic and clinical master's degree in medical physics, and another in radiopharmaceutical sciences; in 2022, a second class of laureates from French-speaking Africa had graduated. To date, almost 300 professionals had benefited from that important training and held positions of responsibility, mainly in the regulatory bodies of their respective countries, reinforcing respect for and compliance with the Agency's safety standards, and the establishment of appropriate national legal frameworks.

152. On the regulatory level, the Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa, chaired since 2019 by the Moroccan Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security Agency (AMSSNuR), had worked to strengthen the role of African nuclear regulators in the field of nuclear security and safety. To that end, AMSSNuR had provided training to 2000 people, 38% from African countries.

153. In addition, in October 2022, AMSSNuR would be hosting a meeting of the Steering Committee on Regulatory Capacity Building and Knowledge Management in Nuclear Safety and Security. Its purpose was to prepare for the Steering Committee meeting due to take place in Vienna, in December 2022, for finalizing the draft 2023–2030 strategic approach for developing the building blocks of capacity: namely human resources programmes, training, education, knowledge management and partnership networks.

154. In that dynamic of bilateral and triangular partnerships with the Agency, Morocco welcomed the double recognition of CNESTEN in 2021: as the first Collaborating Centre on the African continent for the use of nuclear techniques in the fields of water resources management, environmental protection and industrial applications, for the period 2021–2025, and its designation as the first African Collaborating Centre for capacity building in nuclear security.

155. Every year, 2.6 billion people suffered from zoonotic diseases, which caused 2.7 million deaths. Morocco welcomed the significant progress made since the implementation of the ZODIAC initiative, adopted by consensus under the Moroccan presidency of the sixty-fourth session of the General Conference. The initiative aimed to strengthen national and regional capacities for zoonosis diagnosis and detection and the establishment of an Agency-led coordinated response team.

156. Furthermore, Morocco — which had morally and financially supported the establishment of ZODIAC and Rays of Hope — appealed to Member States to continue to support the Agency's structuring actions, such as the ReNuAL project, to provide the Agency with the necessary capacity to meet national needs, and thereby contributing to the achievement of SDGs. Having contributed to the financing of ReNuAL, Morocco also supported the renovation of the Seibersdorf Laboratories, ReNuAL and ReNuAL+, which is essential for strengthening training in developing countries in nuclear science and applications.

157. Turning to nuclear energy, she said that Morocco welcomed and supported the NHSI, launched in April 2022 by the Director General, with the aim of facilitating the safe and secure deployment of SMRs so as to maximize their contribution to achieving the goals of Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, including carbon neutrality by 2050.

158. She concluded with a pledge that Morocco would continue to work resolutely in line with its commitment to support the Agency's key role in providing technical assistance to Member States. Action in the service of the African continent remained a strategic priority for her country, in accordance with the guidelines on developing active South–South and triangular cooperation issued by King Mohammed VI.

159. Mr KOFOD (Denmark) said that the General Conference was taking place against the backdrop of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine, which his country condemned in the strongest possible terms. The nuclear non-proliferation architecture was being deeply challenged and the answer was not less but more multilateralism and international cooperation. Denmark fully supported the Agency's work across the spectrum of its mandate.

160. In such difficult and dangerous circumstances, the Agency's efforts to support nuclear safety and security in Ukraine were crucial. Denmark was particularly concerned about the situation in and around Zaporizhzhya NPP and was grateful to the Director General and his staff for their persistent work in line

with the ‘seven pillars’. His country urged the Russian Federation immediately to withdraw its military forces and all other unauthorized personnel from Zaporizhzhya NPP and all of Ukraine.

161. Denmark was disappointed that the Russian Federation had blocked a consensus outcome at the recent NPT Review Conference. The Treaty would, however, remain the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. Discussions at the Conference had underlined the crucial role the Agency played in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

162. Reiterating Denmark’s full support for the safeguards system, he said that the Agency’s role in verifying and monitoring the JCPOA was critically important for the Plan’s credibility. For that reason, his country was pleased to continue making financial contributions to that work in addition to its significant contribution to the Nuclear Security Fund. It backed a return to the JCPOA and its full implementation but the many steps taken by Iran in contravention of the Plan were a cause for deep concern. Therefore, Denmark urged Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency and return to full compliance, and to implement its safeguards obligations so that all outstanding questions could be solved.

163. Turning to the DPRK issue, he thanked the Agency for its continuing efforts to observe and report on the development of that country’s nuclear programme. Denmark condemned the DPRK’s clear failure to comply with its international obligations and called for the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization required by the UN Security Council.

164. Denmark looked to the Agency to provide standards and guidance on nuclear safety and security. Technological development must be accompanied by development of safety and security standards. Given that accidents or incidents would have cross-border effects, it was necessary to develop and promote nuclear safety and security worldwide.

165. He thanked the Agency for conducting two nuclear safety-related peer review missions to Denmark over the previous year. Those missions provided important feedback and would contribute to further strengthening the country’s nuclear safety provisions. Although Denmark had made the decision not to include nuclear power in its own energy mix, it respected the choice of other Member States and the Agency’s statutory obligations. Moreover, it acknowledged that nuclear technology could contribute to increasing energy security and reducing CO² emissions at the global level. As it supported the Agency’s TC work in crucial areas — human health, food security, water and the environment — Denmark had been pleased to pledge its full share of the TCF target for 2023.

166. In closing, he thanked the Director General and his dedicated staff for their invaluable contribution to building a safer and more prosperous world — especially the courageous efforts of the mission led by the Director General to Zaporizhzhya NPP. Denmark would continue its cooperation with the Agency and other Member States to advance its mandate. In the hope of being elected to the Board of Governors, his country looked forward to contributing actively and constructively to that body’s work.

167. Mr AFRIYIE (Ghana) said that he appreciated the continued support and assistance his country received from the Agency through its TC programme and the IWP and towards implementation of the Milestones Approach in the development of a nuclear power programme. Ghana was currently undertaking Phase 2 activities. On 28 July 2022, President Nana Akufo-Addo had made a declaration accepting the content of the PCR to advance Ghana’s programme.

168. The peaceful application of radioactive materials in various socioeconomic sectors required an effective regulatory framework that tackled safety, security and safeguards aspects. Ghana’s NRA was operationalizing the national legislative framework on nuclear matters and facilitating the establishment

of national policies and strategies for radiation safety and radioactive waste management. Working towards its vision of building a robust and stable regulatory framework, the NRA would continue to seek the Agency's support and other experienced regulators at the international level.

169. Consistent with international best practice, a suite of safety case documentation prepared by the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission and reviewed by Agency experts had been submitted to the NRA for site approval to construct a borehole disposal facility. The successful implementation of the borehole disposal system would not only provide the country with a licensed disposal facility for disused sealed radioactive sources but would also provide the human and technical capabilities required for the country's nuclear power programme.

170. Ghana recognized the Agency's central role of improving nuclear security globally. Cognizant of the principled position that nuclear security within a State was entirely the responsibility of that State, Ghana had embarked on a number of activities, including regulatory oversight, to strengthen its nuclear security regime.

171. Ghana joined other Member States in expressing deep concerns about safety and security issues relating to the NPPs in Ukraine, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP. The ongoing dangerous activities in and around the facility continued to pose a significant threat to the facility itself, human health and the environment. His country therefore urged all parties to immediately cease hostilities and shelling at the Plant and called for an immediate demilitarization of the territory. Ghana supported the seven recommendations outlined in the Director General's report for re-establishing nuclear safety and security at the site and the Agency's continued presence at the NPP, to help stabilize the situation and continue to monitor operations. Ghana had always held the view that diplomacy was the surest way to resolve issues and called on the parties to give dialogue a chance.

172. Having embraced the Rays of Hope initiative, Ghana was strengthening its cancer control programme through an upgrade of existing radiotherapy facilities and the establishment of new centres. Ways of strengthening cancer registries, building human resources and applying artificial intelligence in human health were continually being pursued.

173. To enhance the management of water resources in the country and attain SDG6, Ghana had integrated isotope hydrology in its water resource programmes as a complementary tool to existing technologies. Ghana was also involved in the fourth phase of the AFRA regional project on water resources management titled: RAF7021 "Enhancing, Planning, Management and Sustainable Utilization of Water Resources".

174. Ghana's participation in NUTEC Plastics was already yielding positive results. His country was investigating the applications of ionizing radiation technology as a complementary treatment in recycling hard-to-recycle plastic waste. It contributed to the country's roadmap to establishing a recycling facility to help manage plastic waste.

175. The accelerator facility, established in Ghana in 2016, continued to benefit from Agency support in diverse forms. The Agency had recently approved TC project GHA1014 to upgrade the facility for analytical services, research, education and training for national development for the period 2022–2025.

176. With support from the Agency, Ghana was implementing a number of projects focused on the development of technologies, technology transfer and capacity building in nuclear science and technology applications in food and climate smart agriculture, non-destructive testing, health care and environmental quality. His country was confident that continuous collaboration and support from the Agency and other development partners would enable Ghana to transform its agri-food systems to increase productivity and climate resilience and help towards meeting key SDGs.

177. Ghana thanked the Agency for its part in implementing human resource development initiatives and the nuclear knowledge management programme at the School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences. It would seek further extension of the practical arrangements between the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission and the Agency in the area of nuclear knowledge management.

178. He concluded by highlighting that the establishment in 2019 of Women in Nuclear Ghana (WiN-Ghana) — a chapter of Women in Nuclear Global — had helped mobilize and support women in various nuclear-related fields in the country. The chapter encouraged and mentored young women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, along with nuclear sciences and technology. Initiatives like those complemented the Agency's support for postgraduate education for women and girls through the much appreciated Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme.

Mr Cortese (Italy), President, resumed the Chair.

179. Mr OSMAN (Bangladesh) thanked the Director General and the Secretariat for their efforts under the Agency's mandate, at a time when the world was plagued by a number of complex and multi-dimensional challenges: climate change, conflict, the energy and food crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

180. Bangladesh acknowledged the Agency's role as a reliable partner for the Member States, in pandemic response, the performance of safeguard verifications or in helping developing nations to attain the SDGs through the safe, secure, and peaceful application of nuclear technology. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her Government and the people of Bangladesh highly appreciated their ever-growing engagement with the Agency, which was critical for sustainable growth and prosperity.

181. Bangladesh strongly supported international cooperation and the mutual sharing of experience in the framework of technical cooperation. Through its TC programme, the Agency had been assisting Bangladesh in human resource development and capacity building for the introduction, development and peaceful use of nuclear techniques in many sectors — including health, livestock, agriculture, industry and water management — contributing to the country's socioeconomic development.

182. His country commended the Agency for its tireless efforts to support Member States in implementing the highest standards of nuclear safety and security. The Agency had demonstrated its indispensable role in implementing the NPT and its review process, the cornerstone of the international peace and security architecture.

183. Nuclear energy played an integral role in low-carbon energy transitions. Bangladesh considered nuclear energy to be an important component of its future energy generation mix. The country was in an active phase of building two VVER-1200 technology power units at Rooppur according to the highest international and Agency standards. The reactor pressure vessel of Unit 1 was already at the design phase and that of Unit 2 would be by October 2022. The Rooppur NPP was moving fast towards its final shape.

184. He reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to working closely with the Agency to ensure the highest standards in nuclear safety, security and safeguards to promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology. To meet the maximum safety and security requirements in Rooppur NPP, Bangladesh was creating an appropriate safety, security and safeguards infrastructure to comply with all requirements. In 2022, it had received an ISSAS mission, and conducted IRRS and IPPAS preparatory meetings. It was working with the Agency to receive critical peer reviews and new advisory missions in order to ensure the responsible and timely completion of the Rooppur NPP.

185. Ms ŽIAKOVÁ (Slovakia) reaffirmed her country's full solidarity with Ukraine and commended the Ukrainian people for their courage in defending their country against the unprovoked and unjustified aggression of the Russian Federation, which her country condemned in the strongest possible terms. The

Russian Federation's invasion of a sovereign country was a gross violation of international law and the UN Charter, and severely undermined European and international security. Slovakia also condemned Belarus for its involvement.

186. Slovakia fully supported and recognized the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Russian actions had endangered the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Her country strongly supported the Agency's work in Ukraine, including the Director General's proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP.

187. While regretting that the Tenth NPT Review Conference had failed to achieve consensus on the text of the final document, Slovakia remained strongly committed to the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and an irreplaceable pillar of international peace and security. The Agency's safeguards system was a fundamental component in that regard, with a CSA and additional protocol constituting the current verification standard. As CSAs were legally binding instruments, she called on Iran and Syria to engage constructively with the Agency to clarify and resolve all outstanding safeguards issues.

188. With regard to the implementation of safeguards in the context of naval nuclear propulsion under AUKUS, Slovakia expressed satisfaction with the Agency's current approach. It welcomed the AUKUS parties' engagement with the Agency and encouraged them to continue with that transparent methodology.

189. Turning to nuclear power, energy and climate change, she said that the world faced challenging geopolitical times. The Russian Federation's illegal war in Ukraine had not only put the safety and security of nuclear facilities in serious jeopardy, but had also led to a significant destabilization of global security with serious socioeconomic implications, at a time when the world was trying to recover from ever-increasing post-pandemic inflation. Against that background, nuclear energy had proven, once again, its key and essential role in national energy security, and as an important tool in advancing decarbonization and climate targets and reaching net zero. Safe and secure nuclear power would therefore remain a strategic priority and one of the main pillars of Slovakia's energy policy.

190. Important milestones had been reached in the Slovak nuclear power programme. After the authorization to commission Unit 3 of the Mochovce NPP had been issued at the end of August 2022, the operator had officially started the commissioning processes with the unit expected to become fully operational early in 2023. Power generation from Mochovce 3 would meet some 13% of Slovakia's total electricity needs, increasing the total share of nuclear energy in the electricity mix to 65%. Slovakia would become self-sufficient in supplying the country with electricity.

191. The use of nuclear energy went hand-in-hand with a robust and rigorous application of nuclear safety and security standards to which every country should strictly adhere. Slovakia commended the Agency for its role and efforts in promoting a strong and sustainable global nuclear safety and security framework, including through the development of its Safety Standards and Security Guidance. Slovakia reiterated its commitment to those principles and was working for their constant improvement as a cornerstone of its ambitions in the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies.

192. Earlier in 2022, Slovakia had successfully hosted an ORPAS mission to review its occupational radiation protection arrangements. More recently, the IRRS mission to Slovakia had concluded its assessment of the national governmental, legal and regulatory framework for nuclear and radiation safety, affirming her country's commitment to continuous improvement. The mission would be followed by an ARTEMIS mission, scheduled to take place in February 2023.

193. Slovakia firmly supported the Agency's mandate in advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in line with Atoms for Peace and Development. It continued to benefit from the assistance provided under the Agency's TC programme and attached great importance to the mechanism. Accordingly, it reiterated its call for a demand-driven, efficient, non-discriminatory and needs-based programme.

194. The Agency's Seibersdorf Laboratories played an essential role in delivering nuclear technical assistance to Member States in a wide array of areas, including the environment, human health and climate change. Slovakia was proud to be among the countries that had made an extrabudgetary contribution to enable their modernization and refurbishment under ReNuAL 2.

195. Slovakia welcomed the Director General's extrabudgetary initiatives covering many areas where nuclear technologies added value, including Rays of Hope, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics — recycling with irradiation was of particular interest to her delegation. Another key initiative that Slovakia would follow closely was the newly established NHSI, aimed at supporting the safe and secure deployment of advanced nuclear reactors, including SMRs. She applauded the Agency for taking a proactive approach.

196. Lastly, Slovakia welcomed the Agency's integration of a gender perspective in delivering its statutory tasks and continued to advocate for gender mainstreaming across all activities.

197. Mr SHANGULA (Namibia) said that his delegation had noted that the Agency's Annual Report provided comprehensive information about work undertaken in 2021. Namibia commended the Secretariat on its resilience and its support and assistance to Member States in all programmatic activities, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period.

198. For its part, Namibia continued to pursue cooperation with the Agency. For a developing country like his, the TC programme remained a vital tool for its interventions. It helped it to address specific issues and implement important national policies while achieving the SDGs. Successful cooperation with the Agency continued to be of immense benefit to key sectors such as human health, agriculture and food security, water management and environmental protection. For that reason, Namibia called for increased funding of the TC programme.

199. Namibia underscored the importance of adherence to international treaties, conventions, regulations and standards in radiation safety, security and safeguards. To that end, in July 2022 Parliament had given approval for Namibia to amend its SQP status, as a clear demonstration of its commitment to national obligations regarding nuclear non-proliferation. It would also provide assurance that all nuclear material and activities within Namibia's national borders were for peaceful purposes only. Namibia had made a commitment to advance the goal of non-proliferation and disarmament by supporting efforts for the successful implementation of an NWFZ in Africa in line with its obligations under the Pelindaba Treaty.

200. In addition, Namibia had made progress in improving its regulatory architecture for nuclear and radiation safety and security. It commended the Agency for developing innovative regulatory management tools such as RASIMS and the new Regulatory Authority Information System. It was mindful that, over the previous decade, the security of nuclear material and radiation sources had become a major international concern and that the Agency had worked tirelessly to develop the appropriate standards. In that respect, his Government encouraged the Agency to adopt an integrated approach between safety and security, especially in the development and deployment of regulatory performance management and assessment tools.

201. Cancer continued to be a major cause of morbidity and mortality among the non-communicable diseases. Logically, the fight against cancer remained high on Namibia's agenda of improving quality of life for all. His delegation therefore appreciated the continued Agency assistance and support provided through PACT. It welcomed Rays of Hope, the initiative launched by the Director General on

16 February 2022, on the margins of the African Union Summit, to explore a comprehensive and coordinated strategy in the fight against cancer. It acknowledged that delivery systems in low and middle income and developing countries remained ill-equipped for the provision of adequate cancer cures and care.

202. Although Namibia was classified as a ‘higher-middle-income’ country, there were sizeable inequalities in the country; it had the second highest Gini coefficient among all nations. Disparities were also evident in the health sector — 85% of the population shared one radiotherapy facility. As a result, there was a need to enhance the national cancer control programme to increase accessibility and raise the quality of cancer care countrywide. Namibia stood ready to engage and work with Agency’s TC Department to discuss ways of further exploring opportunities within the Rays of Hope initiative. Namibia welcomed the theme of the 2022 Scientific Forum: “Rays of Hope, Cancer Care for All”, in the hope that the initiative would provide timely interventions and strategies as it looked forward to concrete and effective recommendations.

203. His Government regarded gender equality as an important enabler for women’s participation in all spheres of development. As the requirement to empower women at all levels was enshrined in its constitution, Namibia commended the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, which would help to increase the participation of Namibian women in nuclear science related fields.

204. Namibia had relied on the TC programme for socioeconomic development in various sectors. It believed that it had matured enough to consider large-scale, sector-wide nuclear related projects to further harness economic and social values thanks to the use of nuclear science and technology. Namibia looked forward to working with the Agency and other partners for mutually beneficial undertakings in the area of nuclear science and technology.

205. Lastly, he said that Namibia fully subscribed to the equitable geographical representation of all Member States, in line with the principle of sovereign equality as outlined in the Agency’s Statute. It therefore supported the draft resolution on the restoration of sovereign equality of all Member States submitted by Kazakhstan to resolve the matter as expeditiously as possible.

206. Mr PAUDEL (Nepal) said that his country appreciated the efforts and achievements of the Agency, including the Director General and his team, to ensure the safe, secure, and peaceful application of nuclear science and technology in the interests of international peace and security. Nepal’s policy was to collaborate with the world community to bring about the end of the arms race and the complete disarmament of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and other WMDs. His Government was committed to the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

207. As a signatory and party to major disarmament-related international treaties and protocols, including the NPT and the SQP, Nepal believed that the use of nuclear science and technology should be solely confined to the peaceful purposes within the Agency’s safeguards framework. Nepal had adopted a national nuclear policy in 2007 to regulate, control and monitor the use of nuclear energy in accordance with Agency guidelines. It also set out to enhance national welfare through the peaceful use of nuclear science and take the necessary safety measures for the development and use of nuclear energy, while enhancing public awareness about its benefits and other consequences. More recently Nepal had adopted legislation on the use and regulation of radioactive materials in 2020 and 2022, also in compliance with Agency standards.

208. His Government was working on establishing basic standards and directives for facilities related to ionizing radiation. In order to expedite the process, it was planning to set up an efficient and effective regulatory body in accordance with Agency norms. The Agency’s support in that regard was much appreciated.

209. Nepal highly valued its technical support from and cooperation with the Agency since 2012, when it had signed a TC agreement comprising a number of different projects, many of which were directly linked to people's livelihoods and achievement of the SDGs. His Government was prioritizing its needs and commitment with regard to the SDGs under its 15th national plan. Its ultimate aim was to improve people's lives and livelihoods through peaceful nuclear applications, above all in agriculture, water and the environment, health care and nuclear knowledge development.

210. Following the completion of two cycles of Nepal's CPF in 2022, a new cycle for 2022–2027 would be signed later in the day. It would focus on technical cooperation in areas such as the legal framework, radiation safety and nuclear security, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, water and the environment, energy and industry, and nuclear knowledge development and management. Thanks to the implementation of TC and RCA projects, Nepal would be able to enhance its state of knowledge and capacities in nuclear science application.

211. Mr ZHEMU (Zimbabwe) said that his country valued the importance of nuclear technology and nuclear applications for peaceful purposes and the Agency's role in the promotion of safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In that connection, Zimbabwe reiterated its commitment to the Agency's safeguards system as it built confidence among States that they were abiding by their international commitments. It urged the Agency to remain proactive in the critical area of nuclear use, safety and security, in view of the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

212. Zimbabwe commended the Agency on the successes being registered under the TC programme. His country remained committed to meeting its obligations to the Agency in general — and to the TCF and NPCs, in particular, as they were critical drivers of the TC programme. In the same vein, he applauded the Director General and his staff for the spirited efforts in mobilizing resources and securing critical partnerships to support the TC programmes from which Member States benefited.

213. His delegation commended the Agency for its ground-breaking participation at the 26th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, held in Glasgow, United Kingdom. It had highlighted the role of nuclear technology and applications in the global fight against climate change and in achieving the SDGs. Zimbabwe greatly valued the importance of nuclear technology in the field of clean energy, especially at a critical juncture when the international community was grappling with increased incidences of extreme and often violent weather patterns manifesting in frequent droughts, floods and destructive cyclones. The Agency should continue to collaborate with any Member State that wished to use or further expand its nuclear-powered electricity generation capacities.

214. Zimbabwe welcomed recent collaboration between the Agency and the FAO, in the wake of heightened global food insecurities. It was confident that that strategic partnership would help transform and strengthen agricultural production while fostering resilience in global food systems, through the popularization of the Agency's nuclear techniques in pest control, climate smart agriculture and plant mutation breeding, to name just a few.

215. His country's own partnership with the Agency in the field of agriculture had been transformative; interventions included the use of nuclear science and technology to determine soil quality for effective agro-ecosystem management; mutation breeding as a measure to improve the production and productivity of crops; using nuclear techniques in developing drought-resistant legumes and cereal crops; confronting common tick-borne diseases that had threatened to decimate the national herd; and the use of nuclear techniques to determine the appropriate application of plant nutrients in irrigation systems. With the assistance of the Agency and other partners, Zimbabwe was undertaking studies to assess surface and groundwater dynamics in a process that would allow it to effectively and efficiently manage its water resources, including for agricultural purposes.

216. The COVID-19 pandemic had presented challenges and opportunities for both radiation safety and security, and in furthering nuclear science and technology programmes. With the successful vaccination campaigns and other proactive measures, it was to be welcomed that the negative impacts of the pandemic and related hindrances were currently minimal, restrictions having been eased.

217. Technology transfer and human capacity development were critical in the adoption of nuclear techniques and applications for peaceful purposes. In that regard, his Government called on the Agency to continue expanding its fellowship programmes aimed at supporting the training of nuclear scientists, including women and girls, and to increase its support towards the integration of nuclear science and technology into countries' education systems. He acknowledged the creativity and dynamism shown by the Agency during the peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the implementation of programmes, especially in training, had continued thanks to popularized online and virtual meeting platforms.

218. His delegation commended the Agency on its continued provision of assistance to Member States, especially developing countries, through ZODIAC, ReNuAL 2 and NUTEC Plastics, and the recent expansion of those programmes. In the area of human health, cancer remained a huge burden for health care systems across the globe, not least in Zimbabwe. He therefore applauded the Agency for its support to his Government in the fight against cancer, through the provision of equipment and expert advice and human resources development. Zimbabwe's Health and Child Care Ministry was currently developing a robust national cancer control plan with the Agency's help in order to reduce the incidence of cancer — and cancer mortality.

219. Bearing in mind the importance of nuclear safety and security, Zimbabwe had made significant strides in strengthening its radiation safety regulatory infrastructure, and in contributing to the global nuclear safety regime through the provision of experts for peer review missions and the hosting of fellows and scientific visitors. It had registered significant progress in the construction of a centralized disused radioactive sources management facility. Agency expert support and capacity-building had enhanced national competences for the safe management of the infrastructure. Firmly committed to upholding international conventions and agreements on nuclear safety, security and safeguards, his Government was on course to ratifying a number of conventions related to the safety and security of sources.

220. In July 2022, Zimbabwe had signed its third CPF, to run from 2022 to 2027. Aligned to the country's national priorities, as set out in its five-year National Development Strategy 1 and Vision 2030, the new CPF would help to address socioeconomic development needs through the application of nuclear science techniques and applications.

221. Ms MURRAY (United Kingdom), exercising her right of reply in response to the allegation made by the Argentine delegation about the transport of nuclear material by her country in 1982, said that the UK's position had been and remained clear — and had been clarified in 2003. The UK fully respected its obligations to the NWFZ covering Latin America and the Caribbean and had never broken any disarmament treaties.

222. Mr BULYCHEV (Russian Federation), exercising his right of reply, said that many extremely one-sided general statements had been delivered at the plenary, and the key issue had been evaded or distorted: the shelling by Ukrainian armed forces of the largest NPP in Europe, Zaporizhzhya.

223. He called on other Member States to remain professional and not to sink to the level of the recently adopted resolution, which had been imposed on the Board of Governors. They should keep the key issue in mind, as recalled in the Director General's report on the Agency mission to Zaporizhzhya NPP: namely, the Plant was being attacked with cannon artillery fire, which was extremely difficult if not impossible for air defence systems to intercept, and also with multiple launch rocket systems, kamikaze

drones and the deployment of sabotage groups. That was the key issue that should be occupying the international community and that had convinced the Director General of the need for a protection zone to be established around Zaporizhzhya NPP.

224. He also called on all Member States not to misuse the General Conference to expound political views and sentiments, something better suited to the UN General Assembly. The plenary was intended for discussing specific matters relating to nuclear safety, security and safeguards.

225. His delegation firmly opposed attempts by certain States to paint the protective presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP of members of his country's national guard along with Rosatom experts as the key issue. The key issue was, without any shadow of a doubt, the shelling of the plant by Ukraine's armed forces.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.