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President: Mr SADLEIR (Australia)

Later: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

Later: Mr SOLANO ORTIZ (Costa Rica)

Later: Mr CORTESE (Italy)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
A/CPPNM	Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
AAEA	Arab Atomic Energy Agency
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
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
CTBTO	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FNRBA	Forum of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies in Africa

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
G7	Group of Seven
G8	Group of Eight
HEU	high enriched uranium
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NDT	non-destructive testing
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD/NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPANAL	Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PET	positron emission tomography

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

Quadrupartite Agreement	Agreement between the Republic of Argentina, the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ReNuAL	Renovation of the Nuclear Applications Laboratories
RT-PCR	reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction
SALTO	Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation
SARS-CoV-2	severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMR	small and medium sized or modular reactor
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

6. General debate and Annual Report for 2021 (continued) **(GC(66)/4)**

1. Mr ROSA (Sri Lanka) said that his country appreciated the significant adaptations to the Agency's working methods to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of its activities related to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, nuclear safety and security, and verification and safeguards. TC activities were more vital than ever for a developing country such as Sri Lanka, and it appreciated the high implementation rate achieved in 2022 in challenging circumstances.
2. Sri Lanka commended the Director General's Nuclear and Radiation Safety Report 2022 set out in document GC(66)/10 and underscored the Agency's important role in enhancing nuclear safety. His country continued to have full confidence in the Agency's verification and safeguards regime, and called on all Member States to respect that framework and avoid taking arbitrary, ad hoc measures that prevented the transfer of nuclear technology for purposes consistent with the NPT. Respecting the right of all NPT States Parties to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was an important element in achieving the SDGs. In that regard, it was important to build and strengthen capacities in all Member States, and his country particularly appreciated the assistance provided by the Agency to developing countries operating, expanding or embarking on nuclear power and radiation technology programmes.
3. In 2022, Sri Lanka had made significant progress in its efforts to increase and diversify its power production capacity through nuclear power. An INIR mission had successfully been conducted in April 2022 using the Phase 1 criteria from the Agency's Milestones approach. It had concluded that Sri Lanka had involved appropriate stakeholders when considering the introduction of nuclear power and had commissioned studies that would enable the Government to make an informed decision before embarking on a nuclear power programme. The INIR team had identified some good practices that could be of benefit to other countries. Sri Lanka would implement the recommendations made by the team before progressing to Phase 2. His country needed to diversify its energy mix and was confident that it would continue to make steady progress in that regard with the Agency's continued support.
4. As part of the TC 2022–2023 cycle, Sri Lanka was receiving assistance with respect to NDT, agriculture and human health. Sri Lanka was building its first cyclotron facility for the production of fluorodeoxyglucose, which would undoubtedly be of great benefit to cancer patients awaiting a PET scan. The establishment of a national centre for NDT was one of the great successes of the RCA. With regard to agriculture, the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board had carried out a feasibility study with the assistance of the Texas A&M University and the RCA Regional Office on the construction of an electron beam and X ray facility for food irradiation.
5. Sri Lanka was in the process of incorporating the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radiation Sources into its domestic legislation. In order to further strengthen its regulatory regime, the Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Regulatory Council had drafted regulations relating to the safety and security of radioactive sources during manufacture, use, and storage.
6. With regard to emergency preparedness, the country's Atomic Energy Regulatory Council had submitted a project proposal to the Agency for the 2022–2023 cycle on 'Strengthening the National Capabilities for Responding to Nuclear or Radiological Emergencies'. Sri Lanka was grateful for the Agency's approval of the national nuclear or radiological emergency management plan. It was also keen to focus on strengthening its regulatory infrastructure for radiation safety and security and would continue to work closely with the Agency and other bilateral partners to that end.

7. In closing, he said that Sri Lanka firmly believed that the Agency could bring about positive change by transferring the benefits of safe and secure nuclear technologies to Member States, and looked forward to continuing its meaningful cooperation with the Agency.

8. Mr FACETTI (Paraguay) said that his country congratulated the Director General on the Agency's response to the major crisis that the international community continued to face, principally owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. At the same time, the regrettable safety situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP in Ukraine — Europe's largest NPP — raised concerns about the enormous risk of a nuclear incident. Paraguay issued a strong call for the cessation of hostilities and resumption of dialogue. It welcomed and supported the proposal to declare a zone free from all military personnel at nuclear facilities and in their immediate vicinity.

10. Mindful of the important contribution made by nuclear and nuclear-derived techniques to health care, agriculture and industry, and the environment, Paraguay prioritized the training of its human resources, encouraged research, and promoted women's access to training opportunities. His country was committed to facilitating access to the latest nuclear medicine technology, which was imperative. Paraguay highly valued the progress made by PACT and Rays of Hope, and the assistance provided by the Agency in the areas of radiation safety and quality assurance. Paraguay also lauded the Agency's efforts to respond to Member States' needs in enhancing capabilities to tackle infectious diseases. In particular, it welcomed the ZODIAC project and looked forward to further discussions and regular reporting thereon.

11. Having closely followed international nuclear developments and safety responses, Paraguay highlighted steps to improve compliance with the safeguards regime in order to guarantee the peaceful use of nuclear energy. CSAs between the Agency and nearly 180 countries — many of which were also implementing the additional protocol — helped to ensure that those countries were not pursuing clandestine nuclear weapons programmes. That enhanced security and trust while serving the broader goal of nuclear non-proliferation and helping to lay the groundwork for international cooperation on peaceful nuclear technology, in particular with developing countries.

12. Agency safeguards made an essential contribution to promoting peace and security and building confidence. The Agency's unique safeguards regime constituted an important tool for moving towards the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world and was the cornerstone of the NPT and associated instruments. Paraguay considered multilateralism as the most appropriate way to address global challenges, and it supported the Secretariat and the Director General in taking the necessary steps to provide the international community with real assurances.

13. Underscoring the importance of the Nuclear Security Plan 2022–2025, he said that nuclear security was a challenge that must be addressed in the relevant international forums. All countries should coordinate their respective nuclear security agendas, taking into account current scenarios and threats. Paraguay had ratified the Amendment to the CPPNM in 2016, attesting to its national commitment to protecting nuclear facilities and nuclear material in use, storage and transport in Paraguay, and drew attention to the A/CPPNM Conference that had taken place earlier in 2022. Reiterating its commitment to implementing the SDGs and to contributing efficiently to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in accordance with pertinent international instruments, Paraguay also called for further international conferences on nuclear security and encouraged the participation of all Member States at the highest level.

14. Paraguay continued to refine its nuclear legal framework by building the capacities of the competent authorities, which in turn enabled it to assist in other countries' endeavours to promote the security of nuclear and radioactive material at the national and global level.

15. Complete, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament was the only truly effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The TPNW was an historic milestone and envisaged a transparent and irreversible nuclear disarmament process based on a universal and legally binding framework. Progress on nuclear disarmament was imperative and must continue to be addressed in all relevant forums, in accordance with the obligations and commitments undertaken by all States. The establishment of NWFZs in other regions was a priority, as it would enable progress towards widespread and complete nuclear disarmament under effective international oversight.

16. Paraguay underscored the importance of preserving the JCPOA. Dialogue and diplomatic initiatives should continue, and his country welcomed the participants' strenuous endeavours to reach consensus on that issue. The Agency's reports on Iran's compliance with its international commitments under the JCPOA and its CSA were deeply troubling. Iran should cooperate fully and promptly with the Agency so that the international community could receive sufficient assurances as to the peaceful purposes of its nuclear programme.

17. Paraguay welcomed the international community's continued patient efforts to revive negotiations on the DPRK's nuclear programme, which jeopardized the integrity of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

18. Lastly, as demonstrated by the large number of projects and high implementation rate, the TC programme was the cornerstone of horizontal cooperation. Paraguay, which had one of the highest implementation rates in its region, reaffirmed its commitment to continued collaboration to promote the use of nuclear techniques and applications for peaceful purposes around the world.

19. Mr LILLY (New Zealand) said that the current regular session of the General Conference was taking place under the shadow of the Russian Federation's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal invasion of Ukraine, which had given rise to unprecedented threats to nuclear safety, security and safeguards, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP. The Russian Federation had undermined the Agency's long standing efforts to advance the peaceful uses of atomic energy. That such reckless and illegal actions had been committed by a nuclear-weapon State and Permanent Member of the UN Security Council with deep nuclear knowledge and expertise made the situation all the more difficult to comprehend. New Zealand unequivocally condemned the war and the threat of a Russian-made nuclear disaster. It commended the Director General and the Agency on their tireless efforts over the previous year to uphold the indispensable pillars of nuclear safety and security in the face of the Russian Federation's relentless efforts to erode them.

20. The Russian Federation's nuclear sabre-rattling had highlighted the importance of the fight against nuclear weapons. New Zealand had always championed non-proliferation and the Agency's vital role in that regard, but the total prohibition of nuclear weapons was the only way to remove the threat they posed to humanity. As New Zealand's Prime Minister had said at the UN General Assembly the preceding week, the only way to guarantee that people would be safe from the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons was for such weapons not to exist. New Zealand chose the challenge of nuclear disarmament over the consequences of a failed strategy of weapons-based deterrence, and called on all States to join the TPNW.

21. New Zealand attached great importance to the NPT and was deeply disappointed at the failure of the Tenth NPT Review Conference where the Russian Federation had blocked consensus. The Agency's invaluable work would have been bolstered by a positive outcome at that Conference. The high level of international support for the Agency was a reflection of the clear value of its work to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the safe, secure, safeguarded and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

22. It was regrettable that the international safeguards system continued to face challenges. Iran's significant expansion of its nuclear programme raised serious concerns, and New Zealand continued to hope that restoration of the JCPOA would see Iran's nuclear programme return to a demonstrably civilian purpose, and effectively monitored and verified by the Agency. Iran must comply with its safeguards obligations and cooperate to address the Agency's questions and concerns relating to undeclared nuclear material and activities. Those essential matters of compliance underpinned the international safeguards system. Similarly, the continued nuclear activity in the DPRK and Syria's long standing failure to address its safeguards non-compliance threatened to undermine the integrity of a system that was vital to collective peace and security.

23. The Agency's safeguards system must remain 'fit-for-purpose' across the Agency's mandate. Universal adoption of the additional protocol, and amendment or rescindment of SQPs were readily available ways of making the safeguards system as comprehensive as it needed to be. The Agency was also working to ensure that appropriate safeguards arrangements were in place for nuclear naval propulsion — a new challenge that had understandably attracted the interest of Member States. New Zealand had full confidence in the Agency's expertise, impartiality and professionalism in addressing that issue and keeping Member States fully informed of developments.

24. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy could have widespread benefits, but the associated risks must be thoroughly mitigated. Any nuclear incident or accident transcended international borders, and New Zealand continued to take a close interest in the potential risks associated with the transport of nuclear materials and nuclear power generation. Innovative technologies such as SMRs and transportable nuclear power plants must be developed so as to prioritize safety and security over rapid deployment.

25. There could be no doubt that the Agency continued to do valuable work and that the demands placed on it would increase in the coming year. While the Agency was up to the challenge, it would continue to need the full support and cooperation of all Member States if it was to succeed.

26. Mr COELHO DE ALMEIDA E SOUSA (Portugal) said that the current regular session of the General Conference was being held in unprecedented circumstances. The war in Ukraine and the serious threats it posed in terms of a nuclear disaster and the use of nuclear weapons were challenges that would have been unthinkable only a few months previously. In that context, Portugal remained deeply concerned about the safety, security and safeguards implications of the situation in Ukraine. The Russian Federation's actions continued to endanger Ukraine's nuclear facilities, in particular at Zaporizhzhya NPP, and posed risks that might have global repercussions. Portugal fully supported the Director General's efforts to ensure nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine under extremely challenging circumstances. The continued physical presence of the Agency's technical experts at Zaporizhzhya NPP was of crucial importance. Portugal supported the Director General's proposal to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the facility and called on the Russian Federation to make every effort to ensure that that objective was achieved as soon as possible.

27. Portugal had serious concerns regarding Iran's continued actions that were inconsistent with the JCPOA, had serious non-proliferation implications and had no plausible civilian justification. Iran should return to full JCPOA implementation, including all transparency measures, and cooperate fully with the Agency without further delay or conditionality to resolve all pending safeguards issues in line with its legal obligations under the CSA.

28. His country had not only taken steps to improve its regulatory framework for nuclear and radiation safety by establishing a new independent regulatory authority, but had also requested an international peer review of its regulatory oversight for nuclear and radiological facilities and activities. Portugal's first IRRS mission, which had taken place in March 2022, had acknowledged the country's serious commitment to nuclear and radiation safety, and its recommendations were currently under

consideration. The services provided by the Agency constituted a fundamental part of the peer review process. Portugal had consistently demonstrated its willingness to contribute effectively to that process by providing experts for peer review teams, notably for IRRS, EPREV and ARTEMIS missions. With a view to further enhancing radiation protection and nuclear safety, Portugal had requested an ARTEMIS mission, which would take place in May 2023.

29. Portugal was now a full member of FORO, which had recently celebrated its 25th anniversary and consistently promoted safety in the use of radioactive materials in the Ibero-American region.

30. Portugal agreed with the Director General that the Agency's critical role as nuclear watchdog must not overshadow its contribution to the achievement of the SDGs and its leading role in scientific research to assist Member States in many key areas. In that context, Portugal recognized the strategic value of the ReNuAL project, to which it had made several contributions. It also continued to support the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, and the NUTEC Plastics and Rays of Hope initiatives.

31. Ms ECKEY (Norway) said that the Russian Federation's unprovoked and illegal war against Ukraine had endangered Europe's largest nuclear facility, and its presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP posed an unprecedented risk to nuclear safety and security. The Russian Federation's recent escalation, including renewed threats to use nuclear weapons, was utterly reckless and completely unacceptable.

32. Reaffirming the importance of the seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict, she said that Norway thanked the Director General and the Agency's staff for their professional and impartial efforts to implement them in Ukraine. Norway also commended the efforts of the Ukrainian staff at Zaporizhzhya NPP, who continued to work in extremely challenging circumstances. Norway once again urged the Russian Federation to remove all its personnel from Zaporizhzhya NPP and to withdraw all its forces from within Ukraine's internationally recognized borders.

33. Although the Russian Federation had blocked agreement on a substantive Final Document at the Tenth NPT Review conference, the role and valuable work of the Agency in relation to the implementation of Articles III and IV of the NPT had been widely noted. As the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, the NPT had provided a common sense of security for over half a century. Norway looked forward to the upcoming review cycle and to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, to be held in Vienna in July 2023.

34. Non-proliferation was a key priority of Norway's foreign policy. Her country called on all Member States to conclude a CSA and ratify the additional protocol and considered the pursuit of State-level safeguards approaches to be within the Agency's mandate.

35. It was deeply regrettable that Iran had failed to cooperate with the Agency to address outstanding safeguards issues. Only Iran could provide the necessary clarifications that would enable the Director General to report that those issues had been resolved. Norway was concerned that Iran's failure to implement its nuclear-related commitments and its continued nuclear activities — including those with no credible civilian purpose — undermined prospects for a revival of the JCPOA. Norway called on Iran to fully comply with its commitments under the Plan.

36. Norway deplored the DPRK's nuclear activities, which were in flagrant violation of international law. The reopening of the nuclear test site was deeply troubling, and Norway appreciated the Agency's readiness to resume nuclear verification activities in the DPRK.

37. Norway appreciated the Director General's recent report on IAEA safeguards in relation to AUKUS² and the transparency exhibited by the three countries concerned. It supported continued discussions among the parties, in line with the Director General's mandate.

38. Noting that measures to enhance nuclear safety and security increased public confidence in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, she said that Norway welcomed the Agency's work to coordinate international cooperation on nuclear security, including by hosting the A/CPPNM Conference. Efforts to minimize and eliminate HEU were crucial in strengthening nuclear security, and her country was continuing its cooperation with the USA to eliminate HEU stocks in Norway.

39. Norway commended the Agency's contribution to the COVID-19 response and thanked the Director General for his commitment to increasing the number of women in STEM subjects. Including more women in nuclear-related industries would help to increase understanding and acceptance of nuclear technologies.

40. Ms COELHO (Angola) said that her country recognized the Agency's leadership within the international non-proliferation architecture, in particular during the current challenging times.

41. Angola supported the Secretariat's efforts to encourage Member States' use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, in particular in evolving fields of medicine and agriculture and other crucial areas for developing countries. Regarding technical cooperation with the Agency, the Director General had met her country's president in Lisbon in June 2022 within the scope of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference.

42. Angola appreciated the Agency's endeavours under the Rays of Hope initiative launched during the African Union summit in February 2022 to improve access to affordable, equitable, effective and sustainable radiation medicine services as a component of comprehensive cancer control. It was firmly committed to working closely with the Agency on that and other projects relevant to the country's development, without prejudice to other support it received from the Agency, such as the provision of laboratory equipment under ZODIAC and the training of Angolan staff.

43. The steady progress made in the modernization of the nuclear applications laboratories at Seibersdorf under the ReNuAL, ReNuAL+ and ReNuAL 2 projects was gratifying. Her country was pleased that the Yukiya Amano Laboratories were providing valuable support to Member States in fighting transnational and zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 and the monkeypox virus.

44. Lastly, she conveyed her country's deep gratitude for the Agency's support to developing countries, in particular in Africa. Angola reiterated its firm commitment to continue working with the international community to promote the use of atoms for peace and development in the world.

45. Mr MDOE (United Republic of Tanzania) said that nuclear science and technology were vital tools in achieving the global development agenda in many areas, including human health, food production, water management, energy and environmental protection. Accordingly, his country was resolved to strengthen its technical cooperation with the Agency through a new CPF for 2023–2027, which covered eight priority areas.

46. At the opening of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, there had been clear indications that the world was off track in the implementation and achievement of the 17 SDGs. In the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022, the UN Secretary-General stated: "We must rise higher to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals — and stay true to our promise of a world of peace, dignity and prosperity on a healthy planet." Tanzania's proposed TC programme would principally contribute to the realization of SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15 and 17, and it hoped that the resources to be allocated would

² GOV/INF/2022/20

facilitate achievement of the objectives in the new TC cycle, with a focus on end-user oriented activities with visible socioeconomic impact.

47. It was unfortunate that cancer continued to take away millions of lives in a world that was not short of resources, technology and scientific know-how, modern equipment, human resources, or new methods of treatment. Tanzania experienced around 42 000 new cases of cancer annually, with a mortality rate of up to 67%. His country therefore fully supported the choice of ‘Rays of Hope’ as the theme for the Scientific Forum. Tanzania sought to join forces to improve its health care facilities and ensure that all those in need could access radiotherapy, and it appealed to a range of development partners to support Rays of Hope so that the initiative could deliver on its ambitious objectives.

48. Tanzania recognized the need for partnership with the Agency in fighting cancer so as to achieve the strategic goals of its National Cancer Control Strategy for 2013–2022. It planned to expand radiotherapy services from the existing two centres to six in Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania. With the Agency’s ongoing support, his country had procured a high dose rate brachytherapy machine for the Ocean Road Cancer Institute, which would improve the quality of cancer services, and it counted on the Agency’s continued assistance.

49. Tanzania continued to support AFRA, which would enhance efforts to strengthen nuclear technology applications. It was grateful to Member States that were providing extrabudgetary support to ensure the successful implementation of the Agency’s programmes and initiatives and urged other international partners to follow their example. It also thanked Agency officials for their tireless efforts to provide technical support, which had strengthened his country’s partnership and cooperation with the Agency.

50. Tanzania reiterated its support for the Agency in jointly advancing nuclear science and technology, contributing to the peaceful and sustainable development of humankind, the environment and the world as a whole.

51. Mr MEZGHANI (Tunisia) said that his country had striven in recent decades to remain one of the Agency’s key partners, having upheld all its commitments and worked with other States to implement the Agency’s projects and improve its operating mechanisms. Numerous important projects had been implemented over the years, which had had a direct and tangible impact on priority areas such as socioeconomic development, health, agriculture and industry.

52. Tunisia enjoyed valuable cooperation with the Agency. It looked forward to increasing that collaboration, as the provision of technical cooperation and assistance was a cornerstone of the Agency’s mandate.

53. Tunisia welcomed the introduction of the Rays of Hope initiative, launched at the African Union Summit in 2022. It commended the Agency’s efforts to conduct detailed and comprehensive technical assessments to identify States’ needs and draw up tailored action plans, and it welcomed the IAEA/WHO joint statement on reducing inequity in access to cancer care through the initiative. Tunisia intended to use the opportunities for cooperation made available under the initiative to improve its radiotherapy services for cancer patients. It also hoped to engage with other initiatives to enhance the use of nuclear science, technology and applications to achieve priority development objectives.

54. Emphasizing the vital role played by the Agency in nuclear security, his country welcomed the Nuclear Security Review 2022 and the variety of activities and programmes in that area. The Agency should enhance its work in that domain in order to help Member States identify and confront threats and protect the environment, health and security at both the national and international level. His country thanked the Agency for the support that it had received in ensuring the security of the Francophonie Summit to be held in Tunisia in November 2022.

55. As Tunisia valued the opportunities for cooperation provided by the Agency, it took great pains to meet its financial obligations to the Agency by paying its contributions to the Regular Budget and the TCF and its national contributions to TC projects. Tunisia committed to paying its TCF contribution for 2023 in full.

56. Efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and consolidate the effectiveness of the safeguards system would remain incomplete unless the international community also endeavoured to make real progress in disarmament and ensure that all States — without exception — acceded to the NPT, which was essential for building confidence.

57. Commending efforts to limit the threat posed by nuclear weapons, Tunisia once again called for the establishment of a zone free of all WMDs, especially nuclear weapons, in the Middle East without delay. It called on the General Conference to take the necessary steps to achieve that aim, in particular by ensuring that all nuclear facilities were placed under Agency oversight.

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

58. Mr BUCHEERI (Bahrain), underscoring the central role played by the Agency in supporting the peaceful use of nuclear technology, helping Member States benefit from nuclear energy and transferring knowledge, said that his country commended the Agency's efforts to provide a wide network of technical assistance and to consistently support the use of nuclear techniques in line with the SDGs through the provision of platforms to facilitate international cooperation, promote nuclear safety and security and the application of safeguards and contribute to capacity building, disaster response and climate action.

59. The TC programme was one of the most important pillars of the Agency's work to build the national capabilities of developing countries and ensure the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful uses in pursuit of those countries' development goals. Since joining the Agency, Bahrain had paid great attention to the Agency's TC activities. In the current TC cycle, it had focused on projects on strengthening radiation and nuclear safety and security infrastructure; developing techniques for liquid scintillation, coupled plasma mass spectrometry and total radiation reflection; developing the regulatory infrastructure for radiation and nuclear safety; and establishing a laboratory for characterizing materials using nuclear analysis techniques.

60. Bahrain continued to strengthen its cooperation with the Agency through TC programmes, as such programmes contributed significantly to achieving the SDGs, which were an important part of national goals including Bahrain Vision 2030.

61. Mr ABDULHADI (Libya), appreciative of the support provided by the Secretariat to Member States, said that his country commended the Agency's use of modern technology to sustainably tackle issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental pollution, climate change and cancer, as well as its monitoring and reporting on nuclear facilities and their safety, especially in areas of armed conflict.

62. The Agency's TC programme was important in strengthening capacities in accordance with national needs and priorities, through capacity building, the provision of equipment for the peaceful use of atomic energy and participation in workshops. The Agency had provided devices and equipment for detecting SARS-CoV-2 to the Centre for Disease Control and had installed the physical protection system at Tripoli Central Hospital. It had also provided a linear accelerator device to the University Hospital at the Tripoli Medical Centre — for which the USA's support was appreciated — and technical assistance on waste management and radiation safety. Libya hoped that the Agency would continue to support its nuclear security support office for physical protection and its office for nuclear and radiological emergencies, which had both recently been created within the Atomic Energy Establishment to enhance nuclear and radiation safety and security.

63. Initiatives such as Rays of Hope, which Libya strongly supported and wished to participate in, ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics were important in the current global circumstances and reflected the Agency's pivotal role in achieving the SDGs for the well-being and survival of peoples. Pleased with the Agency's prioritization of Africa in vital areas such as food and agriculture, health, nuclear knowledge management, safety, water, the environment, energy and nuclear techniques, Libya encouraged the continuation of those efforts.

64. One of the first countries to sign the NPT, Libya reaffirmed its full commitment to the Treaty and the Final Documents of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. It had placed nuclear material in its possession under Agency supervision and had signed a CSA and an additional protocol to ensure the exclusively peaceful uses of that material. Moreover, it had voluntarily abandoned its WMD programme in 2003. In that context, his country called on the United Nations and the international community to develop a verifiable, time-bound mechanism to rid the world of WMDs.

65. Libya recognized that responsibility in that regard lay primarily with States possessing or seeking to possess WMDs, and that any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons was a violation of international law, including the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Expressing concern at the policy of double standards applied by some countries in dealing with the issue, his country called upon the United Nations and the international community to strive to rid the world of WMDs, to preserve international peace and security in conformity with the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. In that connection, Libya reaffirmed that the Agency's safeguards system was the best legal framework for effectively and credibly ensuring full compliance with non-proliferation obligations.

66. Standing ready to support all Agency initiatives and efforts, Libya emphasized the importance of establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, in particular the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, in order to save lives and preserve international peace and security.

67. Ms BALI (Togo) said that her country lauded the Director General's dynamism and leadership, and the important initiatives that he had launched to support developing countries, including Togo, during the COVID-19 crisis.

68. The current session of the General Conference was taking place in a difficult context marked by the crisis between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Togo encouraged the parties involved to strive for peace and dialogue and commended the Agency on providing the requisite expertise concerning Zaporizhzhya NPP.

69. Her country was pleased with its TC projects under way in the areas of agriculture, livestock, health and nutrition for the 2022–2023 cycle. In terms of health in particular, Togo was grateful to the Secretariat — in particular the Department of Technical Cooperation's Division for Africa — for its assistance in inspecting the country's first linear accelerator, which had recently made it possible to treat cancer patients in Lomé.

70. The Rays of Hope initiative established by the Director General to broaden access to cancer treatment had come at an opportune moment to help Togo strengthen the technical skills of those working in cancer treatment and improve its technical facilities for cancer screening, diagnosis and curative and palliative care. The theme of the Scientific Forum — 'Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All' — was both relevant and important.

71. After the promulgation of Togo's nuclear law in June 2020, progress had been made in a number of areas concerning the nuclear safety and security regulatory infrastructure, including the establishment of the strategic committee of the National Nuclear Safety and Security Authority, which was currently recruiting technical and administrative staff; the second Regulatory Infrastructure Development Project

for Africa, which had facilitated the drafting of regulations to implement the nuclear law; and the organization in Lomé, in March 2022, of a regional workshop on a risk-informed approach to nuclear and other radioactive material outside of regulatory control.

72. Given its location, Togo was a transit country for maritime, air and land transportation, and it served as a hub for several countries in the West African hinterland. Her country therefore reiterated its request for assistance from the Department of Nuclear Safety and Security in establishing and implementing a legal and regulatory framework to ensure the safe and secure transport of sources on its territory.

73. In order to optimize its participation in TC projects and further strengthen African countries' integrated approach to the peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology for the development of the continent, Togo had joined AFRA in April 2022. Her country was convinced that that step would increase the opportunities available to its scientists and researchers, enabling Togo to participate in all the projects under way within the AFRA framework.

74. She concluded by reiterating her country's resolute commitment to and support for further active collaboration with the Agency with a view to fully achieving the Agency's objectives.

75. Mr KOKONOV (Kyrgyzstan) said that his country highly appreciated the Agency's work and had been an active and reliable partner since joining in 2003. It was particularly grateful for the support it had received from the Agency and donor States during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

76. The Agency's initiatives were clearly demonstrated by projects such as ZODIAC and NUTEC Plastics, and the recently launched Rays of Hope was also welcome. Kyrgyzstan fully supported the Agency's activities and was committed to doing its utmost to contribute to their successful implementation.

77. In recent years, with Kyrgyzstan taking a leading role and thanks to the support of Central Asian countries, in partnership with international organizations and financial institutions, a clear understanding had been achieved concerning measures to ensure environmental security in the region. Projects in that sphere were implemented in strict compliance with Agency recommendations and international standards and rules. Within the CIS, the inter-State targeted programme on remediation of the territories of States affected by uranium mining industries was being successfully implemented with Rosatom. One site had been rendered safe — the Kajy-Say tailings dump had been remediated — and work had begun on remediating the second site, in the settlement of Ming-Kush.

78. With the support of international partners such as the European Commission and the EBRD, work on the remediation of uranium legacy sites in the region had begun. In addition, the Strategic Master Plan for Environmental Remediation of Uranium Legacy Sites in Central Asia developed in 2017 in close cooperation with the Agency had been updated in 2021 — on the basis of five years' results — providing a road map for an effective approach to remediating such sites.

79. Through the remediation of uranium legacy sites, Kyrgyzstan had accumulated significant experience in interacting with residents who faced additional difficulties in terms of socioeconomic development. Many similar problems had, however, been solved in a number of countries with uranium legacy sites. An understanding had been reached on the need to step up regional and international cooperation between towns and villages in order to share ideas, practices and positive experiences in overcoming socioeconomic problems. Accordingly, on the sidelines of the 65th regular session of the General Conference, Kyrgyzstan had announced an initiative concerning the need to establish an international association of towns and villages with uranium legacy sites. In September 2022, exactly one year after the announcement of that initiative, Kyrgyzstan had held the association's first international conference in Bishkek with the support of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek and

with the participation of delegates from France, Germany, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan and representatives of the European Union, the EBRD, OSCE, UNDP and Rosatom.

80. The association should become a mechanism for sustained interaction on the socioeconomic and environmental development of towns and villages before, during and after remediation. Kyrgyzstan encouraged the participation of other countries, which would broaden the exchange of good practices, raise the profile of and involvement in such cooperation, and lead to the development and implementation of regional and international initiatives on socioeconomic and environmental issues.

81. Kyrgyzstan was negotiating with relevant international organizations about integrating the ideas and functions of the association into their existing mandates. For example, the coordination group for the management of uranium tailings dumps could expand its activities by incorporating the association into its scope and including the sustainable and socioeconomic development of villages during remediation planning and implementation and afterwards.

82. Kyrgyzstan also drew attention to the issue of toxic tailings dumps, which posed a threat to people and the environment in the region and gave rise to the systematic contamination of rivers with heavy metal salts, polluting surface water that spanned borders. His country requested support in reducing the risks at such sites.

83. Lastly, Kyrgyzstan noted that the allocation of countries to regional areas was an important topic for a number of Member States and had been under discussion for some time. As a country that remained outside the so-called regional areas, Kyrgyzstan called for a multilateral discussion taking into account the experience of other UN system organizations to consider the issue of allocating the ‘homeless States’ to groups while avoiding political undertones. A fair multilateral mechanism for allocating countries to areas needed to be developed, and Kyrgyzstan called on all other Member States to show goodwill concerning that important issue. Expanding the regional groups would make it possible to step up the effectiveness of collective actions to achieve Member States’ shared goals for the benefit of the entire international community. His country hoped that the long standing wishes of the ‘homeless States’ would enjoy the active backing of most Member States.

84. In closing, he conveyed his country’s gratitude for the comprehensive support provided. Kyrgyzstan looked forward to further fruitful cooperation.

85. Ms KARSELADZE (Georgia) said that her country attached great importance to the Agency’s core mandate in the fields of nuclear safeguards, safety and security, nuclear energy and technical cooperation. Georgia supported the universal and effective implementation of the NPT and underlined the importance of the Agency’s safeguards system in its implementation. CSAs together with additional protocols constituted the current verification standard and her country continued to call for their universalization without delay.

86. It was disappointing that the recent NPT Review Conference had been unable to reach consensus owing to the Russian Federation’s rejection of a compromise document that would have enabled progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

87. Georgia stood in full solidarity with Ukraine and commended the people of Ukraine on their courage in defending their country against the Russian Federation’s unprovoked, unjustified and premeditated full-scale aggression, which Georgia condemned in the strongest possible terms. The Russian Federation’s invasion of a sovereign country was a gross violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and severely undermined European and global security and stability. The Russian Federation’s actions posed serious and direct threats to the safety and security of Ukrainian nuclear facilities and had impeded the Agency’s ability to conduct safeguards verification activities fully

and safely on the ground. Her country welcomed the IAEA Support and Assistance Mission to Zaporizhzhya and commended the Director General and his dedicated team on having conducted that important mission.

88. Georgia urged the Russian Federation to immediately cease its illegal war against Ukraine and to withdraw its military and other personnel from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, including from Zaporizhzhya NPP so that the Ukrainian authorities could resume their sovereign responsibilities and the legitimate operating staff could conduct their duties without outside pressure and interference.

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

90. Georgia's safeguards agreement and additional protocol had been in force since 2003 and significant improvements had been made to the national regulatory framework and technical arrangements. Her country highly appreciated the technical and financial assistance and active contribution from the Agency and its partners — namely the European Union, Sweden and the USA — in developing national regulations and systems for nuclear and radiation safety and security.

91. She concluded by noting that the international community should take coordinated and holistic measures — in particular at such a difficult time — to effectively address multidimensional peace and security challenges.

92. Ms AKRAMI (Afghanistan) commended the Director General's hard work and excellent leadership in providing technical assistance to Ukraine and his efforts to protect Zaporizhzhya NPP. Nuclear safety and security missions to Ukraine were of great importance at the current time.

93. The current session of the General Conference was taking place against the backdrop of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The country needed the support and cooperation of the international community and to be put back on the international agenda. After fourteen months of occupation, the Taliban were still unable to form a functioning, accountable and legitimate government that could deliver vital public services and protect the fundamental human rights of all citizens, above all women and girls. The country was facing a deep political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis, with millions of Afghans living in poverty, repression and fear for the future.

94. The Taliban's rule had proved to be fertile ground for the growth of international terrorism in Afghanistan. The death of Ayman al-Zawahiri had reaffirmed the Taliban's ties to Al-Qaida and other international terrorist networks. The Taliban's links to international terrorists, extremist groups, transnational criminals and drug traffickers raised grave concerns about nuclear material trafficking through Afghanistan and its neighbours. Member States should pay close attention to that issue and hold the Taliban accountable in that regard.

95. The erosion of women's rights had been one of the most notable aspects of the Taliban administration. Afghan women continued to face persistent gender-based discrimination, gender apartheid, segregation, violence and severe restrictions on their fundamental human rights. Of particular and grave concern was the continued denial of women's and girls' fundamental right to complete secondary education. Afghanistan remained the only country in the world where girls were denied the right to education.

96. She asked the Agency and the international community not to let up in their efforts to give Afghan women the tools, education and support that they required to join the next generation of Afghan scientists. Afghan women must be encouraged to participate in and apply for Agency fellowships. A new generation of women leaders in nuclear science and technology could not afford to be lost. Those present must stand in solidarity with Afghan women and demand that the international community ensured that their rights were respected and protected.

97. In closing, she expressed her sincerest appreciation to the Agency and its Member States for their cooperation and support as Afghanistan faced a challenging period. However, there was a need to further strengthen cooperation for the people of Afghanistan.

98. Ms HENRY (Jamaica) said that her country welcomed fellow Caribbean Community (CARICOM) members Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Tonga, to the Agency.

99. Jamaica commended the Agency's commitment to supporting Member States. Since the previous regular session of the General Conference, the Agency had not only delivered on planned programmatic activities but had also embarked on a range of innovative initiatives to assist Member States in tackling pressing global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and plastic pollution. The Annual Report for 2021 succinctly encapsulated the Agency's achievements in pursuit of its vision and goal of ensuring that nuclear science and technology were used for peaceful purposes and development.

100. Her country also lauded the Agency for its continued support to Member States in combating the COVID-19 pandemic through the delivery of reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction (RT–PCR) testing equipment and diagnostic kits. The Agency's rapid response to Member States' requests was a testament to its agility and commitment to serve its members.

101. Jamaica valued its collaboration with the Agency, which remained a key partner in the country's thrust towards socioeconomic development. It had long recognized the potential of innovation, science and technology and welcomed the diverse technical cooperation portfolio covering issues related to the environment and, more recently, cancer care. The Agency's technical assistance played a pivotal role in helping her country move towards the achievement of its national development plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica, and the SDGs.

102. During his recent visit to Jamaica, the Deputy Director General for Technical Cooperation had met with key Government stakeholders, including the Prime Minister, and had undertaken several site visits. One of the highlights had been the inauguration of the nuclear medicine centre at the University Hospital of the West Indies. The Agency had supported the centre by providing a gamma camera, radiopharmaceutical and quality control equipment, and staff training. That new state of the art facility would diagnose and treat non-communicable diseases, which were the leading cause of death in Jamaica.

103. Her country also appreciated the Agency's support in delivering two mammography units to strengthen breast cancer screening and diagnosis capacity. It looked forward to the installation of the equipment at Kingston Public Hospital and Cornwall Regional Hospital, planned for October 2022, and welcomed the requisite technical support for the effective operation of both machines. The Agency's timely focus on cancer through the Rays of Hope initiative demonstrated how countries could make positive use of nuclear energy.

104. As a small island developing State, Jamaica recognized the importance of capacity building and training in such areas as physics, nuclear technology and nuclear energy generation to leverage opportunities for development. Her country continued to benefit from the Agency's technical workshops and training sessions, which complemented the Government's efforts to ensure that Jamaica possessed a cadre of highly skilled professionals in various areas of nuclear science. Both Jamaican participants

who had already participated in the two-year clinical training programme at the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy were now employed as medical physicists at Cornwall Regional Hospital.

105. There was a need to consider how to make food systems more sustainable and resilient, particularly in the context of conflict and climate change. The Agency had acknowledged its potential role in addressing those problems and Jamaica was actively working with it to use mutagenesis to improve crop production. The donation of a self-contained gamma irradiation facility would complement results achieved in 2021 in relation to the mutation breeding of yams, ginger and coffee at the Scientific Research Council. Such initiatives would be critical to the food security agenda and were a step in the right direction as Jamaica strove to infuse more scientific research and innovation into the agricultural sector.

106. Jamaica looked forward to continued collaboration with the Agency during the 2022–2023 programme cycle and was keen to further engage on new initiatives such as NUTEC Plastics and ZODIAC. The efforts of the Liaison Office in Geneva to facilitate engagement with the Agency for those not based in Vienna merited special mention. Her country also recognized the hard work and dedication of the Division for Latin America and the Caribbean within the Department of Technical Cooperation, which continued to ensure the successful implementation of all projects.

107. As Jamaica celebrated its sixtieth year of independence, it thanked the Agency for being an invaluable partner in its nation-building. Her country remained committed to supporting the Agency in its efforts to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy for sustainable development.

108. Mr DOUALÉ (Djibouti) acknowledged the tireless efforts and invaluable contribution of the Director General and Agency staff to preserving peace and nuclear security at a time of serious tension. His country welcomed the initiatives launched under the Director General's leadership, in particular Rays of Hope, NUTEC Plastics and ZODIAC. Djibouti did not have a radiotherapy centre and had spent a great deal to evacuate cancer patients abroad. It was interested in participating in those initiatives, above all to expand radiotherapy for the treatment of cancer in African countries.

109. His country attached great importance to the civilian use of nuclear energy-based technology for its socioeconomic development and had fulfilled its obligations under the various agreements and protocols related to the NPT. It greatly appreciated the support it had received from the Agency since becoming a Member State in 2015 and had made great progress in establishing an appropriate legal framework and regulatory infrastructure. In 2021, Djibouti had adopted two laws regulating the safe handling of radiological and nuclear technologies. It had also established the national authority for nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological safety and security, which would be responsible for recruiting personnel with expertise in nuclear technology and for training officials in public organizations that were or could be involved with radiation sources, with the support of the Agency and partner countries.

110. Academic institutions and research centres played a critical role in attracting nuclear science students and making a positive contribution to a variety of sectors. The Agency had very recently held a workshop in Djibouti to raise awareness among various stakeholders in the public and private sectors about safety and the implementation of security measures in all activities and facilities.

111. Capacity building in the field of nuclear science and technology was essential and would pave the way towards achieving the SDGs. Djibouti was working on the implementation of a number of TC projects — including several approved in 2021 — on establishing a national regulatory infrastructure for radiation safety; promoting the effective use of nuclear applications and technologies within the context of national objectives; strengthening the analytical capacity of the national chemistry laboratory; and using isotopic and hydrometeorological tools to understand the impact of climate change on

groundwater. Djibouti also had decided to set up a regional research observatory on the environment and climate change so as to be able to respond adequately and efficiently to the increasingly negative effects of climate change in the country and region.

112. Djibouti was deeply concerned about the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and other WMDs throughout the world, in particular the Middle East. It therefore called on all countries and regions to progress towards a world free from nuclear weapons and would continue to support resolutions in that regard, in particular the draft resolution submitted by Egypt.

113. Lastly, he reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to the principles of the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and conveyed its support for the Agency's activities and indispensable role in ensuring nuclear security and compliance with non-proliferation obligations.

114. Mr OJEDA VIGLIONE (Uruguay) said that Uruguay had always been recognized as a pacifist country and a supporter of international law, the principles of which had unequivocally guided its activities and foreign policy. In that context, Uruguay reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a universal, complete and verifiable disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which could only be achieved through multilateralism based on the principles of good faith and mutual respect.

115. The Agency enjoyed international respect and recognition owing to its professionalism, credibility and independence, which ensured that its mandate was properly discharged. Uruguay welcomed and supported the work of the Agency and its Director General, and had confidence in its safeguards system, which should be extended to all States. Having ratified the additional protocol, Uruguay was committed to preventing the diversion of nuclear material for non-peaceful uses and its appropriation by terrorist groups. It was proud to be part of the world's first NWFZ and encouraged the establishment of more such zones as an effective way to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation.

116. Uruguay welcomed the First meeting of States Parties to the TPNW — an important instrument in the non-proliferation and disarmament regime that complemented the NPT. It noted that the Tenth NPT Review Conference had recently been held with a view to promoting the universalization and implementation of the Treaty. His country supported such verification and disarmament mechanisms and called once again on the international community to respect and support the safeguards regime as a shared tool to effectively tackle the dangers of proliferation.

117. Uruguay firmly defended the inalienable right of all States to the peaceful use of nuclear energy for development and well-being. It highly valued the work of the Department of Technical Cooperation and appreciated the support received, in terms of inputs as well as training, which was a major challenge for nuclear technology-related professions. Agency cooperation was the best way to shape peaceful nuclear technology to support progress and well-being and achieve the SDGs. Uruguay was grateful for the Agency's assistance in a variety of important areas, and thanked the Member States that had made voluntary contributions helping to make it possible. Uruguay attached particular importance to regional projects, including under ARCAL, and participated actively in that important initiative. In view of the extensive needs of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the fact that allocated funds were insufficient, the TCF should not have to rely on voluntary contributions for its resources, which must be sufficient, assured and predictable. The activities of FORO also merited special mention, and Uruguay encouraged it to continue working together with the Agency.

118. The Agency and its Director General were to be congratulated for launching large scale projects such as ZODIAC, NUTEC Plastics, Rays of Hope and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme — all of which had an undeniably positive impact. Uruguay also wished to highlight the Agency's strong gender policy in all areas.

119. Expressing its appreciation for the Agency's work in the area of nuclear safety and security, his country reaffirmed its commitment to the Nuclear Security Plan and the A/CPPNM and recognized the fundamental role of States and their national policies in that sphere. Adequate contingency plans were also important, and greater competence and responsibility needed to be demanded of national operators in order to ensure the protection and security of nuclear material and facilities. For its part, Uruguay had an independent, professional and responsible regulatory authority that maintained regular contact with its counterparts in the Agency.

120. As a non-nuclear-weapon State, a Contracting Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and a State party to the NPT, TPNW and CTBT, Uruguay was committed at the highest level to strengthening the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. His country reaffirmed its full commitment to the Agency and to safeguards implementation. It urged all Member States to comply fully with their obligations and respect their commitments so as to contribute positively to international peace and security.

Mr Solano Ortiz (Costa Rica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

121. Mr NDAHAYO (Rwanda) said that his country viewed nuclear science and technology as milestones in attaining its Vision 2050, which aimed at improving the quality of life for all and at achieving upper-middle income status by 2035 and high-income status by 2050. Alongside its efforts to achieve the SDGs, Rwanda was committed to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear science and technology.

122. The Rwanda Atomic Energy Board had been established to play a vital role in accelerating atomic energy development for clean energy, food and agriculture, health, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, industry, the environment, geology and mining. The Government had initiated the process of developing a nuclear centre for science and technology and an NPP based on small modular reactor technologies. It wished to establish partnerships with interested companies during the process of developing those new technologies in order to accelerate knowledge and technology transfer and skills development. Rwanda saluted the Agency's constant support to achieve that aim.

123. Rwanda reiterated the importance of global efforts on nuclear security and recognized the Agency's central role in strengthening nuclear security worldwide. It also acknowledged the importance of nuclear security in preventing the unauthorized use of nuclear material and technology, and thanked the Agency for providing expertise on establishing, maintaining and reviewing related plans. Such assistance helped to significantly strengthen the national infrastructure, build capacity, preserve national security and contribute to regional and global security.

124. In closing, he reiterated his country's commitment to the Agency, which made an invaluable contribution to expanding and promoting nuclear science and technology for development.

125. Mr MAPHOSSA (Mozambique) said that his country was committed to promoting and achieving sustainable socioeconomic development through the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology in such areas as industry, health care, agriculture, water resources management, the environment and mineral resources. Mozambique recognized the Agency's key role in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology and the importance of the TC programme in building national capacities in nuclear science and technology.

126. It was well known that the energy produced from fossil fuels accounted for about half of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Nuclear energy provided an alternative way to generate relatively clean and economically viable power. In the words of the Director General, the energy crisis had prompted many countries, and many ordinary people who in the past had given nuclear power little

thought, to turn in its favour, which presented an opportunity for the sector and increased the volume and importance of the Agency's work.

127. Nuclear techniques were vital for diagnosis and medical treatment, particularly to cure certain types of cancer. Mozambique therefore congratulated the Director General on the Rays of Hope initiative launched at the African Union summit in February 2022, which would bring radiotherapy services to more than 20 African countries.

128. Although nuclear safety and security were a national responsibility, they were also global issues, as an accident anywhere was an accident everywhere. Accordingly, Mozambique had acceded to the CPPNM in 2005, and had ratified the A/CPPNM at the Treaty Event on 26 September 2022.

129. He closed by reaffirming his country's commitment to meeting its obligations and maximizing its support for the Agency's mandate.

130. Mr DLAMINI (Eswatini) said that the Agency, under the Director General's leadership, was to be commended on its expeditious and continued support for countries in responding to development-related challenges, in a turbulent context of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical tensions. Eswatini also appreciated the training fellowships awarded to its citizens.

131. In 2017, Eswatini had received its first impACT Review, which had catalysed the establishment of its cancer registry and cancer control unit. Thanks to assistance from the Agency and from other development partners and donors, the country's cancer control capacity had grown rapidly. The Agency's technical assistance had been leveraged to develop draft bankable documents for the establishment of the first radiotherapy facility, the design of which was being finalized and would be circulated to the Agency for comment. The facility was expected to be constructed at the repurposed Manzini hospital and was anticipated to relieve Eswatini of the expense of sending cancer patients abroad for treatment, thus improving its citizens' quality of life.

132. Eswatini had made considerable progress in developing a nuclear law — anticipated to be operational by early 2023 — and the regulatory infrastructure to provide for the safe and peaceful use of nuclear energy in the country. An interim regulatory structure had been established to pave the way for the law's smooth implementation after adoption, providing for the appointment of coordinators for implementing various tasks, such as the completion of the national radioactive material and waste inventory and the construction of the radiotherapy facility.

133. Eswatini was continuously expanding its use of nuclear science and technology through the Agency's TC programme as reflected in the CPF for 2019–2023, under which several projects were being implemented. His country had also joined a number of AFRA regional projects to increase the contribution of nuclear science and technology to its socioeconomic development.

134. In line with the resolution on nuclear and radiation safety adopted by the General Conference in September 2021³, Eswatini was already in the process of becoming a State party to the Early Notification and Assistance Conventions. It had also recently accepted the revised AFRA.

135. Eswatini remained committed to the Agency's core mandate of promoting the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies and cooperation in the nuclear field, and would continue to engage fully with the Agency in those areas.

136. Mr GBERIE (Sierra Leone) said that, with its mandate and unique expertise, the Agency contributed to global peace, security and development and nuclear and radiation safety. Sierra Leone, which had become a Member State in 1967, was committed to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear

³ GC(65)/RES/8

science and technology to meet the SDGs. It was working closely with the Agency to build the requisite strong legal, institutional and regulatory framework in the conviction that the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology provided solutions to socioeconomic challenges.

137. His country had signed a CPF for 2019–2023 comprising five priority areas, and looked forward to continued collaboration with the Agency, in particular the Department of Technical Cooperation, to develop a third CPF based on national priorities.

138. Sierra Leone was grateful for the Agency's assistance in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, including with respect to rapid detection and management. The pandemic had demonstrated the major need for a coordinated multilateral approach. During the 2014 Ebola virus disease outbreak, the Agency's provision of specialized diagnostic RT–PCR equipment had helped his country to combat that highly deadly virus. Furthermore, following the outbreak, the Agency had assisted his country in developing the human resources needed for the swift diagnosis of highly infectious diseases. Capacity had been built at Njala University, a constituent college of the University of Sierra Leone, and the facility regularly held regional training on capturing and taking samples from bats for surveys relating to emerging zoonotic diseases. Accordingly, Sierra Leone welcomed the ZODIAC project and its systematic and integrated approach to supporting the early detection of zoonotic disease outbreaks and their control.

139. Cancer remained a leading cause of morbidity and mortality, primarily as a result of limited access to diagnosis and treatment. His country had therefore embraced the Rays of Hope initiative and was strengthening its cancer control framework with the support of the Division of PACT and the Division for Africa within the Department of Technical Cooperation. Following a comprehensive assessment of cancer control capacities and needs, Sierra Leone was prioritizing the establishment of a radiotherapy facility for cancer diagnosis and treatment, and developing a qualified workforce to improve cancer patients' quality of life. The Agency's support in planning, fundraising and providing specialist training for the country's first radiotherapy facility at Lakka Hospital was highly appreciated. Sierra Leone had also developed a national cancer control plan with the Agency's assistance.

140. Marine plastic pollution was an enormous threat to marine life and ecosystems, food safety and human health, and ultimately jeopardized progress towards the SDGs. As a country that was particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and concerned by the rise in marine plastic pollution, Sierra Leone welcomed the NUTEC Plastics initiative, which would offer Member States an appropriate platform for cross-learning, using radiation technology in recycling, and marine monitoring through isotope tracing, and would help to free the oceans of plastic pollution and its effects.

141. With support from the Agency, Sierra Leone was implementing several projects focusing on technology development and transfer and capacity building in nuclear science and technology. It looked forward to more partnerships in such areas as energy planning, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, nuclear knowledge development and management, radiation safety, and water and the environment.

142. Mindful of an obligation enshrined in the NPT that remained unmet, Sierra Leone noted the importance of strengthening the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with the NPT as its cornerstone.

143. Sierra Leone reaffirmed its commitment to the Agency's ideals and would continue its cooperation to ensure that nuclear science and technology was deployed more effectively.

144. Mr NDOCKI (Cameroon) said that his country commended the Agency's contribution to the fight against COVID-19 through the provision of powerful rapid screening equipment to several Member States and the organization of various virtual events.

145. Cameroon was pleased that the Agency's TC programmes were rooted in priority socioeconomic development sectors for Member States, in particular developing countries. Health and nutrition, food and agriculture, water and the environment, industrial applications of radiation, radiation protection and nuclear safety were concerns shared by most such countries.

146. Building Member States' capacity to integrate nuclear technologies into their development strategies was a key outcome of the Agency's TC programme. The annual Postgraduate Educational Course in Radiation Protection and the Safety of Radiation Sources held in Africa for young people aspiring to become qualified radiation protection experts contributed to the effectiveness of regulatory bodies. Other training events were provided under regional and national projects. His country encouraged the Agency to step up and maintain all programmes aimed at enabling Member States to use nuclear techniques safely and securely.

147. Cameroon's commitment to supporting the TC programme had been reflected in 2021 by the payment of extrabudgetary contributions under the AFRA programme and its participation in cost sharing. The latter had made it possible to renew the technical facilities of the radiotherapy department at Douala General Hospital, including the acquisition and commissioning of a new cobalt-60 source.

148. Cameroon had accepted the revised AFRA in 2022. It had also authorized the organization and implementation of two regional projects before the end of 2022 on the important topics of capacity building in energy planning and the radiation protection of patients.

149. Turning to nuclear security, he noted that an Agency expert mission had contributed to updating Cameroon's draft regulations on the security of radioactive materials being used, transported or stored. The Agency had also provided assistance in the implementation of security measures for the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations.

150. An IRRS follow-up mission had taken place in Cameroon in November 2021 to assess the implementation status of the recommendations issued in 2014. The mission had noted the progress made following the promulgation of the 2019 law on the general framework for radiation and nuclear safety, nuclear security, civil liability and the application of safeguards. In cooperation with Cameroon's National Radiation Protection Agency, the Agency had organized a national workshop on the implementation of the new International Basic Safety Standards.

151. He conveyed his country's gratitude to the Agency for its multifaceted assistance and urged it to establish and maintain active cooperation with regional organizations working on the safe and secure use of nuclear energy and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in Africa, in particular AFRA, the FNRBA and AFCONE.

152. Regarding the implementation of safeguards agreements, Cameroon welcomed the creation of the State Declarations Portal, which enabled data to be exchanged between Member States and the Agency more quickly and securely.

153. Cameroon recognized the Agency's unique role in strengthening the international nuclear safeguards, safety and security regime, and pledged support for the implementation of Agency programmes.

154. Mr ABDEL SHAFI (Palestine), commending the Agency's role in promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy, said that his country was grateful to the Agency for working tirelessly to develop its human resource and infrastructural capacities. The TC programme was an essential tool in boosting national sustainable development and in promoting medicine, agriculture and the economy to address areas of national and global interest such as food and health security, and environmental pollution.

155. With generous technical and financial support from the Agency, Palestine had achieved tangible results through a series of national TC projects implemented in the areas of medicine, agriculture, and the management and control of epidemics and pandemics, such as COVID-19. Other important national TC projects were under way to establish a centre for training and education in nuclear safety and security, improve food security through nuclear techniques and develop capacities and infrastructure in the areas of nuclear medicine, radiation therapy and cancer treatment. However, there were serious difficulties in obtaining approval from Israel for the entry of equipment provided by the Agency.

156. Palestine had demonstrated considerable commitment to all global non-proliferation efforts. It had acceded to the NPT in 2015 and had actively participated in that year's Review Conference and in the first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the Tenth NPT Review Conference. Furthermore, having participated in the negotiations on the TPNW, Palestine had been among the first countries — and the only Arab State to date — to sign and ratify that Treaty and had participated in the recent First Meeting of States Parties.

157. In contrast, Israel, the illegal occupying power, continually refused to accede to the NPT in spite of the genuine risks posed by its nuclear programme, as highlighted in several official and unofficial international reports. Those risks included environmental hazards to Palestine and neighbouring countries as a result of the burial of atomic waste from Israeli nuclear reactors, and the unknown activities carried out at the Negev Nuclear Research Center and other reactors. Accordingly, Israel's ludicrous use of the Agency as a platform to express, with the utmost alarm and anger, its concern about the dangers of proliferation clearly demonstrated its disregard for the entire international system and its confidence that it would not be held accountable or sanctioned.

158. Highlighting the entry into force of Palestine's safeguards agreement in July 2022, he expressed regret that the Director General had been unable to make progress in implementing resolution GC(65)/RES/14 on the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East. Palestine hoped that he would begin consultations with all Member States in accordance with his mandate under that resolution, and that he would spare no effort to advance the swift implementation of the safeguards agreement.

159. The Ukrainian crisis had once again exposed the double standards of the so-called Western democracies, which advocated the universalization of the NPT while giving undue protection to the Israeli occupying power as it refused to accede to the Treaty or place its nuclear facilities under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards.

160. Palestine welcomed the convening of the second session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in accordance with General Assembly decision 73/546, and the Agency's participation as an observer and its provision of the necessary documents. His country thanked Kuwait for presiding over the conference and fully supported Lebanon's presidency of the next session.

161. Palestine had participated in the deliberations of the Agency's policy-making organs as an observer since 1976 under resolution GC(XX)/RES/334 and had been granted additional privileges under resolution GC(42)/RES/20. However, it had refrained from applying to become a Member State, despite having a right to do so like all other countries. Denying his country full membership only served the unworthy political agenda of the occupying power. Palestine looked forward to taking its proper place among other countries in the Agency in the future.

162. Mr MARZO (Brazilian–Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials) said that — as a regional safeguards system — ABACC used a reciprocal inspection arrangement, whereby ABACC inspectors from each country verified the nuclear materials and activities of the other, under the responsibility of a technical secretariat composed of senior Argentine and Brazilian officials guided by a deep shared commitment to their mandate.

163. Since its establishment, 30 years previously, ABACC had carried out more than 3500 inspections at nuclear facilities in Argentina and Brazil. During the previous year, the organization had carried out all the activities in its annual verification plan, including 122 inspections across more than 1100 inspector-days. ABACC could therefore conclude that, in 2021, both countries had fulfilled their commitments to use nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes.

164. Since the entry into force of the Quadripartite Agreement in 1994, ABACC and the Agency had been improving their coordination to avoid duplication of effort while maintaining the principle that both organizations should reach independent conclusions. The good results achieved over the years reflected the high levels of understanding and collaboration achieved.

165. Cooperation was essential for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the successful implementation of regional and international safeguards. ABACC therefore maintained close technical cooperation ties with its member States, the Agency, OPANAL, Euratom, the US Department of Energy, the Korea Institute of Nuclear Nonproliferation and Control and technical associations such as the European Safeguards Research and Development Association and the Institute of Nuclear Materials Management.

166. In 2019, ABACC had received its first visit under the pioneering United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament, demonstrating the international community's recognition of the successful confidence building between Argentina and Brazil. A second visit would take place in October 2022. ABACC welcomed the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/76/52 in December 2021, which noted that the organization had proved itself as an innovative and effective bilateral confidence-building mechanism, with positive effects for peace and security at the subregional and regional levels, and as a reference of best practice in nuclear safeguards and non-proliferation verification.

167. As the Director General had reported to the Board and the General Conference, Brazil had informed the Secretariat of its decision to initiate discussions on arrangements for special procedures for the use of nuclear material under safeguards in nuclear propulsion and in the operation of submarines and prototypes, as set out in the Quadripartite Agreement. Preliminary discussions had been held in May 2022 between Brazil, the Secretariat and ABACC, which was committed to supporting the process in order to ensure that the arrangements were consistent with the agreement between Argentina and Brazil on the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy.

168. ABACC remained committed to continuing effective and efficient safeguards implementation, and contributing to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to regional and international security.

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

169. Mr MBOYO (African Commission on Nuclear Energy) said that a new AFCONE Commission had been elected by the Fifth Conference of States Parties to the Pelindaba Treaty in May 2022. The new Executive Secretary would continue to steer AFCONE towards the promotion of the global non-proliferation regime and the advancement of sustainable development and prosperity in Africa through the effective implementation of the Treaty.

170. AFCONE was working closely with the States Parties, the Agency and other partners to develop capacity to meet safeguards and nuclear security obligations under the Pelindaba Treaty. Recent successes included the development of a reporting template and training courses, including a training programme being developed in cooperation with the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland and the European Commission.

171. Recognizing the Agency as a key partner in promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Africa, AFCONE was working with the African Union Commission to raise awareness among African

States about the Rays of Hope initiative. Article 8 of the Pelindaba Treaty encouraged African States to make use of the Agency's technical assistance programme and, in particular, to strengthen cooperation under AFRA. The MOU between AFCONE and the Agency also highlighted the importance of AFCONE's cooperation under that agreement.

172. In order to avoid duplication of effort and enable African States to benefit fully from the peaceful nuclear applications, AFCONE was striving to coordinate its activities with other stakeholders. It had signed a cooperation agreement with AFRA in September 2020 and had held a meeting with the Agency, the FNRBA and AFRA in March 2021.

173. AFCONE enjoyed the African Union's political support in its efforts to coordinate and streamline nuclear cooperation in Africa and optimize the benefits for African States. In 2019, the African Union had mandated AFCONE to develop — in collaboration with the Agency — a programme to promote the use of nuclear energy for sustainable development in such areas as agriculture, health, infrastructure, mining, security, water, energy and the environment, and to carry out capacity building, education and training activities for the safe and secure use of nuclear energy.

174. It was time for African States to actively strengthen their participation in global nuclear cooperation and interaction within the framework of the Pelindaba Treaty, AFCONE and other relevant multilateral arrangements. The MOU between AFCONE and the Agency was timely and would be crucial in advancing the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in Africa, including for power generation. It was a priority in AFCONE's programme of work to bridge the energy gap by coordinating and enhancing cooperation among African States and with the Agency and other partners in areas such as nuclear safety and radiological protection. In May 2022 in cooperation with the Agency's Department of Nuclear Energy, AFCONE had hosted a workshop in South Africa on promoting effective interactions among nuclear industry entities and regulatory bodies in countries introducing nuclear power programmes.

175. The universalization of the Pelindaba Treaty was progressing in the right direction. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Morocco — both African Union States — had ratified the Treaty in 2022, bringing the total number of States Parties to 44.

176. Despite the many achievements made in relation to nuclear energy, AFCONE recognized that concerns and hurdles remained. Recalling that the Tenth NPT Review Conference had concluded without an outcome document, AFCONE urged the international community to strive to find common ground in order to guarantee the success of the next review conference.

177. In conclusion, he expressed his sincere thanks to the Agency and all AFCONE partners for their support and important roles in furthering global peace and development.

178. Mr DONA (Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that, half a century after the entry into force of the NPT, the current pressing global challenges posed by the pandemic, an accelerating climate crisis, the Ukraine crisis and mounting non-proliferation obstacles could only be addressed through international cooperation. With its indispensable role, the Agency was an inspiring example of how effective international cooperation could make a tangible contribution to global peace, security and development. In that respect, the Order, as a neutral, impartial and non-political entity with a mission to help those in need regardless of religion, race, and age, could act as a mediator.

179. The Order was a recognized sovereign subject of international law headquartered in Rome and maintained relations at the ambassadorial level with more than 112 States — most of them Agency Member States — and multilateral relations with the European Union and the United Nations, where it held permanent observer status pursuant to a General Assembly resolution supported by all member States. In that connection, the Order requested that its placement in the Agency's documentation be

corrected by listing it among other intergovernmental organizations instead of among non-governmental organizations.

180. Nuclear technology continued to play a pivotal role in improving the lives of the less privileged around the world, especially in the areas of agriculture and health in developing countries — an important aim that the Order shared with the Agency. The two bodies had many objectives in common, notably in human sciences and health care. The Practical Arrangements with PACT furthered the Order's collaboration on early cancer diagnosis with WHO and other UN organizations, a key focus being financial support for training activities, notably at the University Hospital Centre "Mother Teresa" in Albania.

181. The Order carried out charitable missions through its relief organization, Malteser International, to provide medical and humanitarian aid and assistance to refugees and migrants, in particular in countries menaced by civil war, such as Ukraine.

182. Appreciative of the Agency's work on technology, safety and security, which aligned closely with the 2030 Agenda, the Order welcomed the Director General's commitment to using nuclear technology to tackle global health and climate issues. Its activities, particularly in food security, resources and cancer treatment, as underlined by the theme of the 2022 Scientific Forum: "Rays of Hope: Cancer Care for All, were of equal importance to non-nuclear States.

183. The Agency would continue striving to ensure that the noble goal of atoms for peace and development became a reality. The Order remained committed to the realization of the Agency's ideas and to continued collaboration to promote a better and safer environment for all.

184. Mr KLEMENT (European Atomic Energy Community) said that the recent signing of an MOU on nuclear safety cooperation paved the way for the continuation and strengthening of the long standing collaboration between the Agency and Euratom.

185. Euratom recognized the Secretariat's continuous and intensive involvement in monitoring the safety and security of nuclear installations in war-torn Ukraine. It condemned the Russian Federation's aggression in the strongest possible terms and had been following the nuclear safety situation in Ukraine since the beginning of the Russian invasion. The European Commission and Euratom member States had created a task force to work on scenario-based risk assessment, emergency preparedness and the immediate provision of aid to Ukraine.

186. Nuclear safety remained of critical importance for the European Union. Member States with nuclear installations had participated in the first topical peer review, on ageing management, under the supervision of the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group. The second topical peer review, on fire protection of nuclear installations, was being prepared for 2023–2024. Nuclear safety knew no boundaries, and the European Union included neighbouring and other countries in activities, such as its nuclear safety stress tests or topical peer reviews.

187. Euratom had been a constitutive regional partner to the Agency's safeguards system for more than 50 years, and 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the new partnership approach. In that context, the European Commission had organized a side event on safeguarding in a regional arrangement at the recent NPT Review Conference.

188. Euratom welcomed the successful conclusion of the First A/CPPNM Conference as an important milestone in strengthening the global consensus on nuclear security. The unanimously adopted outcome document would foster the implementation of the amended Convention and promote its universalization.

189. Highlighting the need for continuous attention to the safe management of radioactive waste and spent fuel, Euratom welcomed the cooperation among the European Commission, the Agency and

OECD/NEA in harmonizing inventory reporting requirements, as well as the concepts and methods to describe and compare decommissioning projects. In general, faster progress should be achieved by all Member States in the implementation of solutions for high level waste.

190. The Euratom Research and Training Programme for 2021–2025 was central to European efforts to promote excellence in nuclear research and innovation in fission and fusion. The programme had €1.4 billion of funding and covered direct and indirect actions, fusion and fission research. Fusion technology had the potential to become a major energy source in the future. Euratom had allocated €5.6 billion to ITER for 2021–2027, as well as a grant for EUROfusion for 2021–2025.

191. SMRs were widely viewed as holding great potential for the achievement of climate objectives and the European Commission was facilitating a European SMR partnership through preparatory actions with regulatory authorities, industry and the research community.

192. For more than 60 years, the Euratom Supply Agency had been doing important work to ensure the stable supply of nuclear materials for power and non-power uses in the European Union. In cooperation with the European Commission and its institutional partners, the Agency followed up on present and future supply challenges, such as high assay materials for research or isotope production and the security of supply for power production.

193. More than ever, challenges in nuclear safety, security and safeguards were a global concern that the whole international community would need to come together to address.

194. Mr ZHANG (Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization) said that, despite the distinct nature of their mandates, the Agency and the Preparatory Commission had always had much in common in upholding the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime. In a deteriorating geopolitical landscape characterized by deepening distrust between countries, heightened rhetoric, new military conflicts and the potential prospect of nuclear weapon use, their challenging, shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons was more critical than ever.

195. Although the recent NPT Review Conference had regrettably been unable to reach consensus on a Final Document, the tireless efforts made by participants to bridge gaps within the international community had laid the groundwork for real progress in the future. The NPT States Parties had intensified their extensive support for the CTBT, with the draft Final Document recalling the importance of its entry into force and reaffirming its promotion as a responsibility of all ratifying States. That was a call to action to achieve universalization and entry into force.

196. Historic milestones had been achieved in the year of the 25th anniversary of the opening of the CTBT for signature. Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, and Sao Tome and Principe had ratified the Treaty, meeting the Preparatory Commission's ambitious goal of at least five new ratifications in one year and completing adherence to the Treaty in West and Central Africa, the Latin American and Caribbean region and South-East Asia. With 186 signatures and 176 ratifications, the CTBT was now closer to entering into force.

197. Between 1945 and 1996, the year that the CTBT had opened for signature, more than 2000 nuclear tests had been conducted, equating to about one test every nine days. The CTBT had created and sustained a norm against nuclear testing so powerful that fewer than a dozen nuclear tests had been conducted since then. Only one country had breached it since the turn of the century. That norm was backed up by the CTBT's state of the art verification, comprising the International Data Centre and International Monitoring System, which ensured that no nuclear test ever went undetected. With that critical verification asset, the CTBT was undeniably a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

198. The Preparatory Commission continued to explore new ways to help States Signatories benefit from the data collected by the monitoring system, including civil and scientific applications such as tsunami warning systems, and earthquake and climate change studies. With that in mind, it had launched the National Data Centres for All initiative in 2022 to enable all States Signatories, especially developing countries, to make full use of the data for the benefit of all.

199. Despite those impressive achievements and exciting initiatives, the mission had not yet been accomplished. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were the cornerstones of a safer and more secure future. Strengthened multilateral cooperation and collective efforts to reinforce the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including through the Agency and, in the future, the CTBTO, were the only way to overcome global challenges and crises and build a safer world, free from nuclear weapons.

200. Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) said that Latin America and the Caribbean had been the first region to create an international legal instrument establishing an NWFZ in a densely populated area and had committed to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. The Tlatelolco Treaty had opened for signature in February 1967 and had been signed and ratified by the 33 countries of the region.

201. Noting that the preamble of the Treaty stipulated that nuclear energy should be used in the region exclusively for peaceful purposes, and that the countries should use that source of energy to expedite the economic and social development of their peoples, he said that cooperation between OPANAL and the Agency was essential for the operation of the NWFZ and the effectiveness of the Treaty. The cooperation agreement between the Agency and OPANAL — signed in October 1972 — had served as a framework for harmonizing efforts to facilitate the efficient operation of the control system established by the Treaty to ensure compliance by the Contracting Parties with their Treaty obligations. All 33 countries of the region had Agency safeguards agreements in force, pursuant to Article 13 of the Treaty.

202. The worsening nuclear safety and security situation in Eastern Europe, especially with regard to Zaporizhzhya NPP, was of great concern. If circumstances continued to deteriorate at Europe's largest NPP, there was a risk of nuclear disaster. OPANAL therefore fully supported the efforts of the Agency and the Director General to provide technical support in the areas of nuclear safety, security and safeguards implementation in order to resolve the situation.

203. Nuclear law provided a legal framework for the peaceful and safe applications of nuclear science and technology and was a key area of international law for further development. OPANAL commended the Director General for the timely First International Conference on Nuclear Law held earlier in 2022, which had provided a forum for discussion of current issues.

204. OPANAL member States were committed to continuing to strengthen the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. OPANAL fully supported the Agency's efforts to promote confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and looked forward to maintaining its strong relationship with the Agency.

205. Mr HAMDI (Arab Atomic Energy Agency) said that the AAEA was preparing for the second phase of the Arab Strategy for the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, for the period 2021–2030, which was to be approved at the next Arab League Summit. The strategy focused on the triad of food, water and energy security through activities in the areas of water resources and food security, human health, the environment, energy, manufacturing and mining.

206. In cooperation with the Agency, the AAEA had established the Arab Network of Nuclear Regulators in 2010 as a platform for sharing experience, expertise and lessons learned. The network also contributed to the development of Arab capabilities in radiation protection and environmental

conservation. Hundreds of Arab trainees and specialists had benefited from the network's nuclear safety and security activities, including in the control of radioactive sources and the security and safety of nuclear and radiation facilities.

207. The AAEA had also implemented a project with the Agency to establish the Arab Network for Environmental Radiation Monitoring and Early Warning, which launched in 2020. Radiation monitoring stations were established or developed in Arab countries to create networks to address any nuclear or radiological incident that might result in radioactive contamination hazardous to the environment, workers and the public, thus supporting Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR.

208. As part of that project, the AAEA, in cooperation with the Agency and under the auspices of the League of Arab States, had organized a high level Arab meeting in Cairo in July 2022 on the establishment of Arab nuclear and radiological EPR infrastructure. Responding to the Director General's call in his supportive video message to the meeting, the AAEA had developed a roadmap for Arab cooperation in the area of nuclear and radiological EPR for the next five years.

209. The AAEA was cooperating with the Department of Nuclear Energy to enhance the nuclear infrastructure of countries starting to construct NPPs, and several seminars had been held on the assistance provided by both organizations to Member States wishing to include nuclear in their energy diversification strategies. The conclusion in June 2022 of a historic, comprehensive memorandum of understanding between the AAEA and the Agency, covering nuclear safety and security, nuclear energy and the applications of nuclear techniques, represented a milestone in their cooperation.

210. In closing, he commended the UAE on successfully operating the first NPP in the Arab region and connecting it to the electrical grid, and Egypt on starting to build its first NPP. The AAEA stood ready to help strengthen the relevant infrastructure in other Arab countries that wished to start building NPPs.

211. Mr HUSSEN (Iraq), exercising his right of reply, reaffirmed his Government's full commitment to all treaties, agreements and international efforts aimed at achieving, promoting and universalizing non-proliferation. Citing Iraq's past as a pretext for disregarding the safeguards regime was a flimsy argument that did not relieve the Israeli entity of its obligation to ratify and join the NPT as soon as possible — as all other States in the Middle East had already done. Noting that the Agency firmly rejected attacks against any peaceful facility under the safeguards regime, he recalled the Israeli strike on Iraqi nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards on 7 June 1981.

212. Iraq called on the international community to shoulder its moral, political and professional responsibility to ensure that the Israeli entity acceded to the NPT and placed all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive safeguards, pursuant to paragraph 5 of UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981), in order to enable the Agency to verify and inspect all of its nuclear activities.

213. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), exercising his right of reply, said that his country resolutely rejected Azerbaijan's unfounded allegations. Armenia took its nuclear safety and security responsibilities extremely seriously and worked proactively with the Agency to implement its commitments in that regard in line with its long standing approach of transparency and accountability in nuclear matters.

214. Several countries in the region, including Armenia, were located in a seismic zone and some were even constructing NPPs in their most seismically active areas. Azerbaijan's failure to demonstrate the same level of concern about their facilities exposed its politically motivated smear campaign aimed at covertly impeding Armenia's technological development.

215. The safety systems at Metsamor NPP had last been assessed during the SALTO follow-up mission in October 2021, which had concluded that Armenia had made significant achievements in addressing

the previous mission's recommendations. Azerbaijan's baseless allegations were therefore an attack not only against Armenia and its right to develop peaceful nuclear technologies, but also, and most importantly, against the reputation, authority and professionalism of the Agency — a key player in helping to ensure the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Member States.

216. Azerbaijan's continuous accusations evidenced its malign intentions regarding Metsamor NPP, especially given that the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defence had officially threatened to launch an armed attack on it in July 2020. In the light of those threats, Armenia had recalled the unacceptability of the use of force or threat of force against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes and the importance of ensuring the security of nuclear facilities at all times and in all circumstances.

217. Every country had the sovereign right to develop nuclear energy, including by building new NPPs. As nuclear power was considered to play a crucial role in global decarbonization efforts to mitigate climate change, Armenia would continue to work closely with the Agency to enhance and expand its nuclear energy capacities.

218. Armenia resolutely rejected Azerbaijan's statement regarding the territories that had come under Azerbaijan's control and occupation following the war of aggression against Artsakh — also known as Nagorno-Karabakh — launched exactly two years previously. The Agency and its Member States should pay close attention to Azerbaijan's implied intentions of foul play in those territories, to prevent any malign activities. Azerbaijan's empty and uncorroborated claims were nothing more than propaganda to cover up its unprovoked and unjustified armed aggression against Artsakh and its people, and its extensive use of weaponry and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

219. Ms KOSTENKO (Ukraine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to false allegations made by the Russian Federation earlier in the week, strongly condemned that country's misleading and cynical statements regarding Ukrainian nuclear facilities. Such propaganda would in no way justify the Russian Federation's constant attacks against Ukrainian nuclear facilities, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP, nor would the mechanical repetition of false accusations exonerate it from responsibility for shelling that plant. The Russian Federation was the sole cause of the problems at Zaporizhzhya NPP and must be held accountable for its persistent violent actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine. It must immediately cease all actions against, and at, Zaporizhzhya NPP and any other nuclear facility in Ukraine, in accordance with the Board's resolutions of 3 March 2022⁴ and 15 September 2022.⁵

220. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), speaking also on behalf of France and the USA in exercise of the right of reply, said that the three countries did not consider the Agency to be the appropriate forum for discussing the TPNW. Their views on the Treaty were well known. They would not sign it or be bound by it, as they did not accept that it contributed to the development of customary international law or consider it to be an effective measure as envisioned by the NPT.

221. Mr KLUČAR (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union in exercise of the right of reply, categorically denounced the unfounded accusations that Russian officials continued to spread in an attempt to legitimize the Russian aggression against Ukraine, including that Ukrainian shelling was endangering the security and safety of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Those facilities had previously operated securely and safely, and it was only since the Russian invasion and occupation that the situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP had posed the risk of a nuclear incident or accident, with potentially grave radiological consequences for human health and the environment in Ukraine and beyond. The European Union once again demanded that the Russian Federation cease its military actions,

⁴ GOV/2022/17

⁵ GOV/2022/58

unconditionally withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, including Zaporizhzhya NPP, and fully respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and independence within its internationally recognized borders.

222. Mr SHAHYAROV (Azerbaijan), exercising his right of reply, said that it was regrettable that the delegation of Armenia continued to seize every opportunity to spread its false narrative and baseless allegations about his country. The distorted manner in which Armenia had referred to Azerbaijan's internationally recognized sovereign territories, which Azerbaijan had liberated from belligerent Armenian occupation in 2020, was an attempt to continue its territorial claims against his country and interfere with its internal affairs.

223. He recalled that it was Armenia that had used force to occupy those territories for almost 30 years in blatant violation of international law and the relevant UN Security Council resolution. The end of the occupation had revealed widespread mining of Azerbaijani lands, deliberate destruction and misappropriation of Azerbaijani historical, cultural and religious heritage, plundering of national resources and destruction of infrastructure, all of which had been duly documented and shared with the international community.

224. Metsamor NPP posed a serious risk to the region. It was located in a mountainous, highly seismically active zone, was well past its internationally accepted retirement age, and its safety and technical standards were poor. Those problems could not be fixed through maintenance and the repeated extension of its operation. Following the SALTO review mission conducted in the light of Armenia's decision to operate the NPP until September 2026, the Agency had urged Armenia to implement the first periodic safety review in line with Agency safety standards, confirm the resistance of electrical components to harsh conditions and complete the comprehensive ageing management review. It was unclear how successfully Armenia would fulfil those requirements.

225. Other specific risks concerning Metsamor NPP were the environmental hazards of fuel accumulation; atmospheric contamination; uncertainties regarding the burial of radioactive and hazardous NPP waste; insufficient water for cooling in the event of an accident; and contamination of the Aras river, which was a main source of water for drinking, agriculture and industry in Azerbaijan. Nuclear hazards knew no borders — current and future security and well-being in the South Caucasus region depended on domestic and regional actions taken at the present juncture.

226. Azerbaijan had never threatened to attack civilian infrastructure of any nature, as demonstrated by its targeting of only military objects during its defensive operation in 2020. Conversely, Armenia had attacked entire civilian settlements in his country that year without any military necessity, including by using ballistic missiles, unguided rockets and cluster munitions, and even attempting to destroy Azerbaijan's largest water reservoir.

227. Armenia's statement was just another attempt to divert attention from its illegal activities, persistent policy of occupation and the serious safety concerns regarding its nuclear reactor.

228. Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Mexico), speaking in his country's capacity as President-elect of the Second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had been struck by the statement delivered by the UK. The Agency's Statute clearly envisaged support for UN policies that furthered the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament, and any international agreements entered into pursuant to such policies.

229. The Agency not only carried out safeguards and verification work that was pertinent to the TPNW but also had the technical expertise relevant to the TPNW and its States Parties in environmental remediation, nuclear disaster mitigation and many other aspects. Moreover, it had contributed to past nuclear disarmament and security initiatives and actions, such as the Trilateral Initiative, the Plutonium

Management and Disposition Agreement, nuclear security summits, G7 and G8 summits, NPT Review Conferences and Preparatory Committees, and negotiations and meetings regarding nuclear-weapon-free zones.

230. The TPNW was constructive and led by NPT States Parties with impeccable disarmament and non-proliferation credentials. As the TPNW States Parties were also Member States of the Agency, they should seek synergies whenever they contributed to shared goals and were in line with the respective mandates. Mexico trusted that all relevant stakeholders would maintain constructive and meaningful dialogue and engagement in the future.

231. Mr BULYCHEV (Russian Federation), exercising his right of reply, expressed regret at the persistent attempts, throughout the current session of the General Conference, to politicize the work of the Agency and deviate from the Agency's statutory objectives and functions. He also noted the crude Russophobia that had prevailed during the meetings, not least when the representative of Poland, Ms Moskwa, had apologized for her surname. It was a great shame to hear such comments, which were in no way becoming of such a high level politician.

232. Once again, both Ukraine and the Western countries had simply repeated a set of standard, carbon-copy propagandist statements. Apparently, the speakers genuinely believed that the more they repeated those statements, the truer they would become. They continually referred to the fact that the Board had adopted two resolutions on Ukraine. Those resolutions, however, were deeply unprofessional and politically motivated and went far beyond the Agency's mandate — it was precisely for that reason that they had been forced through by a vote. Their authors, like many of those who had spoken during the current session, had focused on making political allegations against the Russian Federation and had almost entirely ignored the real issues relating to ensuring nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine. It seemed that they did not really care about the Director General's seven indispensable pillars for nuclear safety and security during an armed conflict or about the content of the Agency's reports on its missions to Ukraine. Worst of all, they could not care less about the lives and health of the Zaporizhzhya NPP staff or the residents of its satellite city, Enerhodar, who continued to be subjected to incessant heavy artillery fire by Ukrainian militia groups. Kyiv, it seemed, was encouraged by the one-sided stance adopted by various countries, perceiving it as some kind of carte blanche to carry out further attacks.

233. It was a sorry state of affairs. Europe's largest NPP continued to teeter on the brink of a nuclear accident, its staff working in harsh conditions that had been created by Ukraine; meanwhile, no one was talking about who was actually responsible for shelling the plant. The Russian Federation hoped that efforts to create a nuclear security protection zone around Zaporizhzhya NPP, as proposed by the Director General, would remedy the situation and that — in the event that the zone was not respected — the culprits would be named.

234. Mr ROUZBAHANI (Islamic Republic of Iran), exercising his right of reply, said that he categorically rejected the absurd and fabricated allegations levelled against his country by Israel. As a responsible party to the NPT, Iran was committed to continuing to implement its obligations under its CSA. Israel, in contrast, refused to heed the numerous international resolutions and decisions repeatedly calling on it to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under Agency comprehensive safeguards, and continued to develop its military nuclear programme.

235. Israel's acquisition of nuclear capabilities posed a continuing and serious threat to regional peace and security. The Israeli regime was taking advantage of the absence of international monitoring to develop and stockpile nuclear weapons. It had already admitted to making nuclear threats against NPT States Parties and attacking nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes, adding to the many international crimes that it had committed since its illegitimate inception.

236. Mr MANUKYAN (Armenia), speaking again in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had not referred to territories of Azerbaijan but to Artsakh, which had exercised its right to self-determination in full compliance with international law. Azerbaijan's allegations, which his country categorically rejected, were a smokescreen to cover up its crimes and aggression against Artsakh and Armenia since 2020.

237. Azerbaijan's aggressive anti-Armenian stance was not new and its constant military provocations and aggression since the 2020 war were the main factors preventing security and stability in the South Caucasus. The Azerbaijani aggression was no longer confined to Artsakh and the unprovoked and unjustified full-scale attack on the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of his country in September 2022 had resulted in the deaths of 207 Armenian military service personnel and six civilians. Towns, residential areas and critical infrastructure along Armenia's southern and eastern borders had also been targeted by Azerbaijani armed forces, in stark violation of international humanitarian law.

238. Although Azerbaijan had made a number of claims about the safety and security of the Armenian NPP for at least three decades, it had never provided Armenia with any supporting evidence. Now that Azerbaijan had taken the positive step of starting to study the Agency's documents and reports, it would undoubtedly come to realize the baseless nature of its allegations. Azerbaijan might be surprised to learn that the majority of the world's 44 operating reactors were in long term operation mode.

239. It was truly disappointing that the delegation of Azerbaijan repeatedly used the Agency as a forum to spread politically motivated and groundless allegations regarding the safety of the Armenian NPP. Not one nuclear or radiation safety incident had been recorded during its entire operating life, which was undoubtedly due to the priority given to ensuring and constantly improving safety since the NPP had become operational.

240. Mr SHAHYAROV (Azerbaijan), speaking once more in exercise of the right of reply, said that Armenia continued its overt attempts to mislead the international community as to the causes, course and consequences of the war that it had unleashed against his country. The fabricated and distorted comments made demonstrated the extent of Armenia's failure to comply with its international obligations and promote peace, stability and cooperation in the region. As affirmed by numerous resolutions and documents of the UN Security Council, the General Assembly and other international organizations, the territory known as Artsakh was internationally recognized sovereign territory of Azerbaijan that had been under Armenia's unlawful occupation for nearly three decades.

241. Armenia should direct its energy and enthusiasm towards implementing its obligations under the trilateral statement of November 2020. In order to ensure peace, security and prosperity in the region, Armenia should work towards normalizing relations with Azerbaijan in good faith and on the basis of the principles of international law, in particular sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of the international order. It should also comply with its international obligations and engage genuinely and constructively in the negotiations.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.