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President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹		Paragraphs
–	Interim oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole <i>(continued)</i>	1
9	The Agency's Financial Statements for 2022	2
10	The Agency's Programme and Budget 2024–2025	3
11	Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute	4
12	Scale of assessment of Member States' contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2024	5
15	Strengthening of the Agency's technical cooperation activities	6
16	Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications	7

¹ GC(67)/24

Contents (continued)

		Paragraphs
22	Promotion of Efficiency and Effectiveness of IAEA Decision Making Process	8–9
23	Restoration of sovereign equality in the IAEA	10–95
26	Amendment of Article VI of the Statute	96–103
27	Personnel	104–105
18	Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea	106–115

Abbreviations used in this record

DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PMOs	Policy-Making Organs
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

– **Interim oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole (continued)**

1. The PRESIDENT recalled that the interim report of the Chair of the Committee of the Whole given at the previous meeting had covered agenda items 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 22, 23, 26 and 27.

9. The Agency’s Financial Statements for 2022

2. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/4 was adopted.

10. The Agency’s Programme and Budget 2024–2025

3. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, draft resolutions A, B and C set out in document GC(67)/5 were adopted.

11. Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute

4. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft decision set out in document GC(67)/L.4 was adopted.

12. Scale of assessment of Member States’ contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2024

5. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out on page 3 of document GC(67)/12/Rev.1 was adopted.

15. Strengthening of the Agency’s technical cooperation activities

6. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.8 was adopted.

16. Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications

7. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolutions set out in document GC(67)/L.3 were adopted.

22. Promotion of Efficiency and Effectiveness of IAEA Decision Making Process

8. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to take note of the report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole on the agenda item in question.

9. It was so decided.

23. Restoration of sovereign equality in the IAEA

10. The PRESIDENT recalled that the Chair of the Committee of the Whole had reported that the Committee had not been in a position to recommend the draft resolution on the restoration of sovereign equality in the Agency set out in documents GC(67)/COM.5/L.14 and Add. 1 to 3. Several amendments had been proposed by one delegation and had been distributed to the members of the Committee. However, there had been broad support in the Committee for the original text submitted by Kazakhstan.

11. Mr UMAROV (Kazakhstan) said that the long standing violation of the basic principle of sovereign equality among the Agency's Member States had compelled his delegation to request the agenda item and table a draft resolution. The situation — which Kazakhstan had been enduring for 30 years, with no end in sight — constituted a grave breach of the Agency's Statute and practice. He thanked the Secretariat and all Member States for their valuable support to restore sovereign equality and establish fairness within the Agency's practices.

12. Despite paying all their dues, making voluntary contributions and signing and ratifying the Statute, so-called 'arealess' Member States continued to be unfairly deprived of their sovereign right to be elected to the Board of Governors and all other elected bodies of the Agency, because they were not in an informal regional group.

13. For three years, Kazakhstan had been consistently and systematically pursuing the issue by requesting the inclusion of an agenda item on sovereign equality at every set of Board meetings and General Conference session. In a parallel process, using information provided by all eight regional groups, his country had compiled the first list of the 17 arealess Member States identified to date, which had been circulated by the Agency in INFCIRC/1116 in August 2023. All those efforts were aimed solely at restoring the Agency's basic principle of inclusiveness in the decision making process.

14. The African regional group — which constituted roughly one third of all Members States — and the Latin American regional group set positive examples. Their only admission requirement was geographical belonging, meaning that no Member State in those regions was arealess.

15. Kazakhstan was proud that the draft resolution had been co-sponsored by 53 Member States and supported by the vast majority of Member States, for whom the prevalence of justice and law was a key priority. The straightforward and succinct document — which had been thoroughly and transparently negotiated with all the Member States and regional groups and took into consideration most of their views and suggestions — would promote the swift allocation of the 17 arealess Member States to the relevant geographical areas.

16. He appealed to Member States to adopt the draft resolution by consensus or, failing that, to vote in favour of it in order to make progress on a matter of great importance not only to arealess States, but to the Agency as a whole.

17. Ms MURADOVA (Azerbaijan), commending Kazakhstan's efforts to address the long standing issue of arealess States, said that her country warmly welcomed the recent progress made.

18. Upholding the fundamental principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the Agency's Statute, it was Azerbaijan's firm belief that each Member State possessed the inherent right to seek election to the Board of Governors and to join one of the regional groups outlined in Article VI.A.1 of the Statute. Member States' full and equitable participation in decision making processes was indispensable for the Agency's effective functioning. Guaranteeing the rights and benefits of membership to all Member States would not only strengthen their commitment, but also ensure faithful adherence to their obligations under the Statute.

19. Despite Kazakhstan's unwavering partnership with the Agency, its substantial contributions to the Agency's endeavours in the realms of nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and its steadfast adherence to its obligations, it remained unable to fully exercise its rights. That situation must be rectified.

20. In closing, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution and a participant in the Group of Friends of Arealess States, Azerbaijan reaffirmed its commitment to addressing the important matter in the best interests of the Agency and all its Member States.

21. Mr REGMI (Nepal) said that his country, as a dedicated Member State, formally advocated for the exclusively peaceful uses of nuclear energy, which it pursued with the Agency's consistent support and assistance. Nepal maintained a strong and constructive relationship with the Agency and always fulfilled its obligations under the Statute.

22. It was unacceptable that, although Nepal was a full-fledged Member State and had paid its contributions in full despite its limited resources, its non-affiliation to a regional group had prevented it from fully enjoying its rights under the Statute and participating in the Agency's work.

23. The principle of sovereign equality among all Member States, which had been long neglected in the Agency, was provided for explicitly in Article IV.C of the Statute, as well as in Article 2 of the UN Charter, which encapsulated the fundamental guidelines governing the operations of all international organizations. Underlining the legal and moral responsibility to adhere to that principle, Nepal appealed to all Member States, the Director General and the Secretariat to address the matter at the earliest opportunity.

24. The exclusion of several Member States from the policy-making process did not serve the Agency and undermined the fundamental principle of sovereign equality provided for by the Statute, depriving those Member States of their rightful representation and voice in critical matters.

25. He urged Member States to adopt the draft resolution by consensus as a step towards restoring sovereign equality, thus enabling the Agency to foster an inclusive and equitable environment for the active participation and collaboration of all Member States.

26. Ms MURRAY (United Kingdom), welcoming the open and inclusive consultations convened by Kazakhstan, said that her country was proud to co-sponsor the draft resolution. The document represented a practical step towards recognizing the scope of the issue of arealess States in the Agency by further encouraging consultations between the relevant States and regional groups to enable all States to fully participate in the PMOs in line with the Statute and the core principles of dialogue and consensus.

27. The UK continued to urge all States that had not yet done so to ratify the 1999 amendment to Article VI of the Statute without delay in order to expand the size and composition of the Board and enable greater opportunities for representation. Her country welcomed the first meeting of the Group of Friends of Arealess States, chaired by Slovenia, and looked forward to further meetings to aid progress on the ratification of the amendment and the allocation of Member States to regional areas.

28. Noting the widespread support for the purposes and principles in the draft resolution, and the readiness of the vast majority of Member States to endorse it, the UK encouraged its adoption as a whole by consensus.

29. Mr USTINOV (Russian Federation) said that the issue of arealess States needed to be resolved immediately. The Russian Federation was therefore grateful to Kazakhstan for its persistent efforts to promote the issue, including by drafting a resolution for the General Conference for the second time. The drafting process had been open, inclusive and transparent. Although not everything in the final version was ideal, his country recognized that it was a political resolution that would enable the General Conference to send a clear signal that it recognized the problem. The draft resolution set out meaningful ways in which the issue could be addressed, preferably as soon as possible. Given the political nature of the resolution, the Russian Federation believed that it would be best for it to be adopted by consensus.

30. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that each regional group should represent its region in a democratic way, with a composition that ensured inclusive decision making in the Agency. Against that background, it was unfortunate that the draft resolution had been discussed in a non-transparent and non-inclusive manner and then presented as a *fait accompli*. Due consideration had not been given to potential concerns about the possible method for enlarging the groups or changing their composition, which was a decision with political, legal and international dimensions and for which there were precedents.

31. Iran had proposed three amendments to the draft resolution in the Committee of the Whole. Firstly, that paragraph (d) should be reworded to read “Noting that some IAEA Member States are yet to be members of regional groups”. Iran was prepared to consider requests to enlarge the regional groups on a case-by-case basis but could not agree to an approach based on a list of countries that had to be accepted or rejected as a whole.

32. Secondly, noting that paragraph 1 was rather pre-emptive in encouraging regional groups to exercise flexibility, Iran had proposed amending the paragraph to read: “Recognizing the discretion of the regional groups regarding their composition and consideration of possible enlargement on case-by-case approach, taking into account the Statute of the IAEA in this regard”.

33. Lastly, his country had requested that paragraph 2 be deleted, as the presentation of the arealess States as a package was unacceptable. Moreover, the appropriateness of mentioning an informal group of friends in such a strategic document and requesting Secretariat support for its efforts was questionable, and went against the practice in other international forums.

34. It was disappointing that, although Iran had done its utmost to achieve consensus, its concerns had not been taken seriously in the Committee of the Whole. His country could therefore not support the draft resolution as tabled.

35. Mr OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) recalled that, in response to the increase in the Agency's membership, the General Conference had adopted resolution GC(43)/RES/19 in 1999 to amend Article VI of the Statute. The amendment, which included conditions for joining regional groups, had yet to be ratified by a number of States before it could enter into force.

36. In accordance with the Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, every Member State had the right to be a Board member — for the arealess States, achieving that goal depended on the entry into force of the Article VI amendment. Stressing the importance of meeting the request of those States, he questioned whether the number and distribution of regional groups approved at the time of the Agency's establishment and the number of Board members approved in 1999 were still appropriate, given the large number of States that had since joined the Agency.

37. Syria encouraged all Member States to support Iran's proposed amendments to the draft resolution in order to achieve consensus or — in the event — to vote in favour of them, as they more closely reflected reality while preserving the indisputable right of the arealess States to full membership in the Agency.

38. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America), commending Kazakhstan's leadership on the important issue, said that the draft resolution was the product of the many bilateral engagements and extensive and inclusive consultations held by that country over the preceding year to gather Member States' input and views. The draft resolution enjoyed very broad support because it reflected and balanced the priorities of many Member States on that significant issue.

39. Kazakhstan's efforts had shed light on the magnitude of the problem by identifying 17 States that were not members of any regional group. The USA maintained that every Member State that contributed to the Agency's mission and met its responsibilities to the organization should have the opportunity to exercise all the benefits of membership if it so desired. Her country continued to call on regional groups to be more flexible in their decision making processes regarding membership and looked forward to further consultations among interested Member States.

40. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, the USA encouraged Member States to support the text as tabled by Kazakhstan and to reject any late-stage efforts to upset the careful balance that its provisions represented. The draft resolution was a constructive and concrete step towards assuming shared responsibility to respect the sovereign equality of Member States as enshrined in the Agency's Statute.

41. Ms ŽVOKELJ (Slovenia), thanking Kazakhstan for the draft resolution, said that the balanced text had been extensively discussed and negotiated. With some 53 co-sponsors, including Slovenia, it had garnered wide support and should be adopted by consensus.

42. The late amendments presented by Iran defeated the purpose of the draft resolution and were not conducive to solving the issue of arealess States. In the likely event of a vote, Slovenia would vote in favour of the draft text as tabled, without amendments, and hoped that other Member States would do likewise.

43. Mr CAMPUZANO PIÑA (Mexico) said that, since Kazakhstan had first raised the matter, his country had supported the sovereign equality of States and their legitimate right to representation in the Agency's governing bodies, especially the Board of Governors. The legitimate request of the 17 Member States unjustly denied that right should be promptly addressed. He expressed appreciation for the efforts and consultations undertaken by Kazakhstan.

44. Ms HERNANDEZ (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), supportive of the cause of Kazakhstan and the other arealess States, said that Kazakhstan's consultations with Member States, in particular her country, and with all the regions on the draft resolution were appreciated. All Member States should

belong to a regional group and enjoy all the rights arising from membership, including election to the Board.

45. As her country had been unable to participate in all the meetings of the Committee of the Whole, it had not had the opportunity to air its concerns about the text of the draft resolution. Venezuela agreed with Iran regarding paragraph (d) and the deletion of the reference to document INFCIRC/1116 in paragraph 2. Her country had no problem with welcoming the establishment of the Group of Friends of Arealess States, however, as the forum would enable productive discussions on the issue.

46. Mr O'LEARY (Ireland), thanking Kazakhstan for its careful, reasonable and consensus-directed approach to developing the draft resolution, said that his country could not support the amendments proposed by Iran, which had been put forward at such a late stage. In view of all the efforts undertaken, it would be a shame not to adopt the draft resolution by consensus. With the greatest respect, he urged Iran to join the consensus in order to avoid a divisive vote, and to use its explanation of vote to clarify its position that the resolution in no way undermined the discretion of the regional groups.

47. Mr SHAALAN (Egypt), commending Kazakhstan's openness and total transparency in its efforts on the draft resolution, said that his country subscribed to the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States, as reflected in the Statute. Egypt's support for the draft resolution was in accordance with resolution GC(43)/RES/19 of 1999, which stipulated clearly that the relevant amended provisions of Article VI of the Statute would enter into force when the General Conference confirmed a list of all Member States, adopted by the Board of Governors, in both cases by 90% of those present and voting, and whereby each Member State was allocated to one of the geographical areas referred to in the Statute, and that any change to the list thereafter might be made by the Board with the confirmation of the General Conference, in both cases by 90% of those present and voting, and only after a consensus on the proposed change was reached within any area affected by that change.

48. Ms MONTERRUBIO VILLAR (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, thanked Kazakhstan for its leadership on the draft resolution. The balanced text was the result of long and intensive consultations and had garnered broad support from Member States. In the event of a vote, the member States of the European Union, as co-sponsors of the draft resolution, would support the original text and reject the new amendments presented late in the process by Iran.

49. Mr BENGU (South Africa) said that the reform of the international system and global governance institutions was a major priority for his Government. As it had stated in various international forums, South Africa would not cease its advocacy until the antiquated institutions of the previous century, created before the liberation of Africa, had been brought into the 21st Century.

50. His country reiterated its firm position that, on the basis of the principle of sovereign equality, all member States had the inherent right to stand for election to important leadership positions in all international organizations — the Agency should not be an exception to that rule.

51. In such an important global governance organ as the Agency, the existence of arealess States was both unjust and irrational. The power to change that situation was in the hands of all Member States. South Africa therefore called on all those that had not yet ratified the amendment to Article VI of the Statute, especially African States, to do so without further delay.

52. Thanking Kazakhstan for keeping the unjust situation in focus, South Africa affirmed its support for the draft resolution, which was a step towards inclusiveness and full representation within the Agency, and stood ready to support further efforts to that end.

53. Mr LAGGNER (Switzerland), commending Kazakhstan for the extensive, open and transparent discussions and consultations held, said that the draft resolution addressed an important unresolved problem and highlighted the importance of the rapid entry into force of the Article VI amendment. The

text was well balanced and had therefore won broad cross-regional support. He expressed the hope that consensus could still be achieved on the draft resolution as tabled. In the event of a vote, his country would support the original text.

54. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), observing that the common message was that the draft resolution could and should be adopted by consensus, encouraged the President to try to bridge the gap in opinions.

55. The PRESIDENT, noting the strong support for the original draft, asked whether the Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

56. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country could not support the draft resolution as tabled.

57. The PRESIDENT said that the draft resolution would therefore be put to the vote.

58. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) requested that separate votes be taken on each of his country's proposed amendments and on the draft resolution as a whole.

59. Mr LODDING (Sweden) said that the consideration of previously unseen proposals at such a late stage caused difficulties. If there was to be a vote, the delegations would need to receive copies of the amendments. Expressing the hope that such a situation would not recur during the remaining deliberations, he noted that his delegation would proceed as the President wished.

60. The PRESIDENT, acknowledging the immense efforts made by the Committee of the Whole to bring the item to a conclusion, said that sensitive issues of concern to certain Member States remained unaddressed. She understood that Iran's amendments had previously been circulated to the Committee in accordance with Rule 63 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference; however, they would be distributed again for the purposes of the vote.

61. Mr UMAROV (Kazakhstan), appreciative of the President's leadership and mindful of Iran's position, said that it was a waste of time to consider the amendments at the current stage, as they had not been officially submitted before the deadline the previous day in accordance with Rule 63. Kazakhstan had worked rigorously to produce a simple, well-balanced text representing the views of the majority of Member States. Expressing regret that the Iranian delegation had decided not to withdraw its proposed amendments and join consensus, he stressed that it was not advisable to begin discussing the new proposals at that point.

62. The PRESIDENT, understanding of Kazakhstan's stance, pointed out that under Rule 63, she was authorized to permit the discussion and consideration of amendments even if they had not been distributed or had been distributed the same day. As far as she understood, Iran's proposals, made the previous day, had been circulated to the Committee of the Whole and, being unresolved, had subsequently been referred to the Conference.

63. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) thanked the President for eloquently clarifying the situation and confirming that his country's amendments had been circulated to delegations in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

64. The PRESIDENT said that, as there was no agreement regarding Iran's proposed amendments to paragraphs (d), 1 and 2, the General Conference would proceed to a vote on each amendment in turn and then on the draft resolution as a whole.

65. In accordance with Rule 72, the votes would be taken by show of hands and, in accordance with Rule 70, a simple majority of Member States present and voting was required. Explanations of vote would be allowed once all four votes were complete.

66. Mr UMAROV (Kazakhstan) said that that his delegation would vote against any amendments at the current stage and called on all Member States to do likewise.

67. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America) said that, although her delegation did not object to the President's exercise of her discretion under Rule 63, the basis of the Conference's consideration of the amendments introduced by Iran in the plenary must be made clear. It was important to note that the amendments had not been posted on the GovAtom website and had only just been distributed to all delegations. Accordingly, the amendments were before the Conference because they had been introduced by Iran during the current meeting under Rule 63 and not because they had been tabled at least a day in advance in accordance with that Rule.

68. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the United States delegation's false statement was an unconstructive effort to divert attention from the real issue. Iran's proposals had been presented in the Committee of the Whole and had been submitted in time under the Rules of Procedure for consideration by the Conference, as the Secretariat could confirm.

69. The PRESIDENT invited the General Conference to vote, by show of hands, on Iran's proposed amendment to paragraph (d) of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.14 to read "Noting that some IAEA Member States are yet to be members of regional groups".

70. There were 3 votes in favour and 86 against, with 24 abstentions. The proposed amendment was rejected.

71. The PRESIDENT invited the General Conference to vote, by show of hands, on Iran's proposed amendment to paragraph 1 of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.14 to read "Recognizing the discretion of the regional groups regarding their composition and consideration of possible enlargement on case-by-case approach, taking into account the Statute of the IAEA in this regard".

72. There were 3 votes in favour and 84 against, with 26 abstentions. The proposed amendment was rejected.

73. The PRESIDENT invited the General Conference to vote, by show of hands, on Iran's proposed deletion of paragraph 2 of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.14.

74. There were 2 votes in favour and 83 against, with 26 abstentions. The proposed amendment was rejected.

75. The PRESIDENT invited the General Conference to vote, by show of hands, on the draft resolution as a whole, as set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.14.

76. There were 99 votes in favour and 2 against, with 16 abstentions. The draft resolution was adopted.

77. Ms ABIDA (Jordan), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her delegation attached importance to the principle of sovereign equality among all Member States, as enshrined in the Statute, and affirmed the right of all Member States to enjoy the rights and privileges arising from their membership, including the opportunity to participate fully in the Agency's decision making processes.

78. In that regard, Jordan welcomed the Group of Friends of Arealess States and stood ready to participate in consultations aimed at finding a satisfactory solution to realize the equal rights of all

Member States to serve in the PMOs, in accordance with General Conference resolution GC(43)/RES/19.

79. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), speaking in explanation of vote, commended Kazakhstan's leadership in pursuing the important and long standing issue. He said that his country understood the frustration of the arealess Member States, which remained deprived of the opportunity to participate in the Agency's work and the PMOs. The principle of sovereign equality had to be applied in every organization.

80. Pakistan had abstained from the vote on the draft resolution as a whole because the resolution should have been adopted by consensus. His country remained of the firm view that the persistent and complex problem could only be addressed by the early entry into force of the Article VI amendment, which laid down a clear path towards the solution and which it had accepted in 2000. The most critical element of the resolution just adopted concerned the early entry into force of that amendment; the informal Group of Friends of Arealess States should therefore gear its efforts towards interacting with Member States that had co-sponsored the draft resolution but had not yet ratified the amendment. It was also clear that any new admission to a regional group was to be discussed and decided by that group on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Statute.

81. Hopeful that the resolution just adopted would give impetus to the early entry into force of the amendment, Pakistan thanked the Director General for his efforts in that regard and called on those Member States that had not done so to accept the amendment at the earliest opportunity. In the meantime, the arealess States should remain engaged with the appropriate regional groups to find consensus-based solutions.

82. Mr OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in explanation of vote, said his country had voted against the resolution not because it disagreed with the content but because the resolution would not give the 17 arealess States the equality that they were requesting. That would only be achieved by the entry into force of the Article VI amendment, which should be applied on a case-by-case basis, with each State being accepted into a regional group only once it had fulfilled the conditions set out in the amendment.

83. Mr MAZUMDAR (India), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country applauded Kazakhstan's dedication to restoring the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States — a principle that it valued highly — and appreciated that delegation's compilation of a list of all arealess Member States.

84. The Article VI amendment was not an immediate or feasible way to solve the problem. As demonstrated by Oman's admission to the Middle East and South Asia Group in 2010, the full ratification of the amendment was not a requirement for countries to join regional groups. His country was committed to participating actively in consultations aimed at finding an appropriate and timely solution to the issue.

85. Mr SKINNER-KLÉE ARENALES (Guatemala), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had voted in favour of the original text because it was based on the sovereign equality of States and because inclusion and broader participation legitimized the Agency's mission. It was regrettable that the normal procedures had been obstructed on the basis of the right to table amendments that had garnered no support whatsoever.

86. Mr FARHANE (Morocco), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country welcomed the resolution, which would restore the rights and sovereign equality of Member States. Although 25 years had passed since the approval of the Article VI amendment, only 64 countries had accepted it. Calling on those States that had not yet done so to accept the amendment, he suggested that the adoption of the

resolution be reflected in the Director General's biennial report on progress towards the entry into force of the amendment.

87. Mr USTINOV (Russian Federation), confirming that his country had voted in favour of the resolution as a whole, said that the Russian Federation had consistently supported the view that the Agency should step up its efforts to address the issue of States that did not belong to any regional group. His country appreciated the persistence shown by Kazakhstan, which had long been at the forefront of efforts to resolve the issue in a timely manner. In that regard, the adoption of the resolution and the distribution of document INFCIRC/1116, which contained a complete list of all the arealess States, represented substantive progress. The list showed that 17 Member States did not belong to any regional group, preventing them from serving on the Board and putting forward candidates for positions in the PMOs. That situation put some States in a privileged position compared to others and ran counter to Article IV.C of the Statute, which stated that the Agency was based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members.

88. The Russian Federation welcomed the fact that a Group of Friends of Arealess States had been established in order to discuss how the 17 States could be distributed among the regional groups. The Group of Friends had already held its first meeting, which had been a good starting point for addressing the issue. The Russian Federation had participated in that meeting and would continue to participate in the Group's work, optimistic that it had the potential to resolve the issue.

89. The Russian Federation supported the proposal made by the Chair of the Group's first meeting to prepare a list of the current composition of all regional groups, having repeatedly requested the Secretariat to do the same.

90. The vexing issue of the arealess States should be addressed without linking it to the amendment of Article VI of the Statute, to which it was only indirectly related. Although some countries believed that the issue could be resolved by amending Article VI, the prospect of any such amendment was uncertain. His country therefore urged Member States to show some flexibility on the issue so as not to hold 17 States hostage to the amendment process. The time had come to rectify the unjust situation.

91. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country's vote in favour of the resolution as a whole was without prejudice to General Conference resolution GC(43)/RES/19, which it did not consider to be superseded by the resolution just adopted.

92. Mr CISSE (Côte d'Ivoire), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country's support for the resolution was rooted in utmost respect for equity and for the fundamental principle of sovereign equality, as enshrined in international law.

93. Mr HIKIHARA (Japan), welcoming the adoption of the resolution and praising the stewardship of the delegation of Kazakhstan, said that the failure to reach consensus was regrettable. Japan strongly believed that all Member States should have an equal opportunity to take part in the Agency's decision making processes in accordance with the Statute and therefore encouraged those Member States that had not yet done so to accept the Article VI amendment to enable its entry into force. His country was committed to participating actively and constructively in the informal Group of Friends of Arealess States, among other forums, to reach an appropriate conclusion.

94. Mr UMAROV (Kazakhstan), deeply grateful to the Member States that had voted in favour of the resolution, said that the legal gap in the Statute and the continued failure of Member States to adjudicate the status of arealess States had been preventing the identified 17 Member States from exercising their legitimate right to fully participate in the Agency's decision making process.

95. The adoption of the resolution was a significant first step towards restoring justice, inclusivity and the rule of law in the Agency. Relying fully on the support of the Secretariat and Member States,

Kazakhstan would work meticulously with the arealess States to assign them to their preferred regional groups. He hoped that all Member States would work together to make the Agency a truly healthy organization where sovereign equality was preserved and observed.

26. Amendment of Article VI of the Statute

96. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft decision set out in document GC(67)/L.7 was adopted.

97. Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea), welcoming the adoption of the decision, thanked the Director General for his updated progress report on the entry into force of the amendment of Article VI of the Statute.

98. All three operational amendments to the Statute — which had respectively increased the number of seats on the Board from 23 to 25, to 34 and finally to 35 — related to Article VI. The first had entered into force in less than a year and half; the second, in less than three years, in 1973; and the third, in five years. The fourth amendment, adopted in 1999, would enable the current 50-year-old governance structure to adapt to the ever-increasing membership and to the changes in the world of atomic energy. Regrettably, 24 years later, it had still not entered into force.

99. Although, the amendment had essentially been designed for the benefit of Member States joining after 1973, 66 of the 78 States that had joined the Agency since that year, and 49 of the 50 that had joined since its adoption in 1999 — that is, 98% — had not accepted it.

100. The amendment was also of particular significance for the current General Conference as an indispensable element in restoring true sovereign equality. However, the efforts under way to allocate all arealess States to certain regional groups addressed only half the problem. As more countries joined the Agency, a failure to proportionately increase the Board's membership would reduce the chances of representation for Member States in the affected groups, thus inadvertently increasing inequality. The amendment guaranteed greater opportunities and better representation, making its entry into force all the more important. Member States must act quickly, before the amendment became out of touch with reality. Stronger and sustained outreach was needed.

101. In that regard, the Republic of Korea encouraged the Director General to continue his valuable work to encourage acceptance of the amendment by the 105 Member States that had not yet done so and requested that the Secretariat continue reminding Member States of the benefits of its entry into force.

102. UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/57/9 had encouraged all Member States to ratify the Article VI amendment — that included the arealess States. Calling for the restoration of sovereign equality without accepting the amendment was like a person requesting a new prescription when they already had the required medicine — all they need do was take it. The Republic of Korea encouraged the relevant Member States to quickly accept the amendment in order to remove the item from the agenda once and for all.

103. Ms ŽVOKELJ (Slovenia), recalling that the Article VI amendment consisted of the enlargement of the Board of Governors and the creation of a list allocating each Member State to a regional group, said that her country strongly supported its entry into force and appreciated the Director General's efforts to that end. Thanking the General Conference for adopting the decision, she said that Slovenia would work to implement the resolution on the restoration of the sovereign equality of Member States in the Agency until the amendment entered into force.

27. Personnel

104. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.9 was adopted.

105. The PRESIDENT thanked the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Committee of the Whole for the work done thus far.

18. Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (GC(67)/20; GC(67)/L.6 and Add.1 and 2)

106. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada), introducing the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.6 and Add.1 and 2, said that, following its circulation, the draft resolution was being presented on behalf of 67 Member States, which was more than the previous year.

107. In negotiating the draft resolution, the DPRKCore Group had sought to build on the text contained in General Conference resolution GC(66)/RES/11, which had been adopted by consensus in 2022. As in preceding years, the Core Group had focused on factual revisions consistent with the Director General's latest report, which made it clear that the DPRK's nuclear activities remained a cause for serious concern and a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It was therefore imperative for the General Conference to send the DPRK a strong and united message that it must halt all such activities, that it could not have the status of a nuclear-weapon State under the NPT, and that it must fully comply with its obligations.

108. In drafting the text, the Core Group had engaged in a constructive process aimed at achieving consensus, as had been the case for many years. The Group had sought to respond to the previous concerns of delegations by circulating an early working draft among regional groups, listening carefully to the feedback received and incorporating it in a fact-based and balanced manner. He thanked delegations for their constructive approach.

109. The year 2023 marked the 30th anniversary since the DPRK's non-compliance with its safeguards obligations was first substantively discussed within the Agency. Over the preceding three decades, the General Conference had repeatedly sent a unified message regarding the importance of the Agency's work in that area. Calling once again on the DPRK to cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of Agency safeguards, Canada commended the impartial efforts of the Director General and of the Secretariat on the issue, including their continued reporting and enhanced readiness activities.

110. Expressing sincere appreciation on behalf of the Core Group to all delegations that supported the draft resolution, including through their co-sponsorship, his country called for its adoption by consensus.

111. Mr USTINOV (Russian Federation) said that his country had always favoured a political and diplomatic solution to the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula. Unfortunately, the incessant and escalatory rhetoric of the USA and its allies meant that the international community was moving further and further away from that important goal. The USA had repeatedly affirmed its readiness to resume dialogue with the DPRK but had not taken any practical steps in that regard, casting doubt on the sincerity of its statements. The USA's true intentions had become apparent in April 2023 with the signing of the Washington Declaration with the Republic of Korea: the USA was once again cosying up

to a non-nuclear-weapon State under the NPT and giving it an unprecedented role in the USA's strategic planning and decision making.

112. The launch of a joint USA–Republic of Korea nuclear consultative group and two visits by United States nuclear submarines to ports in the Republic of Korea demonstrated that the two countries were making no secret of the fact that their unconventional nuclear cooperation was intended to target the DPRK. Such recklessness would have a very negative impact on regional security and would undermine the entire architecture of UN Security Council resolutions aimed at finding a diplomatic solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Unlike the USA and its allies, the DPRK had refrained from genuinely aggressive actions in the nuclear sphere. That had been confirmed by the Director General's annual report on the application of safeguards in the DPRK set out in document GC(67)/20, which indicated unambiguously that no significant actions had been taken by the DPRK to develop its nuclear programme during the reporting period.

113. The Russian Federation had consistently expressed the view that dialogue with the DPRK must be based on genuine incentives to engage that country in negotiations, and not on threats and escalation. In that regard, the draft resolution before the General Conference was unhelpful: the ritual of listing endless grievances against the DPRK was simply counterproductive. It was worth considering what would actually be achieved by adopting the resolution: would it help to resolve the situation on the Korean Peninsula, taking account of the situation on the ground? The answer was unequivocally 'no'. The draft resolution had been foisted on the Agency by the countries concerned, which wanted to tailor it to suit their foreign policies. Moreover, it contained a number of accusatory passages, many of which were completely irrelevant to the Agency's mandate, and every year the accusations against the DPRK mounted. The sole purpose of those who tabled the resolution was to point the finger at the DPRK in an attempt to obscure the fact that a diplomatic solution was being blocked by none other than the USA. His country was no longer willing to condone that tired approach. While not seeking to derail any consensus on the resolution, the Russian Federation was distancing itself from it, deeming it to be useless and even harmful.

114. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.6.

115. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.