

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the Twelfth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Friday, 29 September 2023, at 11.15 p.m.

President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(67)/INF/6

¹ GC(67)/24

Abbreviations used in this record

CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
G-77	Group of 77
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction

– General remarks

1. The PRESIDENT said that the Committee of the Whole required more time to complete its work and she proposed that the clock be stopped.
2. It was so decided.

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

3. Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea), speaking also on behalf of Japan and the USA, said that the three countries were united in their steadfast commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.
4. The adoption at the preceding meeting, by consensus, of the resolution on the implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the DPRK sustained an encouraging tradition that had prevailed over most of the 30 years since the resolution had first been introduced in 1993, when the Board of Governors had found the DPRK to be in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement. The General Conference's adoption of the 31st such annual resolution manifested the deeply troubling reality that the DPRK's nuclear programme had continued to develop over the preceding three decades.
5. The resolution clearly demonstrated that the DPRK's ongoing nuclear programme should be a cause for serious and universal concern. The three countries therefore strongly urged the DPRK to fully comply with all its obligations under relevant UN Security Council resolutions; to take concrete steps towards abandoning all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner; and to return at an early date to, and fully comply with, the NPT and Agency safeguards.
6. As clearly documented in the Director General's report set out in document GC(67)/20, the DPRK had continued its unlawful nuclear programme, from the production of fissile material to weaponization. It was the only country to have conducted nuclear explosive tests in the 21st century and was poised to conduct yet another. Furthermore, it had engaged in irresponsible rhetoric regarding its plans to exponentially increase its nuclear arsenal, including tactical nuclear weapons.
7. The DPRK's nuclear activities and other related provocations constituted substantive threats to the region and beyond. It was therefore imperative that all Member States fully, comprehensively and immediately implement all relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including the ban on the transfer of all arms and related material to and from the DPRK. Member States should send a clear signal that the international community could not and would not tolerate the DPRK's unlawful and irresponsible nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes.

8. Having recently gathered at Camp David, USA, and reaffirmed their commitment to the peace and prosperity of the Korean Peninsula and the Indo-Pacific region, the three countries remained committed to dialogue with the DPRK with no preconditions, and urged it to cease all provocations and destabilizing actions, to return to dialogue and to focus its resources on improving the well-being of its people.

9. Appreciative of the continued efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat to monitor developments with respect to the DPRK's nuclear programme, the three countries expressed strong support for the Agency's continued work to maintain and enhance its readiness to carry out monitoring and verification activities in the DPRK, if called upon to do so.

10. He expressed sincere gratitude to the 67 co-sponsors of the resolution and the Member States that had joined the consensus and also thanked the members of the DPRK Core Group, in particular the Canadian delegation for its leadership throughout the drafting process.

11. Ms HWANG (Australia), commending the Canadian delegation on its tireless work and leadership in steering the DPRK Core Group, thanked all the co-sponsors and noted the growing support for the resolution.

12. Australia condemned in the strongest terms the DPRK's ongoing pursuit of WMDs and their delivery systems. The DPRK's continued advancement of its illegal nuclear weapons programme, including long-range missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons, threatened all countries. Moreover, its actions posed a grave threat to international peace and security and a serious challenge to international non-proliferation efforts. Australia urged the country to refrain from further nuclear explosive tests and to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.

13. The DPRK's illegal and destabilizing actions necessitated a strong and united response by the international community. UN Security Council sanctions against the DPRK should therefore be implemented fully by all countries.

14. The text of the resolution represented the DPRK Core Group's best efforts to ensure that the General Conference adopted a consensus text that reflected factual updates and sent a firm, united message to the DPRK that its actions would never be accepted or normalized, and that the international community would continue to call out its violations and escalatory acts.

15. Mr LI Song (China) said that the Korean Peninsula issue was essentially a political and security matter rooted in the aftermath of the Cold War and the absence of a peace mechanism. The crux of the problem lay in the lack of due attention paid to the DPRK's legitimate and reasonable concerns. In recent years, certain countries had dramatically increased their military presence on and around the Korean Peninsula, strengthened so-called 'extended deterrence' measures and conducted provocative military exercises, seriously undermining strategic security interests on the Peninsula and in neighbouring countries. Such practices were imbued with a Cold War mindset, promoted confrontation, exacerbated tensions, and ran counter to the goal of denuclearizing the Peninsula and maintaining peace and stability there.

16. The current situation on the Korean Peninsula was complex and sensitive, making it all the more important for the parties to remain calm, exercise restraint and refrain from any action that would undermine peace and stability or discourage denuclearization. China stood ready to work with the parties concerned and the international community and promote a political settlement to achieve long term peace and stability in north-east Asia using a phased, dual-track, step-by-step process.

29. Report on contributions pledged to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2024 (GC(67)/21/Rev.1)

17. The PRESIDENT said that document GC(67)/21/Rev.1 contained details of pledges of the TCF contributions for 2024 that governments had made to the Director General by 5 p.m. on 28 September 2023.

18. The number of Member States that had pledged was higher than the number at the same time the previous year. Since the document had been sent for printing, eight more Member States had communicated pledges: Angola (€9600); Argentina (€664 320); Côte d'Ivoire (€20 160); Honduras (€10 000); Kenya (€27 840); Kuwait (€216 000); Mozambique (€3840); and Vanuatu (€960). That brought the total amount pledged by the end of the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference to €37 930 383, representing pledges from 92 Member States and accounting for 39.5% of the TCF target for 2024. The 92 Member States that had pledged represented 52% of Member States.

19. The percentage of the TCF target pledged by the end of the sixty-seventh regular session was the highest percentage at any General Conference. She urged all delegations that had not yet done so to make their 2024 pledges and pay their contributions in full at the earliest opportunity, to enable the Secretariat to submit to the Technical Assistance and Cooperation Committee in November 2023 a draft TC programme and budget for 2024 based on the level of pledges received, and then to implement the approved programme without hindrance or uncertainty.

20. The PRESIDENT proposed that the Conference suspend its meeting and resume once the Committee of the Whole had concluded its deliberations on all pending issues.

21. Mr SKINNER-KLÉE ARENALES (Guatemala) said that, year after year, the proceedings were held to ransom on account of one delegation. Noting that all other delegations had been working in good faith to complete the Conference's business, he appealed to the President to set a time limit on the deliberations of the Committee of the Whole.

22. The PRESIDENT, acknowledging the hard work done so far and the lateness of the hour, urged all delegations to persevere for the successful conclusion of the Conference. She would encourage the Committee to swiftly conclude its work.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 p.m. and resumed at 2.30 a.m.

– Oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole

23. The PRESIDENT, expressing her appreciation to all delegations for their patience and for enabling the General Conference to proceed with intensive deliberations, said that the Agency was a technical organization to which Member States attached great importance and its activities were of great benefit and interest to all Member States. She believed that the intensive consultations held in the preceding hours — involving ambassadors and technical experts — bore testimony to the importance that countries attached to the Agency's activities, and their keenness to adopt resolutions on those activities by consensus.

24. Mr CSERVENY (Hungary), Chair of the Committee of the Whole, reported on the outcome of the Committee's deliberations on agenda items 13, 14 and 17.

25. Under item 13, “Nuclear and radiation safety”, the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.12/Rev.3.

26. Under item 14, “Nuclear security”, the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.11/Rev.2.

27. Under item 17, “Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards”, the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.8/Rev.2.

28. Appreciative of the confidence shown by Member States in electing him as Chair, he thanked his able Vice-Chairs and all the coordinators of draft resolutions. He also thanked the Committee members for their flexibility and cooperation, and the Secretariat for its support.

29. The PRESIDENT thanked the Chair for his report and for efficiently conducting the work of the Committee.

13. Nuclear and radiation safety

30. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.12/Rev.3 was adopted.

31. Ms ECKEY (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Iceland and supported by Mr LODDING (Sweden), said that, although they deemed ‘gender equality’ the correct term, they had compromised on including ‘gender balance’ in paragraph 114 of the resolution to achieve consensus.

32. Mr BAGAPORO (Philippines), highlighting his country’s advocacy for gender equality in various multilateral forums, said that the resolution had fallen short of his delegation’s expectations. Despite its preference to retain the original agreed wording on gender equality in paragraph 114, the Philippines had joined the consensus on the resolution in the spirit of compromise. His country hoped for more constructive discussions on gender equality in the future.

33. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada), commending the assiduous work done to achieve consensus on the resolution, said that his country aligned itself with the previous comments and emphasized the critical importance of gender equality.

34. Ms GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ (Costa Rica), agreeing with previous speakers, said that her country did not welcome the inclusion in the resolution of the term ‘gender balance’, which was not the same as gender equality. Although Costa Rica had joined the consensus in recognition of the immense efforts to reach it, the consultation process should have been more open and transparent.

35. Mr O’LEARY (Ireland), Ms HOURNAU-POUËZAT (France), Ms MONTERRUBIO VILLAR (Spain), Ms VASKUNLAHTI (Finland), Ms FREIJE MURILLO (Honduras), Mr OJEDA VIGLIONE (Uruguay), Ms HOLGATE (United States of America) and Mr SCHMIDT-BREMME (Germany) said that they associated themselves with the remarks made by previous speakers regarding gender equality.

36. Mr GÓMEZ OPORTO (Chile) said that his country defended transparent, democratic and inclusive multilateralism above all. Chile believed firmly in the difference between gender equality and gender balance. In paragraph 114 of the resolution just adopted, ‘gender equality’ was the correct term, as used in previous years. Nevertheless, exercising its characteristic flexibility, his delegation had joined the consensus.

37. Mr GLENDER RIVAS (Mexico), underscoring his country's belief in gender equality, said that consensus should leave all parties satisfied with the outcome. The adopted wording, however, had failed to deliver on that score.
38. Mr BIGGS (Australia), aligning with the preceding speakers, said that 'gender equality' was the terminology of UN institutions and instruments.
39. Mr PASCHALIS (South Africa), expressing a preference for the term 'gender equality', said that his delegation shared the concerns expressed regarding the consultation process, which had led to the existing outcome.
40. Ms GIL (Colombia) said that her country regretted the inclusion of the term 'gender balance' in the resolution.
41. Mr MONTI (Italy), also expressing regret, said that 'gender equality' was the only appropriate term in the context of paragraph 114.
42. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran), underlining the delicacy of the issue, said that any concept introduced into a sensitive document must be relevant to the paragraph where it appeared. In Iran's view, the reference to gender equality was not relevant to paragraph 114. Moreover, cultural diversity should be respected during discussions to facilitate smooth interactions and understanding among Member States and avoid deadlocks.
43. Expressing surprise at the opposition to the inclusion of 'gender balance', he noted that Iran too was not completely satisfied with the wording of the resolution, as it conflicted with his country's culture. His delegation had compromised, however, to respect the aspirations of others.
44. Mr MARTINSEN (Argentina), while expressing his country's preference for the concept of gender equality, said that the diligence and professionalism displayed by colleagues in crafting the text at such a late hour deserved recognition.
45. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), echoing the comments made by Argentina, noted that the resolution was the outcome of long discussions and negotiations. It included both the words 'equality' and 'balance', reflecting the discussions held, and had rightly been adopted by consensus.

14. Nuclear security

46. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.11/Rev.2 was adopted.

17. Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards

47. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/COM.5/L.8/Rev.2 was adopted.
48. Ms GOPINATH (India) said that her country strongly believed that strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards needed to be accorded priority.

Although India strongly supported the resolution as a whole and had joined the consensus, it hoped that, regarding paragraph 8, Agency safeguards would be applied in accordance with Member States' differentiated safeguards obligations.

49. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), speaking on paragraph 8 of the resolution, and on Agency safeguards more broadly, said that his country supported the Agency's activities in all areas of its mandate, in accordance with the Statute. That support was evident from Pakistan's full implementation of its safeguards obligations in all its civil and nuclear facilities, and from its cooperation with the Agency.

50. His country believed that the role of safeguards was to facilitate and provide the framework for cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, without any discrimination and unaffected by strategic or political considerations. The Statute took into account the differentiated nature of Member States' safeguards obligations and did not accord universality to any particular model, such as the CSA.

51. It was Pakistan's understanding that paragraph 8 must be read together with the chapeau, which stipulated that the operative paragraphs were to be implemented consistent with the respective safeguards undertakings of Member States. Accordingly, Pakistan considered paragraph 8 to be applicable only to those States that had undertaken to sign a CSA.

52. The PRESIDENT said that all the items referred to the Committee of the Whole had now been acted upon. She thanked delegates for their cooperation and again expressed her sincere appreciation to the Chair of the Committee of the Whole for his skilful guidance of the Committee's deliberations, as well as to the Vice-Chairs.

— **Closing of the session**

53. The PRESIDENT said that the current session of the General Conference had been attended — in person and in a virtual manner — by high level representatives of Member States, including one President, two Vice-Presidents, two Deputy Prime Ministers and 57 ministers. During the general debate, 142 speakers had taken the floor. A total of 111 side events had taken place.

54. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that the Group congratulated the President on her excellent leadership and thanked the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Committee of the Whole, as well as the Secretariat for its invaluable organizational support.

55. All seven of the draft resolutions coordinated by the Group had been tabled and considered by the Committee in a timely and smooth manner. Their co-sponsorship by many countries and adoption by the Conference showed Member States' commitment and good spirit of cooperation.

56. Ms MONTERRUBIO VILLAR (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed sincere thanks to the President for her able stewardship of the General Conference. The European Union also commended the Chair of the Committee of the Whole on his tireless efforts to reach consensus on technical resolutions and expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for supporting the Conference.

57. The session had resulted in tangible outcomes in different areas of the Agency's mandate and had reaffirmed the collective support for the work carried out by the Director General and his staff. The European Union expressed its congratulations and strong support for the Director General as he embarked on his second term at the helm of the Agency.

58. The European Union welcomed the first ever General Conference resolution on nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, which sent an important message of support for the Agency's crucial and courageous work there. The Russian Federation must now take the necessary action to implement the resolution, withdraw from Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP and return its control to the competent Ukrainian authorities.

59. The European Union congratulated all the countries elected to the Board and looked forward to close and constructive cooperation with them. Remaining strongly committed to strengthening the Agency's safeguards system and to global nuclear safety and security, the European Union would continue to promote the universalization of the additional protocol and the full and effective implementation of international nuclear safety and security conventions.

60. Member States must defend the increasingly strained rules-based international order. Expressing deep concern at the growing challenges affecting multilateral cooperation, the European Union remained attached to the Vienna spirit of consensus but did not want it to become an abusive tool.

61. In conclusion, the European Union thanked all delegations that had worked for the successful outcome of the General Conference, which represented a significant contribution towards the strong, capable and independent Agency that all Member States wanted to see.

62. Mr ULYANOV (Russian Federation), responding to the comments just made regarding his country, said that the European Union had unfortunately strayed from realpolitik into propagandistic activities.

63. Mr MOFADAL EL NOUR (Sudan) said that the successful conclusion of the General Conference in the small hours of the morning was a cause for celebration.

64. The PRESIDENT said that it had been an honour and privilege, for herself and her country, to serve as President of the General Conference. She expressed her sincere appreciation to all participants for their cooperation, assistance and constructive spirit. The spirit of Vienna had been kept alive.

65. She also thanked the Director General and the Agency's able and dedicated staff — including the interpreters, translators, précis-writers, conference officers, general services staff and Secretariat of the Policy-Making Organs — for their valuable support. She further thanked the Austrian authorities and the city of Vienna for their hospitality.

66. Lastly, in accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure, she invited the Conference to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.

67. The PRESIDENT declared the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference closed.

The meeting rose at 3.20 a.m.