

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the First Meeting

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President: Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹	Paragraphs
– Opening of the session	1–4
1 Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee	5–23
4 Arrangements for the Conference	24–25
(a) Adoption of the agenda and allocation of items for initial discussion	24–25
2 Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations	26
3 Statement by the Director General	27–50
5 Approval of the Appointment of the Director General	51–68
6 Contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2024	69–71
7 General debate and Annual Report for 2022	72–177

¹ GC(67)/24

Contents (continued)

	Paragraphs
Statements by the delegates of:	
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	72–78
Islamic Republic of Iran	79–87
Saudi Arabia	88–97
United States of America	98–105
Russian Federation	106–113
China	114–120
Kazakhstan	121–129
Spain (European Union)	130–144
Austria	145–149
Japan	150–160
France	161–170
Hungary	171–177

Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
AEOI	Atomic Energy Organization of Iran
ALPS	Advanced Liquid Processing System
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEANTOM	ASEAN Network of Nuclear Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
COP	Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EPR	emergency preparedness and response
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
G7	Group of Seven
GDP	gross domestic product
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
HEU	high enriched uranium
ICONS	International Conference on Nuclear Security
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LEU	low enriched uranium
MESA	Middle East and South Asia Group
MW	Megawatt
New START	Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
NHSI	Nuclear Harmonization and Standardization Initiative
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
NSF	Nuclear Security Fund
NUTEC Plastics	Nuclear Technology for controlling Plastic Pollution
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
PUI	Peaceful Uses Initiative
Rostekhnadzor	Federal Environmental, Industrial and Nuclear Supervision Service of the Russian Federation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMRs	small and medium sized or modular reactors
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
TEPCO	Tokyo Electric Power Company
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction
ZODIAC	Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action

– Opening of the session

1. The DIRECTOR GENERAL declared the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference open.
2. In accordance with Rule 33 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference — and in the absence of the delegate of Italy, who had presided over the sixty-sixth session — he said that he would, in his capacity as Director General, preside over the sixty-seventh session until a President had been elected.
3. On behalf of all delegates, he expressed his sincere appreciation to Mr Cortese of Italy for the skilful and professional manner in which he had presided over the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference and wished him well in his future endeavours.
4. In accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure, he invited delegates to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and stood in silence for one minute.

1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee

5. The DIRECTOR GENERAL invited nominations for the office of President of the Conference.
6. Mr BIGGS (Australia), speaking on behalf of the South East Asia and the Pacific Group, proposed Ms Mangklatanakul (Thailand).
7. Ms Mangklatanakul (Thailand) was elected President by acclamation.
8. The DIRECTOR GENERAL congratulated Ms Mangklatanakul on her election and wished her a successful conference.

Ms Mangklatanakul (Thailand) took the Chair.

9. The PRESIDENT expressed her gratitude and sense of honour at the trust bestowed on her. Proud to be only the sixth woman to have been elected to the esteemed role of President of the General Conference since the Agency's establishment in 1957, she expressed her commitment to bringing the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference to a successful conclusion, with the support and cooperation of delegates.
10. She thanked the South East Asia and the Pacific Group, in particular its Chair, for their support and encouragement, and conveyed her deep appreciation to her predecessor for his successful stewardship of the regular and special sessions of the General Conference during the previous year. She commended the Director General on his exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to steering the Agency's work. She also commended the Agency's staff on their valuable work and continuing support to Member States.
11. The Agency played a pivotal role in accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world, as enshrined in the Statute. Over the past 67 years,

the Agency had been remarkably successful in fostering cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, ensuring nuclear safety, security and safeguards and upholding the norms of nuclear non-proliferation. It continued to provide the impetus for cooperation, diplomacy and innovation to secure a safer and more sustainable future for all.

12. In celebrating the Agency's achievements, it was important to remember that Member States were the driving force in shaping its future, and that the responsibility for ensuring that it remained effective and responsive to emerging needs and challenges was a shared one. Member States should strive to ensure that the Agency's motto 'Atoms for Peace and Development' remained relevant and that the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy were long lasting.

13. The purpose of the sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference was to deliberate the Agency's future direction. The issues on the agenda ranged from the Agency's routine operations for the coming year, the enhancement of the technical aspects of its work, and situations that were of critical importance to the Agency. Acknowledging that a range of views would be expressed, she said that differences of opinion should not be seen as obstacles; rather, they provided an opportunity to adopt the 'Vienna spirit' and achieve balanced and consensual outcomes through diplomacy.

14. Acknowledging that the task would not be easy, she pledged to serve the General Conference with transparency, accountability and inclusivity and to do her utmost to address delegates' questions and concerns. It was her fervent hope that all Member States would adopt a constructive approach and engage in meaningful dialogue, and she looked forward to working closely with them to ensure that the sixty-seventh regular session of the Conference could be brought to a successful and timely conclusion.

15. Turning to procedural matters, she said that the Conference was required under Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure to elect eight Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and six additional members of the General Committee to constitute a General Committee of 15, which she would chair. However, in the current year, she understood that the General Committee would be composed of 16 members, consisting of eight Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and six additional members, so that the South East Asia and the Pacific Group, in addition to providing the President of the Conference, could also have a Vice-President That would involve suspension of Rules 34 and 40 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, as had been done in comparable situations in the past.

16. The President's proposals were accepted.

17. The PRESIDENT, noting that the Middle East and South Asia Group (MESA) had not yet reached agreement on its candidate to serve as Vice-President, suggested proceeding with the election of the candidates whose names were already known. She therefore proposed that the delegates of Australia, China, Colombia, France, Kenya, the Russian Federation and the United States of America be elected as Vice-Presidents, that Mr Cserveny of Hungary be elected as Chair of the Committee of the Whole, and that the delegates of Canada, Denmark, Honduras, Poland, the Sudan and the United Arab Emirates be elected as additional members of the General Committee.

18. The President's proposals were accepted.

19. Mr MAZUMDAR (India), speaking on behalf of MESA, said that the Group had received one candidature for the position of Vice-President of the General Conference. Despite the group's efforts, however, it had not been able to reach a consensus in that regard.

20. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) said that his country appreciated the MESA Chair's efforts to try to reach consensus on its candidacy for Vice-President of the sixty-seventh session of the General Conference, and the support and confidence shown to Yemen by the rest of the MESA members. Unfortunately, one State had objected to Yemen's nomination, breaking that consensus, as it

had done previously. Yemen hoped that Member States would support its candidacy by taking the necessary action in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference and would spare no effort in serving them during the session to achieve common goals.

21. The PRESIDENT proposed that the delegate of Yemen be elected as Vice-President of the General Conference.

22. The President's proposal was accepted.

23. The PRESIDENT congratulated the Vice-Presidents, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole and the additional members of the General Committee on their election.

4. Arrangements for the Conference

(GC(67)/INF/7, GC(67)/INF/8 and GC(67)/INF/9)

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

24. The PRESIDENT proposed that, before receiving the General Committee's recommendation on the provisional agenda, the General Conference should suspend Rule 42 of its Rules of Procedure, in line with past practice, and proceed with consideration of items 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 — in that order — so as not to delay the start of the regular session.

25. It was so decided.

2. Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations

26. Ms WALY (Director General, United Nations Office at Vienna) read out the following message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

“It is a pleasure to send greetings to everyone participating in the General Conference of the IAEA.

“In these times of turmoil and tension, the IAEA's role as a bulwark against nuclear proliferation and the driver of international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is more critical than ever before.

“In Ukraine, the war continues to pose a grave risk to the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhya NPP. I fully support the IAEA's five principles for protecting the Zaporizhzhya plant and I applaud the courageous service of IAEA personnel stationed at the plant. The United Nations will continue to do all it can to ensure the safe rotation of experts operating there and at other nuclear facilities in Ukraine.

“In Iran, the IAEA continues its essential role in impartially and expertly monitoring the implementation of the JCPOA, while seeking sustainable solutions to the outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme. The JCPOA remains vital to the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and to regional and international security.

“Across the world, the IAEA's TC programme supports over 140 Member States, demonstrating how nuclear science and technology can improve lives and catalyse progress on the SDGs.

“The IAEA is an indispensable partner in our collective efforts to secure a better future for all, from fighting diseases and improving food, water and energy security to mitigating and adapting to climate change and preventing the next pandemic.

“I look forward to deepening our cooperation on all these fronts and I wish you a successful General Conference. Thank you.”

3. Statement by the Director General

27. The DIRECTOR GENERAL welcomed Cabo Verde and The Gambia as new Member States, bringing the total number to 177.

28. He said that, over the past year, the Agency’s work had continued to be dominated by major global challenges. Four years previously, at the start of his first term as Director General, no one could have imagined that within only a few months the world would be facing a global pandemic on a scale not seen for a century. War in Europe posed a serious and unprecedented threat to the security of a major nuclear power programme. Those two events — which were tragedies in and of themselves — had increased the difficulty and urgency of tackling the pressing calamity of climate change and the very serious challenges of poverty, disease and hunger, and food, water and energy insecurity. He was humbled and privileged to lead an institution with such a unique mandate.

29. Seventy years after US President Dwight Eisenhower had delivered his famous speech to the UN General Assembly setting out his vision of ‘Atoms for Peace’, the Agency had become the operational instrument for charting that novel course, and the concept had become an integral part of the Agency’s efforts to foster international peace and security and promote sustainable development.

30. As Director General, he had always been convinced of the formidable potential of the Agency as an instrument for peace, stability and progress, and the delivery of its programme since then was the clearest illustration of the approach that he had taken.

31. With regard to cancer, he said that the Agency continued to assist Member States to tackle a growing global crisis that had gone under the radar for too long. In his first year as Director General, 10 million people had died of the disease and there had been 19 million new cases; by 2040, the number of new cases was expected to rise to 30 million. If the current trend continued, far too many people would die of cancer in the coming decades, because the burden of disease was falling disproportionately on those in low and middle income countries. Over 70% of the African population had no access to radiotherapy services, and over 20 African countries lacked basic radiotherapy equipment. That was why the Agency, with the support of African Heads of State and WHO, had launched the Rays of Hope initiative at the 2022 African Union Summit. The initiative brought together all stakeholders — including Member States, development banks and the private sector — to address the situation. In all, 67 Member States had already requested assistance under the initiative; to date, it had focused on 7 African countries, but it continued to expand, and in the coming months, funds would be allocated for activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. He was proud that the Agency had raised over €42 million for an initiative that had not existed just a few years previously.

32. The COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the urgency of applying nuclear techniques in order to mitigate its consequences. In that context, the Agency had launched the ZODIAC initiative, which strengthened Member States’ preparedness and capacity to respond swiftly to zoonotic disease outbreaks. Working in partnership with WHO, the FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health, the Agency had delivered training in almost one hundred countries.

33. Noting that the environment was another area in which nuclear techniques and applications played a key role, he said that the Agency had launched NUTEC Plastics in order to increase Member States' capacity to use nuclear isotopic techniques to study marine microplastics. Scientists at the Marine Environment Laboratories in Monaco were honing powerful and accurate nuclear scientific tools to better understand the impact of nanomaterials that entered the marine and human food chains.

34. At the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York, the Agency had launched the Global Water Analysis Laboratory Network to help Member States address water scarcity and quality and hydrological extremes — challenges that were exacerbated by climate change. In the area of food security, the Agency continued to work closely with the FAO through the Joint Centre on initiatives to improve access to nutritious foods and address food security effectively; the Agency would shortly be making several important announcements in that regard.

35. The TC programme continued to be a success. As requested by the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference, he was planning to organize an IAEA ministerial conference on nuclear science, technology and applications and the technical cooperation programme in 2024, and was pleased to announce that the Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana, Kwaku Afriyie, and the Minister of Climate and the Environment of Finland, Kai Mykkänen, would be sharing the presidency of that important event.

36. Recalling that one of his first overseas trips as Director General had been to the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25), he said that he was pleased that the Agency had continued to be present at subsequent sessions of the Conference of the Parties in Glasgow and Sharm El Sheikh. Later in 2023, the Agency would be present at the nuclear pavilion of COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, and would work with Member States and nuclear energy users in order to highlight the role of nuclear energy in mitigating climate change. At the International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in the 21st Century, held in Washington in 2022, many States — both those with established nuclear power programmes and newcomer countries — had affirmed their will to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

37. Until recently, the Agency had not been sufficiently vocal about the benefits of nuclear power. Although polls showed that public opinion was shifting in favour of nuclear energy, countries still needed to engage stakeholders openly and proactively in their nuclear power programmes. Given the need for concerted efforts and international action in that regard, the Agency was organizing a nuclear energy summit to be held in the spring of 2024. Over 400 nuclear reactors were operational, accounting for around 10% of installed capacity, and that figure was set to increase. Moreover, the Agency would be helping countries to access new nuclear technologies such as SMRs.

38. Nuclear fusion held great promise as a source of abundant energy in the future. Four years previously, the Agency had focused exclusively on the science of nuclear fusion, but it was now expanding its activities with a view to accelerating the development and deployment of fusion energy systems. He invited Member States to take stock of the considerable progress on fusion energy at the 2023 IAEA Fusion Energy Conference, to be held in London in November 2023. The IAEA World Fusion Outlook, a new publication to update the public about developments in nuclear fusion, would be launched at the conference.

39. Climate change had shown that humanity must take responsibility for the long term well-being of the planet and its people. The nuclear field, with the Agency at its centre, had shown that it took that responsibility very seriously, including by taking tangible steps to ensure the safe storage of radioactive waste, designing the commissioning of NPPs that would be in service for the best part of the century and developing a mindset of continuous learning in order to foster a global culture of nuclear safety and security.

40. Thanks to the nuclear field's commitment to nuclear safety and the Agency's role in that regard, nuclear energy was safer than ever before — indeed, it was safer than almost any other energy source. Noting that 2023 marked the 65th anniversary of the IAEA Safety Standards, he said that the Agency continued to apply them while fulfilling its statutory mandate and utilizing its scientific knowledge and global reach to help to protect the environment from the consequences of a nuclear accident.

41. Such efforts were particularly visible in Japan, where the controlled discharge of treated water from Fukushima Daiichi NPP had begun in August 2023. The Agency, which had a permanent presence at the site, would continue to conduct independent monitoring, sampling and evaluation of the discharge for decades to come — and until the last drop of water had been discharged — to ensure that no harm arose from the operation.

42. With regard to the situation in Ukraine, he recalled that, one year previously, he had reported to the sixty-sixth regular session of the General Conference that the Agency had recently established an ongoing presence at Zaporizhzhya NPP. To date, 53 missions comprising a total of over 100 Agency staff had been deployed at Ukraine's five nuclear sites, and the Agency would continue to maintain a presence there. Over the past year, 10 rotations of Agency safety experts had crossed the front lines of war to access the plant, and they continued to work in a situation that remained extremely fragile.

43. Nuclear security was an important domain in which the Agency had responded to demand among Member States for more support and increasingly sophisticated training. He was happy to announce that construction of the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre at Seibersdorf had been completed. As the first international centre of excellence for nuclear security, it would enable Member States to benefit from training, capacity building and cooperation like never before.

44. Since assuming office in 2019, he had been committed to strengthening the legal framework underpinning the continued verification of the peaceful uses of nuclear material. He was therefore pleased to report that, during his first term, the number of States with safeguards agreements in force had increased from 184 to 190, while the number with additional protocols had increased from 136 to 141. Rescinding the SQP — which allowed countries with very small amounts of nuclear material to have a reduced inspection regime — continued to be a very important area of the Agency's work. All Member States should be up to date in that regard.

45. Turning to the Agency's verification activities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, he said that he had continued to report to the Board on Iran's NPT safeguards agreement and on the verification and monitoring activities undertaken in light of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015). Regrettably, significant safeguards issues remained outstanding after a number of years, and there had been a lack of progress in implementing the activities set out in the latest joint statement by the Agency and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in March 2023. He personally remained actively engaged and ready to work with Iran on those issues and other matters related to the de facto suspension of the JCPOA. Only full cooperation by Iran, with tangible results, would provide credible assurances as to the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

46. As part of ongoing efforts to monitor the DPRK's nuclear programme, the Agency had observed activities at several sites consistent with that country's advancement of its illegal nuclear programme, in clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The Agency would continue to provide updates on the situation and hoped to re-engage with the DPRK.

47. It was important to recognize that the nuclear field was only as good as the people working in it. The invisible barriers to women's participation were real and harmful, especially given the shortage of skilled professionals in the nuclear sector. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme continued to expand, and over 500 women had now participated in it — a remarkable achievement given that the programme had existed for less than three years. Acknowledging that there was more to be done,

he said that, earlier in 2023, he had launched the Lise Meitner Programme, named after the prominent Austrian-Swedish physicist who had discovered nuclear fission. The aim of the programme was to level the playing field for women working in the nuclear field by giving them opportunities to advance their professional careers. He was pleased that steady progress had been made in maximizing the Agency's talent pool and creating conditions conducive to gender equality: at the start of his tenure, less than 30% of the Secretariat's staff serving in the Professional or higher categories were women, but that figure continued to rise and currently stood at 43%.

48. The Agency's Programme and Budget for the period 2024–2025 sought to balance the financial constraints of Member States against demand for the Agency's services. Unfortunately, the contributions of some Member States were overdue. He called on all Member States to pay their contributions in full and on time so as not to jeopardize the Agency's work.

49. Each year, the General Conference provided him with an opportunity to meet with delegates, listen to their concerns and support the Agency's mandate and the mission of 'Atoms for Peace and Development'. He expressed his gratitude to delegates for their cooperation, and to the Agency's exemplary host country of Austria, which made every effort to enable the Agency's work. He also extended his deepest gratitude to Monaco for its steadfast support over the past 25 years in hosting the Marine Environment Laboratories. He commended the Agency's staff for their unwavering commitment to supporting Member States.

50. In closing, he said that, 70 years after President Eisenhower's famous speech, the dream of 'Atoms for Peace' — which had evolved into the Agency's mission of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' — lived on. It was up to the Agency and Member States to make that dream a reality.

5. Approval of the appointment of the Director General (GC(67)/8)

51. The PRESIDENT said that, pursuant to Article VII.A of the Statute, in March 2023, the Board of Governors had decided to appoint Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi to serve as Director General of the Agency for a term of four years, from 3 December 2023 to 2 December 2027, and had requested the General Conference to approve that appointment by adopting the draft resolution contained in document GC(67)/8.

52. She took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(67)/8.

53. It was so decided and the Conference approved the appointment of Mr Grossi to the post of Director General by acclamation.

At the invitation of the President, Mr Grossi joined her at the lectern.

54. The PRESIDENT congratulated Mr Grossi on behalf of the General Conference and wished him a successful tenure. She invited him to take the oath of office.

55. Mr GROSSI took the following oath:

56. "I solemnly swear to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to discharge these functions and to regulate my conduct with the interests of the Agency only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions

in regard to the performance of my duties from any Government or other authority external to the Agency.”

57. Mr GROSSI said that his sense of moral, ethical and professional duty and responsibility was even stronger than it had been four years previously. In leading the Agency, he would ensure that it did not wait to be called upon to help when help was needed, that it was inclusive and proactive instead of reactive. He would bring the same emotion, enthusiasm and passion to the role that he had displayed over the previous four years. Thanking Member States for the trust and confidence placed in him, he said that he would strive to honour it every day.

58. Mr KHOKHER (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, congratulated Mr Grossi on the approval of his appointment for a second term. The Group commended his valuable work in leading the Agency and, in particular, his efforts to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The Group looked forward to the enhancement of the Agency’s activities in that area, including its efforts to achieve the SDGs. The Group acknowledged the impartial, effective and professional manner in which Mr Grossi had discharged his responsibilities as Director General, and assured him of its full support and cooperation in the discharge of his professional duties during his second term.

59. Mr HERNÁNDEZ (Mexico), speaking on behalf of GRULAC, congratulated Mr Grossi on the approval of his appointment for a second term. His strong leadership over the past four years had enhanced the Agency’s work in the areas of safeguards verification, nuclear security and new nuclear energy applications that contributed to the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

60. In his first term, Mr Grossi had surpassed expectations and could be assured of the full support of GRULAC in executing his mandate for a second term. GRULAC had every confidence that he would continue to display the utmost transparency in his work, supported by his highly professional and capable team, and that he would remain committed to important issues, including the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

61. Mr JOHNSON (Ghana), speaking on behalf of the African Group, congratulated Mr Grossi on the approval of his appointment for a second term and commended his tireless efforts to promote the use of nuclear energy for peace and development in a professional, impartial and effective manner. The Group reaffirmed its support for Mr Grossi’s efforts to strengthen the Agency’s contribution to attaining the SDGs. It attached great importance to Mr Grossi’s efforts to support Member States, in particular those in Africa, in meeting the SDGs. The Group reaffirmed its readiness to continue to work closely with Mr Grossi to achieve the objectives of Agenda 2063, and assured him of its full support and cooperation during his second term.

62. Mr ARIFIN (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the ASEAN, warmly congratulated Mr Grossi on the approval of his appointment for a second term, which was a testament to the trust placed in him by Member States. ASEAN commended his steadfast leadership and recognized that, despite many challenges, he had consistently conducted himself in an impartial, effective and professional manner. Mr Grossi could be assured of ASEAN’s full support.

63. ASEAN hoped that Mr Grossi would work closely with its Member States to help them meet their goals under the 2030 Agenda and boost the ASEAN economic region by promoting international peace and security and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. ASEAN’s aspirations to be at the centre of global growth were reflected in the theme of ‘Epicentrum of Growth’ chosen by Indonesia, the Association’s current Chair. It looked forward to working with Mr Grossi and his team to strengthen cooperation between the Agency and the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM), advance deliberations on the peaceful uses and applications of nuclear energy and explore further avenues for cooperation under the ASEAN-IAEA Practical Arrangements.

64. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America), speaking on behalf of the North America Group, welcomed the appointment of Mr Grossi to serve as Director General for a second term. The Group deeply appreciated his unwavering commitment to the Agency's overarching mission of promoting the peaceful uses of the atom for the benefit of all.

65. In his first term, Mr Grossi had shown dynamic and exemplary leadership during a time of unprecedented challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the military invasion of a country with a large scale nuclear power programme. He had led with vision and energy, launching important new initiatives to support the achievement of the SDGs while maintaining the Agency's essential role in applying safeguards and helping Member States to achieve the highest standards of safety and security. The Group lauded Mr Grossi's extraordinary expertise, professionalism and impartiality and his dedication to achieving gender equality and diversity, and assured him of its continued support and cooperation during his second term.

66. Mr GUNAAJAV (Mongolia), speaking on behalf of the Far East Group, warmly congratulated Mr Grossi on his appointment for a second term and conveyed the Group's sincere appreciation for his excellent and professional work over the past four years. Under his leadership, the Agency's role in promoting a peaceful and prosperous world would undoubtedly be strengthened. Inclusive, impartial and effective leadership was of crucial importance in addressing pressing global challenges.

67. The Group thanked the Chair of the Board of Governors for his able leadership in guiding the Board through the reappointment process and assured Mr Grossi of its full support and cooperation during his tenure.

68. Mr LAGGNER (Switzerland), speaking on behalf of the Western European Group, warmly congratulated Mr Grossi on his appointment for a second term and commended him for his leadership in challenging circumstances. The Group welcomed his strong commitment to implementing the Agency's mandate and his initiatives that had significantly raised the Agency's profile. It also welcomed his commitment to gender equality and to ensuring the effective and efficient functioning of the Secretariat. The Group wished Mr Grossi a successful tenure and assured him of its full support.

6. Contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund for 2024 (GC(67)/21)

69. The PRESIDENT, recalling that, in June 2023, the Board had recommended a figure of €96 000 000 as the target for voluntary contributions to the TCF for 2024, drew attention to document GC(67)/21 showing the contribution that each Member State would need to make in order to meet its share of the target.

70. The early pledging and payment of contributions to the TCF greatly helped the Secretariat in planning the Agency's TC programme. All delegations in a position to do so were urged to notify the Secretariat during the current session of the contributions that their Governments would be making for 2024. She was pleased to note that 32 Member States had already made their pledges.

71. She would provide an update at the end of the session on the contributions pledged and hoped to be able to report favourably on the percentage of the 2024 target figure already pledged.

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2022 (GC(67)/2)

72. Ms JIMÉNEZ (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country was convinced that science and technology were tools for promoting peace, well-being and solidarity among peoples. In 1984, ten Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Venezuela, had informed the Agency of their intention to establish a mechanism for horizontal cooperation in nuclear science and technology that would enable them to address issues related to human health, food security and the environment. Those countries would shortly celebrate the 40th anniversary of that successful endeavour and the region was eager for knowledge, training and technology transfer, which would grant access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and its benefits.

73. However, the Latin American and Caribbean region — and Venezuela in particular — was currently besieged by 950 unilateral coercive measures initiated by a country that had launched two nuclear bombs and subjected humanity to acts of barbarism. Such measures, which had been intensified during the pandemic, violated the human right to development and to health. For example, following the establishment by the Department of Technical Cooperation of a mechanism to facilitate access to radiodiagnostic and radiotherapy equipment, companies had refused to supply Venezuela with the linear accelerators that were so badly needed to care for the 10 000 cancer patients requiring treatment in the country.

74. At the Seventh Summit of CELAC Heads of State and Government in January 2023, the participating States had announced their intention to cooperate with the Agency and ARCAL to develop tools for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in the Latin American and Caribbean region and to guarantee atoms for peace and more science for life.

75. Venezuela continued to call for transformative measures that would enable it to establish its own conditions for development and economic, political, social and scientific growth, on the basis of its own identity, history and world view, without interference and without hegemonism. Science and technology could not be hijacked by individual interests. Venezuela upheld the principle that science and technology, and especially atoms for peace, should reflect the rationality of life.

76. Reaffirming her country's commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, she said that during the reporting period, Venezuela had received 11 Agency technical missions, which had enabled it to benefit from technology transfer and training to overcome difficulties in accessing radiodiagnostic and radiotherapy equipment.

77. Turning to verification and safeguards, she said that, as the Agency was the only competent authority in the field of verification, its work must be independent and based exclusively on objective technical considerations, free from political pressure. Venezuela supported the JCPOA, which had marked a historic milestone in diplomacy and multilateralism and served to highlight Iran's cooperation with the Agency under its CSA.

78. Her country remained committed to the NPT, the TPNW, the CTBT and the Statute. While reiterating its inalienable right to development, Venezuela recognized the need to strengthen capacities in science, education and technology for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Moreover, Venezuela reaffirmed its pacifist vocation and expressed its full support for general, complete and non-discriminatory disarmament and its commitment to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

79. Mr ESLAMI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that global climate change required States to move quickly and with serious determination towards low-carbon energy sources in order to reduce

greenhouse gases. Since peaceful nuclear energy played an important role in reducing the use of high-carbon sources and fuels, the Agency, as the main international body responsible for accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to health and prosperity throughout the world, had a statutory obligation to facilitate the access of all Member States to peaceful nuclear power, without discrimination.

80. In line with its principal policy and major national development strategy, Iran was determined to increase the share of nuclear power in its diversified energy mix up to 20 000 MW(e) by the end of 2040. The relevant plans had been reviewed several times over the past 50 years; basic studies and engineering, design, planning and some construction activities had started. The Agency had been, and would be, informed of developments accordingly.

81. Despite the imposition of oppressive unilateral sanctions, Iran was developing its capacity to design, engineer and construct research reactors, accelerators and irradiation facilities. It was also producing and using radioisotopes in various fields with the aim of improving the social welfare and quality of life of its people, and stood ready to cooperate with other countries in those areas. In 2024, the AEOI would celebrate its 50th anniversary. Moreover, in May 2024, Iran would hold its 30th national nuclear conference together with its first international nuclear conference. The Director General had already been informed of that international event.

82. Nuclear disarmament was of the utmost importance to the international community. The qualitative and quantitative development of nuclear weapons and arsenals was worrying and went against an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon States. As the expansion of nuclear arsenals posed a great danger to global peace, there was an increasing need for the nuclear weapon States to fulfil their disarmament commitments under Article VI of the NPT, which regrettably had not been fully implemented.

83. As the initiator of the NWFZ in the Middle East, Iran was seriously concerned about the clandestine military nuclear programme of the Zionist Israeli regime. Unfortunately, that regime continued to refuse to accede to the NPT and to place its nuclear activities and installations under Agency safeguards, thereby creating a permanent threat to international peace and security and endangering not only the stability and security of the region, but also the integrity and credibility of the NPT and Agency safeguards. Moreover, the Israeli regime was keeping up its terrorist threats against Iranian scientists and peaceful nuclear facilities, in grave violation of the Statute and the UN Charter. It was incumbent upon the international community, the Director General and the Secretariat to respond strongly against such threats.

84. The Israeli regime, which had enjoyed the generous support of certain States for years, had been fabricating information to misrepresent Iran's peaceful nuclear programme and divert global public attention from its own nuclear arsenal. The regime's Prime Minister, in his statement at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, had clearly declared that Iran must face a credible nuclear threat. There was no doubt that the international community's silence in the face of the repeated threats by the Israeli regime had emboldened its authorities. Consequently, it was very clear that Iran reserved the right to respond to the rudeness and audacity of the Israeli regime.

85. Iran's nuclear facilities were subject to the most robust and uninterrupted verification and monitoring by the Agency. His country expected that its continuous and strong cooperation in good faith with the Agency would not be overlooked and that the Agency would take effective and tangible measures to protect the confidentiality of relevant information. He highlighted the importance of professionalism, impartiality and objectivity and of not providing unnecessary details in the Agency's reports.

86. Although it had been five years since the USA's unlawful withdrawal from the JCPOA, the US Government had not yet stopped imposing illegal sanctions against Iran, despite repeated confessions by US authorities that the sanctions had been ineffective and failed to impede the expansion of Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. There should be a clear distinction between the legal obligations of Member States under their respective safeguards agreements and their voluntary undertakings. The JCPOA-related verification and monitoring measures had been voluntary and in no way linked to the CSA. There was, therefore, no basis for repeatedly trying to link such measures to any alleged issues. Iran's extensive cooperation with the Agency should neither be taken for granted nor negatively affected by short-sighted political agendas. The Secretariat and all Member States were duty-bound to act wisely when it came to addressing such issues so that the reality of cooperation between Iran and the Agency was neither distorted nor misrepresented. It was time to reverse the current course of action and avoid further political and psychological pressure on Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. Those who had created such conditions must stop their unproductive acts.

87. He concluded by noting that Iran continued to fulfil its commitments under its CSA and made every effort to facilitate the smooth conduct of the Agency's verification activities. All of Iran's nuclear material and activities had been declared and verified by the Agency; Iran therefore expected the Agency to prepare its reports on verification activities in Iran on the basis of the principles of impartiality, professionalism and objectivity. With the highest number of safeguards inspections of its peaceful nuclear programme, Iran had an exemplary record of cooperation with the Agency. For that reason, it expected that all 'outstanding issues' would be resolved at the earliest opportunity.

88. Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman AL-SAUD (Saudi Arabia) said that the General Conference reflected the Agency's important role in promoting international cooperation with the goal of harnessing the atom for peace and development.

89. The Director General's re-election for a second term, unanimously supported by Member States, reflected the international community's immense trust in the outstanding leadership that he had shown in challenging circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic and current global events.

90. Saudi Arabia's nuclear energy policy was focused on observing the highest levels of transparency, reliability and safety. Recognizing the positive contribution of nuclear energy to energy security, as well as its socioeconomic benefits, his country was working closely with the Agency to develop peaceful uses in various fields. It was implementing a national nuclear energy project involving the construction of Saudi Arabia's first NPP to help achieve sustainable development as outlined in the Saudi Vision 2030, in accordance with domestic requirements and international commitments.

91. Saudi Arabia had recently decided to rescind its SQP and fully implement its CSA. To that end, it was working at the national level to establish the necessary mechanisms, following best international practices and experiences, and was collaborating closely with the Agency to leverage expertise and advisory services regarding safeguards implementation in order to develop the required national infrastructure and human capabilities.

92. Saudi Arabia looked forward to establishing a regional cooperation centre with the Agency to build capacity in nuclear and radiological EPR, as well as other regulatory aspects at the national, regional and international levels. His country therefore appreciated the Agency's outstanding initiatives and other efforts to harness nuclear technology for peaceful uses and find solutions to global challenges, in a safe environment free of nuclear threat. It was pleased to announce a contribution of US \$2.5 million towards Rays of Hope to help save lives and address the cancer burden using nuclear techniques.

93. Saudi Arabia welcomed the launch in October 2023 of the Nuclear Security Training and Demonstration Centre in Seibersdorf, to which it had contributed funding. His country hoped that the centre would play a key role in enabling the Agency to strengthen the nuclear security

capabilities of all Member States and that it would become a reference centre in that area. It also welcomed the launch of the Lise Meitner Programme, which sought to enhance women's leadership in nuclear energy, and had participated in the first cycle.

94. Concerted international efforts were required to implement and universalize the NPT, and to counter nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. In that regard, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed the importance of fully implementing the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, aimed at establishing an NWFZ in the region.

95. Saudi Arabia praised the Agency's continued neutrality and exercise of its safeguards and verification responsibilities under Member States' CSAs. The Agency's outstanding efforts to uphold those activities as important principles and ensure their effective contribution to the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy were likewise commendable. His country affirmed its inherent right to benefit from peaceful nuclear technology, including the nuclear fuel cycle, and to commercially benefit from its natural uranium ore deposits, in accordance with relevant international treaties and agreements.

96. Saudi Arabia welcomed the efforts of the Agency and the Director General at Zaporizhzhya NPP in light of the current situation in Ukraine. Their important role in maintaining nuclear security and safety through ongoing visits and the establishment of permanent Agency expert missions to nuclear facilities in Ukraine was appreciated.

97. Reiterating its support for the Agency with a view to harnessing nuclear technology for humanity, Saudi Arabia called on the international community to cooperate actively in developing the safe and peaceful use of such technology and to firmly oppose any attempt to use it in a contrary manner.

98. Ms GRANHOLM (United States of America) read out the following message from President Biden:

"This year's General Conference marks 70 years since President Eisenhower presented his vision of "Atoms for Peace" — a future where nuclear technology could serve the needs, rather than the fears, of humankind.

"Today, thanks to the leadership of the IAEA and the prowess of our scientific communities, peaceful nuclear technology serves many civilian needs — from fighting cancer to fighting climate change.

"The United States is committed to the IAEA's mission of helping all responsible nations expand such capabilities. We will continue to provide financial, technical, and capacity building assistance, while upholding and promoting the highest nuclear safety, security, and non-proliferation standards.

"My Administration is committed to preventing the malign use of nuclear technology by irresponsible actors undermining the very fabric of the United Nations Charter.

"That is why earlier this year, I approved the US Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism and Advancing Nuclear and Radioactive Material Security. This policy builds on decades of successful efforts to prevent non-State actors from acquiring materials that could be used to make a nuclear weapon, and sets out new goals to further reduce the production and accumulation of weapons usable materials worldwide.

"It is also why we continue to stand by Ukraine as it confronts Russia's continued brutal aggression, and support the IAEA's efforts to prevent a nuclear emergency in the face of Russia's irresponsible actions against Ukraine's nuclear facilities.

"This week, as we celebrate all the ways the IAEA has manifested President Eisenhower's vision, we must recommit to delivering on his fundamental promise: that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy can unite a divided world."

99. The USA expressed its broad support for the people of Ukraine and for the courageous Agency staff on the ground.

100. Her country was fully committed to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and to furthering the Agency's critical nuclear safety, security and safeguards mission and pledged to protect the NPT, which underpinned both its global disarmament efforts and commitment to non-proliferation. The USA reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the highest non-proliferation standards around the world, including through the AUKUS partnership with the UK and Australia.

101. The USA welcomed Saudi Arabia's decision to rescind its SQP and encouraged other countries with older SQPs to either rescind or modify them as soon as possible.

102. Together, States must commit not only to living up to President Eisenhower's vision, but to modernizing it with their 21st century capabilities and values. With the climate crisis firmly on the doorstep, States must leverage the full potential of nuclear power to help achieve a net zero carbon future while advancing energy security. Nuclear energy was already a reliable source of carbon-free power, and emerging technologies presented exciting opportunities to make it more affordable, accessible and deployable. Ground-breaking discoveries, such as the recent achievement of fusion ignition, were broadening the bounds of what was possible. The USA was therefore committed to supporting its nuclear industry in developing the next generation of nuclear technologies while simultaneously prioritizing safety, security and safeguards.

103. States must leverage scientific breakthroughs by expanding civil applications of nuclear science and technology that could help all countries pursue the SDGs and improve people's quality of life. The USA was committed to supporting the Agency in harnessing that extraordinary potential — particularly through Rays of Hope, the Agency's flagship initiative to address the global cancer care gap. She was proud to announce that the USA would contribute an additional US \$7 million to that life-saving initiative, bringing its total financial and in-kind contributions to more than US \$47 million.

104. States must focus not only on the work ahead of them but also on the people behind it. The strongest and most innovative and effective solutions were produced when a range of perspectives was included. It was therefore necessary to continue expanding and diversifying the nuclear workforce, including by closing the gender gap. The Agency and the Director General had shown tremendous leadership in that regard.

105. If States committed to addressing such issues, they could fully realize President Eisenhower's vision in the modern age — where nuclear energy was a tool for peace and unity. More than ever, the international community must continue to heed his words and dedicate its strength to serve the needs of humanity.

106. Mr LIKHACHEV (Russian Federation) said that his country commended the Agency's work under the leadership of the Director General in the current difficult times and trusted that the Director General's experience and professionalism would continue to enable the Agency to remain within its mandate, despite the attempts by some States to politicize its work. The Agency could count on the Russian Federation's support and cooperation in the future. His country would continue to finance major Agency projects through the TC programme, the NSF, its national safeguards support programme and INPRO, and Russian experts would continue to participate in Agency events and contribute meaningfully to Agency activities. In addition, the Russian regulator, Rostechnadzor, planned to host a full-scope IRRS mission.

107. The year 2022 had ended on a high note for the Russian Federation — electricity generation had reached a new record level and the building of new Russian NPPs had continued: at Kursk NPP-2, construction work was being completed and commissioning was beginning; at Leningrad NPP, planning

for the construction site of power units 7 and 8 had begun; and at Smolensk NPP, engineering surveys were being completed. In addition, the Russian Federation continued to develop small-scale nuclear power generation. In April 2023, the Russian regulator had issued a licence for an onshore NPP with a RITM-200N reactor unit in Yakutia, and a construction camp had already been opened at the site. Furthermore, four upgraded small floating power units were being constructed and would be deployed in Chukotka in the near future.

108. The Russian Federation was systematically working towards the creation of a two-component nuclear power system. In 2022, it had completely converted the BN-800 fast neutron reactor at Beloyarsk NPP to uranium–plutonium mixed oxide fuel and had experimentally substantiated the operational safety of water cooled, water moderated power reactors using uranium–plutonium fuel with reprocessed uranium. That was a practical demonstration of the possibility of closing the nuclear fuel cycle and reusing spent fuel from a light water reactor. His country was continuing construction work on the Pilot Demonstration Energy Complex in Seversk. For the first time in global practice, a fourth-generation power unit with a lead cooled fast reactor, as well as modules to support and close the nuclear fuel cycle, were being built at a single site. In addition, the international project involving the construction of a multipurpose fast research reactor was progressing ahead of schedule and a key stage had been completed with the installation of the reactor vessel in its design position.

109. The Russian Federation continued to actively promote the development of nuclear energy around the world. Despite the unprecedented pressure of sanctions, no construction projects had stopped, nor had cooperation between regulators. In Türkiye, four power units with a capacity of 1200 MW were being constructed simultaneously at Akkuyu NPP, and the first batch of nuclear fuel had been delivered to the plant in April 2023. In the coming weeks, fuel would be delivered to the Rooppur NPP site in Bangladesh. In May 2023, the first concrete had been poured at Unit 3 of the El-Dabaa NPP in Egypt, and there were plans to pour the first concrete at Unit 4 in November ahead of schedule. The second, main stage of construction at the Paks NPP in Hungary had started. In 2023, three nuclear reactor vessels had been shipped to the Kudankulam NPP in India and the Tianwan and Xudabao NPPs in China, respectively. In addition, the construction of the first NPP in Belarus had been completed. Thanks to all the Russian-designed NPPs operating around the world, gas emissions equivalent to 217 million tonnes of carbon dioxide had been prevented in 2022 alone, which was his country's contribution to the systematic work to unlock the potential of nuclear technologies under the coordinating role of the Agency.

110. Nuclear technologies were not only an affordable source of clean energy, they also tackled a wide range of challenges in order to improve quality of life. Accordingly, non-power applications had been one of the main topics discussed at the Russia–Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum in July 2023. As stated by Russian President Vladimir Putin, Rosatom was ready to share its unique experience with partner countries and provide unparalleled technologies in the field of non-power applications. Such work was already under way with Latin American countries in the field of medicine and agriculture. In March 2023, the Russian Federation had signed its first-ever thematic agreement on cooperation in those areas with Nicaragua. In Bolivia, a cyclotron complex built by Rosatom for the production of radiopharmaceuticals had been inaugurated in March 2023, and a multipurpose irradiation centre had been commissioned in August of the same year.

111. With regard to the situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP, his country's principled position remained unchanged. As the safety of nuclear facilities and installations was an absolute and unconditional priority, the Russian Federation was taking all necessary measures to ensure the nuclear safety and security of Zaporizhzhya NPP. In the light of the work undertaken by Rosatom employees and Agency inspectors at Zaporizhzhya NPP for more than a year, it was clear that the only real threat to the plant and its workers was the reckless actions of Ukrainian armed formations. The employees of Zaporizhzhya NPP and the residents of Enerhodar, where the nuclear workers lived, had made their

choice in favour of the Russian Federation, with more than 90% of the region's citizens voting to join the Russian Federation in the referendum held in September 2022. The residents had confirmed their decision in the recent regional elections.

112. Rosatom's task was not only to strengthen the material base of Zaporizhzhya NPP but to develop the social infrastructure of Enerhodar. In that connection, it supplied modern equipment for educational, medical and sports institutions and introduced nuclear science classes with advanced study of natural sciences in schools. In other words, it was doing everything necessary to establish normal life in the town. In addition, Rosatom was cooperating closely with the Agency to prevent threats to the safety of Zaporizhzhya NPP and continued to support the Director General's efforts in that regard. Agency employees had maintained a permanent presence at the plant since 1 September 2022. The eleventh team was currently working there, with three rotations having been led by the Director General himself. Rosatom maintained and ensured the conditions necessary for Agency staff to continue to work effectively and safely.

113. The major challenges facing the global nuclear industry would not be solved through politics but through global cooperation and reliance on the Agency's experience and authority.

114. Mr LIU Jing (China) said that as the most important intergovernmental organization in the nuclear field, the Agency played an indispensable role in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Under the Director General's leadership, the Atoms4NetZero initiative was helping the world to meet green energy goals. The Agency was also helping Member States to enhance their capacities for applying nuclear technology to areas such as food, agriculture, health and environmental protection. The Secretariat had spared no effort in helping Member States to maintain and strengthen nuclear safety, security, emergency response and radioactive waste management, thus helping to ensure that the nuclear energy industry developed safely. Progress had likewise been made in promoting safeguards globally and maintaining the international non-proliferation regime.

115. China viewed its relationship with the Agency from the strategic perspective of maintaining international peace and security and promoting sustainable development. It engaged in active, comprehensive cooperation with the Agency, whose role it supported. China's own Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative were both highly compatible with the vision of Atoms for Peace and Development and the SDGs. In 2023, China had shared its experience with developing countries through a cross-regional seminar on the development and application of small modular reactor technology and the second China-ASEAN Forum on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology. China had also assisted developing countries, including by providing training for specialized workers and public goods, and by launching the second phase of its annual scholarship programme in nuclear energy and technology. China actively supported the Agency's TC programme, paid its share of the TCF in full and on time, and was taking tangible steps to promote the benefits of nuclear energy and technology in numerous developing countries.

116. The Agency's work had expanded to address new challenges that had arisen from complex and profound changes in the global situation. China appreciated the Agency's constructive role in promoting the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine, supported the seven pillars and five principles proposed by the Director General, and had contributed to the assistance programme for nuclear safety and security in Ukraine.

117. As for the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi NPP, China noted that the disposal of nuclear-contaminated water was only the first step in a long term process. The decommissioning of the reactors would be even more difficult and the Agency should accord the matter high priority. Japan's insistence on launching its ocean discharge programme despite widespread international scepticism and

strong opposition from neighbouring countries had caused considerable international concern. The discharge of nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean presented a major nuclear safety issue: such an intentional discharge was unprecedented; there was great uncertainty surrounding the cumulative effects of discharging large quantities of radionuclides into the ocean; and Japan had been unable to provide a credible scientific justification. The Agency must therefore establish a long term, effective international monitoring mechanism and prevent any long term damage to the marine environment and human health caused by the ocean discharge.

118. The nuclear submarine cooperation between the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia posed a serious challenge to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and the Agency's safeguards system. The issue was not a private one to be handled by the three countries and the Secretariat alone, but should be dealt with by all Member States in an open, transparent, inclusive and sustainable intergovernmental process.

119. China congratulated the Director General on his reappointment and would continue to support his initiatives in the area of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology. That said, China hoped that the Director General and Secretariat would take seriously Member States' diverging views and concerns on important and sensitive issues and promote in-depth discussions and greater consensus among Member States so that they could provide stronger support to the Secretariat in discharging its duties and responsibilities independently, objectively and scientifically, in accordance with the Agency's Statute.

120. Lastly, China stood ready to work with all Member States and the Secretariat to advance the Agency's work in realizing atoms for peace and development.

121. Mr SATKALIYEV (Kazakhstan) said that, since its independence, his country had followed an effective national model for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. By voluntarily renouncing its nuclear weapons in 1991, Kazakhstan had made non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy essential components of its national identity. His country was a party to all fundamental international treaties on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of atomic energy and complied fully with its obligations under the NPT and its safeguards agreement. The Agency's safeguards system was a highly effective tool that supported the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

122. In May 2023, Kazakhstan had successfully completed the power start-up of the water-cooled IVG.1M reactor with low-enriched fuel. Two of the country's three nuclear reactors — WWR-K and IVG.1M — had already been converted to LEU fuel and continued to operate successfully, and work was being carried out with the aim of converting the pulsed graphite nuclear reactor to LEU fuel. The Agency had recognized the fundamental reliability of the unique technology for irradiated HEU fuel utilization developed by Kazakhstan's experts, which could be used by other countries participating in the HEU minimization programme.

123. The closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991 had demonstrated his country's commitment to nuclear security and non-proliferation. The law on the Semipalatinsk nuclear safety zone adopted in July 2023 regulated the legal basis of activities on the former test site, including the possible gradual return of conditionally clean land into economic circulation.

124. The development of radiation oncology and nuclear medicine constituted a priority for Kazakhstan and his country was highly interested in participating in Rays of Hope. Kazakhstan's Institute of Nuclear Physics was planning to arrange through the Agency the supply to Kyrgyzstan of technetium-99 generators, and his country was also planning to deliver the radioactive isotope cobalt-57 to France. Kazakhstan was also an active participant in the ZODIAC initiative.

125. His country was following a path of gradual energy transition and had adopted a national strategy for achieving carbon neutrality, which was aimed at transitioning the economy to low-carbon development by 2060. Under that strategy, special attention was paid to the development of nuclear and hydrogen energy, renewables and the conversion of coal-fuelled facilities to more environmentally friendly energy sources.

126. In recent years, Kazakhstan had been carefully studying the possibility of developing safe and environmentally friendly nuclear power and considering options for the construction of its first NPP. It had successfully hosted an INIR mission, thereby demonstrating its commitment to professionally assessing the readiness of its nuclear infrastructure. His country was grateful for the invaluable expert support and technical assistance provided by the Agency for the development of its nuclear power programme. In addition, during the Director General's visit to Kazakhstan in April 2023, the country had signed a CPF covering the period 2023–2028.

127. Kazakhstan attached great importance to the IAEA LEU Bank in Öskemen, which had been operating for the past five years. In June 2023, the Agency had conducted the first recertification of the cylinders. Promoting the wider use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes was essential for meeting global energy needs and providing carbon-free energy to achieve climate change goals and the SDGs. The LEU Bank could be operationalized for the benefit of countries in need and the LEU stored therein made available to interested Member States, including developing countries. Kazakhstan was ready to discuss the matter at the expert level.

128. The issue of the so-called 'arealess' Member States was profoundly important to Kazakhstan. Despite their impeccable record in non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, such States were deprived of the right to participate in the Agency's decision-making process, and Kazakhstan intended to address that long-standing injustice. It had therefore submitted a draft resolution on restoration of sovereign equality in the Agency, which it encouraged all Member States to support.

129. In closing, he reaffirmed Kazakhstan's strong commitment to the Agency's work to further develop the peaceful uses of atomic energy, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and increase international nuclear security. He also emphasized the importance Kazakhstan attached to international cooperation in the energy sector and to strengthening global energy security.

130. Ms MORENO BAU (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Iceland aligned themselves with her statement.

131. The European Union attached great importance to the Agency's technical, independent and impartial role in all areas of its 'Atoms for Peace and Development' mandate and remained committed to cooperating closely with the Agency. In the current difficult times, the rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, must be protected.

132. The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, its continued armed attacks on Ukrainian territory and illegal seizure of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhya NPP constituted flagrant violations of international law, including the UN Charter, and the very principles of the Agency's Statute. Such acts posed increased risks to nuclear safety, security and safeguards and required an appropriate response from the General Conference.

133. The European Union condemned the Russian Federation's war of aggression in the strongest possible terms and expressed strong support for Ukraine. It thanked the Director General and Agency staff for their work in difficult circumstances, noting that the Agency's support and assistance missions on the ground were crucial in helping to prevent a nuclear accident that could have severe consequences. It was deeply worrying that the Director General's seven indispensable pillars for ensuring nuclear safety

and security during an armed conflict continued to be compromised as a result of Russian aggression and that the Russian Federation was preventing the Agency from comprehensively assessing the situation at Zaporizhzhya NPP against the Director General's five principles, which must be respected. The Russian Federation must heed the Board's resolutions, immediately and completely withdraw all its armed forces, military equipment and other personnel from Ukraine, including from Zaporizhzhya NPP, and fully respect Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

134. As a key security priority, the European Union would continue to invest in diplomatic and political actions aimed at ensuring that Iran did not acquire a nuclear weapon. As a staunch supporter of the JCPOA, the European Union regretted that Iran had not taken the necessary steps to return to its nuclear-related commitments under the Plan. The risk of a nuclear proliferation crisis in the region had further increased as a result of Iran's escalating nuclear trajectory. Tangible and sustained de-escalation measures were needed to help restore trust. The European Union therefore called on all States to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015).

135. Iran must work towards fulfilling the commitments set out in the March 2023 joint statement and cooperate with the Agency in full and without further delay to resolve all pending issues, in accordance with its legally binding obligations under its CSA. The European Union strongly condemned Iran's disproportionate unilateral measure to de-designate additional experienced Agency inspectors, which undermined the Agency's ability to effectively conduct its verification activities in Iran, and expressed concern about the impact of that decision on the monitoring of the JCPOA. It urged Iran to reverse that course.

136. The European Union remained gravely concerned about the DPRK's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, in clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions. It urged the DPRK to engage in meaningful discussions with all relevant parties to build a basis for sustainable peace and security, and to take steps aimed at the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The DPRK must return to compliance with the NPT and its CSA, bring into force an additional protocol and sign and ratify the CTBT. The DPRK could not and would never have the status of a nuclear-weapon State.

137. The European Union firmly supported the full, complete and effective implementation of the NPT and its three pillars and continued to call for its universalization. It also supported the strengthening of the safeguards system and remained of the view that CSAs together with additional protocols constituted the current verification standard and should be universalized without delay. States that had not yet done so should amend or rescind their original SQPs and apply the CSA in full, especially those already constructing nuclear facilities. The European Union noted with concern the Agency's assessment that it might no longer be able to draw safeguards conclusions for States with the original SQP.

138. The European Union attached utmost importance to the continuous improvement of nuclear safety. It had established and developed an advanced, legally binding and enforceable nuclear safety framework applicable in all Euratom member States. It also provided financial and human resources worldwide, including through the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation, with a budget of €300 million. The European Union encouraged all Member States to promote a strong nuclear safety culture and implement the highest possible nuclear safety standards.

139. Sustained efforts were needed to strengthen global nuclear security. Member States should work together towards a successful ICONS 2024. As one of the largest donors to the NSF, the European Union recognized the Agency's central role in facilitating international cooperation and assisting Member States in building their capacities to respond to nuclear security threats and risks.

140. As the European Union accorded the utmost importance to a robust international nuclear safety and security architecture, it strongly supported the international safety and security conventions and their implementation and universalization. It appreciated the Agency's continued commitment to maintaining fully applicable and up-to-date safety standards and security guidance and to considering the nuclear safety and security implications of situations involving armed attacks.

141. The European Union and its member States reaffirmed their long-standing commitment to the TC programme and supported the Agency's activities concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear technology to achieve the SDGs, including in the context of the UN Climate Change Conference. All countries had the sovereign right to decide whether or not to include nuclear power in their energy mix to achieve the 2030 climate target and the Paris Agreement commitments. The European Union acknowledged the role of nuclear technologies in global efforts to limit climate change and mitigate its negative effects and welcomed the 2023 Scientific Forum on Nuclear Innovations for Net Zero.

142. The European Union also welcomed such important initiatives as Rays of Hope and NUTEC Plastics and looked forward to hearing more about the Director General's most recent initiative — Atoms4Food.

143. As the largest donor to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme, the European Union appreciated the Agency's strong commitment to gender equality and encouraged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve gender parity and mainstream gender in programmes and projects.

144. Lastly, the European Union was concerned about the serious liquidity challenges facing the Agency due to delays in the payment of assessed contributions to the Regular Budget. It encouraged all Member States to do their utmost to ensure sustainable and predictable funding so that the Agency could continue its crucial work.

145. Mr SCHALLENBERG (Austria) said that the General Conference was taking place when war was still raging in Europe. In the nineteen months since the Russian Federation had brutally invaded its sovereign neighbour Ukraine, the world had witnessed a chain of irresponsible and unacceptable acts, including blatant violations of the UN Charter, nuclear threats and blackmail and the stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus — which was a mere day's drive from Vienna. The Russian Federation had shown a high degree of disregard for the central pillars of the Agency and its work on nuclear safety by endangering Zaporizhzhya NPP. Austria was grateful to the Agency and the Director General for their efforts in Ukraine. As the host country, Austria was acutely aware of the personal risks taken and sacrifices made by Agency staff to provide crucial information and at least some sense of security. His country stood firmly behind the Director General and his five principles to prevent a nuclear accident and had contributed a further €1 million in order to assist the Agency's important work on Ukraine.

146. It was deeply regrettable that, despite intense diplomatic efforts, there had been no return to full implementation of the JCPOA. Noting that Iran was continuing its nuclear programme at an alarming rate, Austria called on that country to cooperate fully with the Agency, including on outstanding safeguards issues. However, it was not just the state of the JCPOA that was deeply troubling — the entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime was under enormous pressure. The international community was caught between an alarming standstill on one side and a backtracking on commitments on the other. The most recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference had ended in another failure, meaning that NPT States Parties had not been able to agree on an outcome document for 13 years. There was no need to spell out the definition of doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome.

147. Other alarming developments, such as the suspension of New START by the Russian Federation, the dangerous escalation by the DPRK, which threatened the Republic of Korea and Japan, and a worrying re-emphasis on nuclear deterrence among some States, proved that nuclear risks were currently

higher than ever. That vicious cycle had to be broken, and the best way of doing so was for States to put their collective support behind the TPNW. Austria therefore encouraged all Member States to participate in the second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in New York in November 2023.

148. As was well known, Austria rejected the use of nuclear power, which it did not consider to be a sustainable source of energy. Elements other than the reduction of emissions, such as the long term environmental and health impact of possible nuclear accidents and the unsolved question of the treatment of nuclear waste, needed to be taken into account. Austria's position was clear: States that chose to use nuclear technology needed to uphold the highest safety and security standards.

149. Austria fully supported the Agency's work and its activities in the wider field of nuclear science and technology, such as health care, the fight against climate change, and food security. At a time when the multilateral system was visibly cracking under the strain of geopolitical tensions, lack of trust and obstructionism, States needed to make the most of the General Conference and show that they could still deliver and that the spirit of Vienna was still alive and kicking.

150. Ms TAKAICHI (Japan) said that her country strongly supported the Agency's activities and commended the Director General's leadership in promptly and appropriately addressing crucial nuclear issues in a challenging international environment.

151. Japan attached great importance to non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As holder of the G7 Presidency, Japan had hosted the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May 2023 and emphasized its commitment to addressing such important issues as regional non-proliferation, nuclear technology application and the transparency of civilian plutonium management. Japan would continue to cooperate with the Agency, strengthen and maintain the global non-proliferation regime and promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

152. Agency safeguards were fundamental for ensuring global nuclear non-proliferation, Japan strongly supported the Agency's efforts to make them more effective and efficient and would welcome the universalization of the CSA, additional protocol and amended SQP. The international community should continue to work together to resolve all regional non-proliferation issues.

153. The DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes posed a serious challenge to the international non-proliferation regime and were totally unacceptable. Japan strongly urged the DPRK to take tangible steps towards the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of all WMDs, ballistic missiles of all ranges and related programmes. In that regard, she emphasized the critical importance for all States to fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions, and noted that the denuclearization of the DPRK required robust verification. Japan highly commended the Agency's continued work to enhance its ability and readiness to verify the DPRK's nuclear programme.

154. With regard to Iran's nuclear-related activities, Japan supported the JCPOA to uphold the international non-proliferation regime. It would continue its diplomatic efforts towards achieving the return to compliance with the Plan by all countries concerned.

155. The situation of nuclear facilities in Ukraine remained a grave concern. Russian military activities at or near NPPs and other facilities in Ukraine could not be tolerated, and Japan condemned the Russian Federation's actions in the strongest terms. In that context, Japan had contributed approximately €12 million to support the Agency's continued and commendable efforts to secure nuclear safety and security in Ukraine and would continue to provide the necessary backing.

156. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy were increasingly important for responding to such global issues as climate change and for achieving the SDGs. Japan therefore welcomed the new Atoms4Food initiative and, in particular, the Agency's participation in COP28, with a view to contributing to a zero-emission society. Moreover, through its contributions to the TCF and PUI, Japan supported the

Agency's activities to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including the Director General's initiatives related to zoonotic diseases, marine plastic pollution and cancer.

157. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be promoted in a way that ensured the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and non-proliferation. In that regard, Japan had been steadily advancing the decommissioning of TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and continuing environmental restoration activities off site with the cooperation of the Agency, which had a unique mandate to establish international safety standards related to the nuclear sector's impact on health and the environment. The Agency's comprehensive report on the results of its two-year review of the safety of ALPS-treated water issued in July 2023 had concluded that Japan's activities on the discharge of such water into the sea was consistent with international safety standards and that the radiation impact on people and the environment would be negligible. Japan had also provided the international community with transparent information about the discharge of ALPS-treated water based on scientific evidence, even before the process had begun. Consequently, countries from a wide range of regions had expressed their understanding of and support for Japan's efforts.

158. In August 2023, Japan had begun the discharge of ALPS-treated water into the sea, taking all possible safety measures. Since the start of the process, the Agency had promptly and transparently announced the results of its monitoring and consistently confirmed that the discharge was proceeding safely as planned. Japan was grateful for the professional, independent, objective and transparent work carried out by the Director General and the Agency. Japan would continue to provide all relevant data and information based on scientific evidence in a transparent manner to the people of Japan and the international community. Moreover, with the Agency's continued involvement, Japan would continue to ensure the safety of the discharge process up until the last drop of water had entered the sea and that human health and the environment would never be adversely affected.

159. Noting that the earlier comments by the representative of China had not been based on scientific evidence, she said that, despite being a member of the Agency, China was the only country that continued to spread scientifically groundless information and impose unreasonable restrictions. She therefore urged China to take actions based on science and to provide accurate information.

160. In closing, she reaffirmed her country's strong determination to continue providing the maximum support to the Agency.

161. Mr JACQ (France) said that his country congratulated the Director General for having ensured the continuity of all the Agency's activities with remarkable efficiency, despite the very difficult international context. It was deplorable that the General Conference was once again being held against the backdrop of a terrible war that had been raging at the heart of Europe for over a year and a half and had caused considerable human and material damage and far-reaching consequences for the international community. France reiterated its strong condemnation of the Russian Federation's unprovoked and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. The invasion of a sovereign country constituted a grave violation of the UN Charter and seriously undermined European and international security and stability.

162. France remained extremely concerned about the safety of Ukraine's nuclear facilities, in particular Zaporizhzhya NPP. It reaffirmed the importance of a continued Agency presence at the site, with regular rotations, and called on the Russian Federation to ensure unrestricted access for the Agency's experts. The responsibility for the current situation lay with the Russian Federation: its war of aggression, the massive strikes against Ukraine's energy infrastructure, the illegal occupation of Zaporizhzhya NPP and the undue pressure being put on Ukrainian operating personnel were significantly undermining the safety of Ukrainian NPPs and severely limiting the ability of the Agency and the legitimate Ukrainian

authorities to safely carry out verification activities under Ukraine's CSA. The Russian Federation must cease its aggression and comply with the Board's resolution set out in document GOV/2022/58.

163. France welcomed and fully supported the work being done by the Agency and its Director General to assist Ukraine in ensuring the safety and security of its nuclear installations and enabling the application of safeguards in Ukraine. In that regard, France reaffirmed its support for the five principles announced by the Director General at the UN Security Council in May 2023. France would continue to provide Ukraine with political, technical, human and financial backing and would stand with the Agency as it carried out its missions. So far in 2023, France had already delivered over €2 million worth of equipment to Ukraine for the maintenance of the South Ukraine NPP. A further several million euros had been made available in response to a request for assistance from Ukraine, to supply Energoatom with equipment and consumables needed for nuclear and fire safety and the reliable operation of its reactors.

164. As part of the fight against proliferation, France, in close coordination with Germany, the UK and the USA, had been engaged for several years in efforts to return Iran to compliance with its JCPOA commitments. It was regrettable that, in 2022, Iran had turned down two diplomatic opportunities to return to the Plan by insisting on demands that it knew to be unacceptable. While escalating its nuclear programme without any credible civilian justification for more than four years, Iran had also substantially reduced its cooperation with the Agency. France condemned Iran's recent de-designation of several experienced Agency inspectors as an attempt to prevent the Agency from effectively exercising its safeguards mandate, and would respond with its partners on the basis of the Director General's forthcoming reports.

165. France urged Iran to provide the Agency with credible explanations as part of its investigation into the presence of undeclared nuclear material at sites identified by the Agency and to implement fully and without delay its commitments set out in the joint statement agreed on 4 March 2023. The absence of a credible response was all the more worrying given that Iran was simultaneously pursuing activities enabling it to progress in the acquisition of technologies needed for the development of a delivery system capable of carrying a weapon, despite the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). France was determined that Iran should never acquire nuclear weapons and remained steadfast in its commitment to finding a diplomatic solution. It firmly supported the Director General on safeguards implementation in Iran and urged Iran to comply with its obligations, as it had been requested to do in a statement recently made on behalf of 63 countries to the Board.

166. France also urged the DPRK to refrain from any further nuclear tests and immediately abandon all its nuclear weapons and associated ballistic and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner in accordance with its obligations.

167. Nuclear energy contributed to the transition to sustainable energy. Global warming had shown that the challenge ahead was to provide low-carbon, abundant and affordable energy. To achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, France was pursuing a major nuclear programme and a law on energy planning would be presented to Parliament by the end of 2023. For France, nuclear energy was a key technology for achieving its energy and climate objectives: nuclear was not only one of the most carbon-free energy sources throughout its life cycle, but was also a stable and controllable means of production allowing reliable grid management and high security of supply. President Macron had announced the launch of a new programme to build EPR reactors, a law to speed up the construction of new facilities and a strategy for developing innovative nuclear power and small reactors.

168. France looked forward to the International Conference on Climate Change and the Role of Nuclear Power, to be held in October 2023. It also welcomed the Director General's personal

commitment to raising awareness of the challenges of global warming among the various stakeholders, and in particular his participation in COP28 in the UAE.

169. France supported the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear safety and security, and especially the universalization of international legal instruments. It encouraged the Agency to continue its activities relating to the safety of innovative reactors, in particular by assessing the applicability of Agency safety standards to related technologies. Accordingly, France supported the NHSI, which fostered dialogue and cooperation between industry and regulatory authorities.

170. In conclusion, France called on the Agency to continue its work on developing nuclear energy, while meeting the highest standards of safety and security, and to promote its strengths in high-level international forums on climate and energy. In that context, France supported and would contribute to ICONS 2024.

171. Mr SZIJJÁRTÓ (Hungary) said that the European Union was facing tremendous challenges related to economic security and energy supply, with its members now paying seven times more for natural gas than the USA and three times more for electricity than China. The use of more nuclear energy and a radical increase in nuclear capacity constituted the only way for the European Union to increase its competitiveness, guarantee energy supply security and remain ambitious about environmental protection. The European Union would then be able to produce much more, cheaper and safer energy and further reduce its emissions.

172. Noting that the 440 reactors operating in the world had replaced 180 billion cubic metres of natural gas, he said that if the world was serious about achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, it would have to at least double its nuclear capacity. All ideological and politically-motivated debates regarding nuclear energy and attacks against its use must cease. There must be a level playing field for nuclear and an absence of discrimination. Hungary was therefore pleased to have supported the Director General's letter to COP28 about the clear advantages of nuclear energy.

173. Based on its positive experience in using nuclear energy for over four decades, Hungary had decided to build two new reactor units, increasing its nuclear capacity from 2000 MW to 4400 MW. No one had the right to interfere in the composition of another country's energy mix, which fell exclusively within the competence of the State concerned. As Hungary considered energy supply security to be a sovereign matter, it regarded all obstacles to its nuclear investment as an attack against its sovereignty.

174. His country had never supported — and would never support — any sanctions that hindered nuclear cooperation with the Russian Federation as they went against Hungary's national interest. It also rejected all sanctions related to nuclear technology, fuel deliveries and the construction and operation of nuclear facilities. Moreover, the European nuclear-related sanctions were unnecessary considering that the USA had bought 416 tonnes of uranium from the Russian Federation during the first half of 2023, which was more than double compared to the previous year and the largest amount purchased within a period of six months since 2015.

175. Having made great efforts to enhance its competitiveness, Hungary had become a meeting point for Eastern and Western investments. It hoped to remain one of the twenty countries in the world that had been able to increase its GDP while decreasing emissions. The construction of two new reactor units and the decision to extend the lifetime of its four existing units by 20 years would provide the country with enough energy to maintain its economic growth path and protect its environment.

176. Currently, 65% of Hungary's electricity production was carbon neutral, 80% of which was derived from nuclear technology. His country hoped to achieve 90% carbon-neutral electricity production by 2030 and total carbon neutrality by 2050. Once the two new reactor units had begun

operation in the early 2030s, Hungary would be able to reduce its annual carbon dioxide emissions by 17 million tonnes. The international project would involve Rosatom as the main constructor, and German, French and US companies. The project would be implemented in accordance with the highest possible technological and security standards. More than 1.5 million cubic metres of ground had already been excavated for the project.

177. In closing, he expressed Hungary's heartfelt appreciation to the Director General for his work to depoliticize nuclear energy. His country counted on the Director General, and he in turn could count on Hungary.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.