

General Conference

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Plenary

Record of the Eighth Meeting

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President : Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

Contents

Item of the agenda ¹		Paragraphs
–	Restoration of voting rights	1–3
28	Examination of delegates' credentials	4–9
8	Election of Members to the Board of Governors	10–48
–	Report on the Scientific Forum	49–51
19	Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East	52–100
8	Election of Members to the Board of Governors (<i>resumed</i>)	101–104
19	Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East (<i>resumed</i>)	105–128

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

¹ GC(67)/24

Abbreviations used in this record

CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
R&D	research and development
TC	technical cooperation
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction

– **Restoration of voting rights**
(GC(67)/INF/9)

1. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day to consider the request from the Dominican Republic, contained in document GC(67)/INF/9, for the restoration of its voting rights under Article XIX.A of the Statute. The Committee had recommended that the Dominican Republic's voting rights be restored during the current session of the General Conference for a period of one year, ending before the commencement of the following regular session of the Conference.
2. She took it that the Conference accepted the recommendation by the General Committee.
3. It was so decided.

28. Examination of delegates' credentials
(GC(67)/29/Corr.1)

4. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had met earlier in the day as a Credentials Committee to examine the credentials of all delegates, as provided for in Rule 28 of the Rules of Procedure. Since that meeting of the General Committee, the Secretariat had received credentials in due form for the delegate of Panama. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 8 of its report contained in document GC(67)/29/Corr.1, with the reservations and positions expressed in the report.
5. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that his country's acceptance of Israel's credentials by no means constituted recognition of the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Shebaa Farms. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.
6. Ms ABIDA (Jordan) said that under no circumstances did the acceptance of Israel's credentials constitute any change in her country's position of considering all territories occupied by Israel on 4 June 1967 to be occupied territories. Israel must withdraw from those territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, and abolish all measures imposed on those areas, in accordance with international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. Israel's borders were limited to those provided for in the Jordanian–Israeli peace agreement of 1994. Furthermore, Jordan's joining of the consensus on the report and resolution on the examination of delegates' credentials in no way signified any agreement on its part that Israel's credentials applied to the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, or to the Syrian Golan Heights.
7. Mr TORABI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee should under no circumstances be construed as recognition by his Government of the Israeli regime.
8. The PRESIDENT took it that, with the reservations and positions expressed, the General Conference was prepared to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 8 of document GC(67)/29/Corr.1.

9. It was so decided.

8. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (GC(67)/3 and 26)

10. The PRESIDENT drew attention to document GC(67)/3, containing the designations of members to serve on the Board of Governors from the end of the sixty-seventh (2023) regular session until the end of the sixty-eighth (2024) regular session of the General Conference.

11. Recalling that, under Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure, the presiding officer must indicate to the General Conference those elective places on the Board which must be filled, she referred to paragraph 2 of document GC(67)/26, which indicated, for each geographical area, the number of Member States that must be elected so as to ensure that the Board would be constituted in accordance with Article VI.A of the Statute.

12. There were 11 seats to be filled: two for Latin America; two for Western Europe; two for Eastern Europe; two for Africa; one for the Middle East and South Asia; one for the Far East; and one additional seat — the so-called floating seat under Article VI.A.2.(b) of the Statute — which in the current year was to be filled by a Member State from South East Asia and the Pacific.

13. Paragraph 3 of document GC(67)/26 listed the 24 Member States which had been either elected by the General Conference in 2022 in accordance with Article VI.A.2 of the Statute, and which would therefore continue to serve on the Board until the end of regular session of the Conference in 2024, or had been designated by the Board the previous June for membership of the Board pursuant to Article VI.A.1 of the Statute for the one-year period from the end of the current session until the end of the regular session of the Conference in 2024.

14. In order to facilitate the election, delegates had been furnished with an informal note showing the results of consultations within the area groups regarding their candidates for the elective places. She stressed that the note was purely informal in character and provided information insofar as it had been made available to her and to the Secretariat.

15. She recalled that, in 1989, the Conference had approved a procedure whereby no secret ballot would be held when there was agreement regarding the candidate or candidates from a particular area. Balloting would take place only in respect of those areas for which there was no agreed slate. That procedure considerably facilitated the efficient use of the Conference's time. Therefore, Rule 79 of the Conference's Rules of Procedure, which stipulated that elections to the Board were to be by secret ballot, must be suspended in respect of the areas for which no secret ballot would be held.

16. She was pleased to report that there was agreement on the candidates in all area groups, with the exception of the two vacant seats to be filled for Eastern Europe.

17. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Algeria and Burkina Faso to the two vacant seats for Africa.

18. Algeria and Burkina Faso were duly elected.

19. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect the Republic of Korea to the one vacant seat for the Far East.

20. The Republic of Korea was duly elected.
21. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Ecuador and Paraguay to the two vacant seats for Latin America.
22. Ecuador and Paraguay were duly elected.
23. The PRESIDENT said that the Netherlands and Spain had submitted their candidatures for the two elective places to be filled for Western Europe. There being no other candidates, she took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect the Netherlands and Spain to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.
24. The Netherlands and Spain were duly elected.
25. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Bangladesh to the one vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.
26. Bangladesh was duly elected.
27. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Indonesia to the one so-called floating seat.
28. Indonesia was duly elected.
29. The PRESIDENT said that, with regard to the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe, she had been informed that there was no consensus in the group.
30. Rules 81 and 83–85 of the Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 84, applied in an election to fill vacant seats to the Board.
31. In accordance with Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure, election of members to the Board would be by secret ballot and there must be no nominations. She assumed that all of the candidates for the election had made their candidatures known to the other delegations. Under Rule 74 of the Rules of Procedure, explanations of vote would not be allowed before or after the vote. The relevant provisions set out in Article XIX.A of the Statute governing voting rights of Member States applied.
32. Ms BALLA (Hungary), speaking in her capacity as Chair of the Eastern European Group, confirmed that there was no consensus in the group with regard to the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe. She reminded the Conference, however, that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine had submitted their candidatures.
33. Mr TSYMBALIUK (Ukraine) said that his country had not been a member of the Board for the past 12 years, despite having applied for membership.
34. His country had 4 operational NPPs comprising 15 nuclear reactors, which generated over half of the country's electricity. At all those plants, Ukraine enjoyed constructive and close cooperation with the Agency's expert missions that had recently established an ongoing presence there.
35. Ukraine had 9 educational institutions that provided training for specialists in the fields of nuclear energy and nuclear security. Moreover, it had robust R&D capabilities in the nuclear sphere. Some 20 000 radiation sources were in use, information on which was recorded in a national registry. Ukraine had substantial uranium resources and production facilities that met approximately 30% of the country's needs.
36. Member States were aware of Ukraine's global priorities in its cooperation with the Agency: relevant information regarding nuclear verification, technical cooperation, nuclear safety and security,

nuclear science and technology and nuclear fuel had been distributed by email. He hoped that the increased cooperation between Ukrainian nuclear institutions and authorities and the Agency would help to strengthen nuclear security, safety and safeguards implementation in his country.

37. To achieve those goals, however, Ukraine badly needed the support of Member States and its partners and friends in the international community. He assured the Conference that, both in a personal capacity and as the representative of Ukraine, he remained deeply committed to close cooperation with all Member States and the Secretariat on all the outstanding issues on its agenda. In that regard, he hoped that his experience of multilateral diplomacy, gained through 30 years of service in Nairobi, New York, Nordic countries and Vienna, would be helpful.

38. Mr PAPIKYAN (Armenia) said that he wished to thank the current and former Chairs of the Eastern European Group for their efforts to ensure that there was an agreed slate for candidates for membership of the Board. Three years previously, Armenia had decided to submit its candidature for the period 2023–2025, in the expectation that there would be an agreed slate. Unfortunately, it had become necessary to hold a vote.

39. Armenia, which had an operating NPP, had been a member of the Agency for 30 years but had only served on the Board once. If elected, Armenia would contribute to advancing the Agency's core objectives in all key areas and to promoting the Agency's activities aimed at ensuring an effective safeguards regime, high standards of nuclear safety and security and access to nuclear technologies in accordance with the Statute, General Conference resolutions and relevant international conventions and instruments.

40. Armenia would continue to strongly support the TC programme in order to ensure that it was balanced, predictable and results oriented. It would also continue to support the Agency's activities related to nuclear applications in human health, food security, agricultural development, zoonotic disease control, environmental protection, the green energy transition and climate change mitigation. Moreover, Armenia stood ready to make in-kind contributions in support of the Agency's activities.

41. In a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect and in cooperation with other Member States, Armenia would do its utmost to contribute to the advancement of the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear science and technology for peace and development.

42. Mr SADIGBAYLI (Azerbaijan) said that his country had submitted its candidature with the aim of contributing to the Agency's activities related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the strengthening of nuclear safety and security. Azerbaijan attached great importance to its cooperation with the Agency, which had an indispensable role in promoting nuclear energy for global peace, health and prosperity.

43. As an active member of the Agency, Azerbaijan had established successful cooperation with the Secretariat. Moreover, it had a strong record of active participation in dialogue and a rational national policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. If elected, Azerbaijan would facilitate the Agency's activities in priority areas, such as the enhancement of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the improvement of technologies to detect and prevent illicit transfers of nuclear technology and materials, the development and enhancement of verification mechanisms to uphold the safeguards regime, the development of human resources in nuclear physics, and capacity building in nuclear research and medical applications of nuclear technology.

44. Having served on the Board twice, Azerbaijan had gained useful experience and was fully committed to implementing the Statute. As such, his country was ideally placed to contribute to the Agency's work.

45. The PRESIDENT said that, in accordance with Rule 84 of the Rules of Procedure, there would be a single ballot for the two fixed seats to be filled. Accordingly, each Member State that was entitled and eligible to vote would receive one ballot paper specifying the two fixed seats for the area of Eastern Europe in accordance with Article VI.A.2(a) of the Statute. Delegates were requested to indicate on the ballot paper their preference for two candidates, each for one of the two fixed seats from among the eligible States of Eastern Europe. She recalled that Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine had submitted their candidatures.

46. A vote was taken by secret ballot.

47. At the invitation of the President, Ms Cunniffe (Ireland) and Mr Uller (Brazil) acted as tellers.

48. The PRESIDENT proposed that the General Conference take up other items on the agenda while the votes were being counted.

– **Report on the Scientific Forum**

49. The PRESIDENT, recalling that the theme of the Scientific Forum 2023 had been “Nuclear Innovations for Net Zero”, invited the Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2023, Ms Sol Pedre, to report to the General Conference.

50. Ms PEDRE (Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2023) read out the report (annexed hereto).

51. The PRESIDENT thanked Ms Pedre for the interesting report and commended the Secretariat on its excellent preparation of the Scientific Forum 2023, which had been well attended by Member States.

19. Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East (GC(67)/17; GC(67)/L.1)

52. The PRESIDENT said that the item had been included in the agenda pursuant to resolution GC(66)/RES/12. Pursuant to paragraph 13 of that resolution, the Director General had submitted the report set out in document GC(67)/17, which had also been considered by the Board of Governors the previous week. Document GC(67)/L.1 contained a draft resolution submitted by Egypt.

53. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons was crucial to the security of all States and the future of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Since the entry into force of the NPT more than half a century earlier, Egypt and other States conscious of the pivotal importance of the issue had striven to encourage the international community to take practical and serious steps to achieve that goal through numerous initiatives and resolutions that it had submitted to the United Nations and other international forums, and to the General Conference.

54. All those resolutions had been adopted either by consensus or by a significant majority, yet none had been implemented, owing to a lack of political will. The resulting stalemate undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and called into question the sincerity of certain Member States which, despite professing their commitment to ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in various international forums, in reality adopted irrational positions towards genuine efforts to achieve that goal.

55. More than 25 years had passed since the adoption by consensus of the resolution on the Middle East at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. That resolution had served as the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, to which all remaining Arab States had since acceded. However, the international legal commitment set out in that resolution was far from being met. For the current stalemate to be overcome, Member States must work together to support the initiatives called for in the resolutions on the application of safeguards in the Middle East proposed by Egypt to the General Conference each year, which were based on agreed goals regarding universalization of the NPT and CSAs. The implementation of such initiatives would be an important step towards the establishment of a verifiable NWFZ in the Middle East and would build confidence among the international community.

56. Commending the State of Palestine on the ratification of its CSA, as mentioned in the Director General's report set out in document GC(67)/17, Egypt hoped that Israel — the only country in the region that had not acceded to the NPT or concluded a CSA — would be inspired to follow suit, thus universalizing the two instruments in the Middle East.

57. In 2023, Egypt was again submitting to the General Conference a draft resolution on the application of safeguards in the Middle East, as set out in document GC(67)/L.1. The text reflected the will of the international community and provided a strong basis for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East, without excluding any party.

58. Egypt encouraged consultations between the Director General and Member States in the region with a view to ensuring the implementation of the resolution. Egypt also expected the Secretariat to give due attention to ensuring the universalization of the comprehensive safeguards regime and the application of comprehensive safeguards to nuclear facilities in the Middle East, in particular those not subject to any verification or monitoring measures.

59. There was no justification for simply accepting the status quo. Member States had a duty to address the challenges faced and prevent any serious repercussions for international peace and security.

60. Failure to vote in favour of the resolution demonstrated a lack of respect for States' obligations to support the non-proliferation regime and for ongoing efforts in that regard. Egypt therefore hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by the greatest possible majority.

61. Ms ALIZADA (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of NAM, welcomed the report set out in document GC(67)/17 and said that NAM was committed to its principled position on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East.

62. She said that NAM strongly believed that stability could not be achieved in a region where a continuing massive imbalance in military capabilities, in particular owing to the possession of nuclear weapons, allowed one party to threaten its neighbours and others in the region. In its conviction that the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East would be a positive step towards global nuclear disarmament, NAM reiterated its support for the establishment of such a zone in accordance with the relevant UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Moreover, NAM remained convinced that the effective and efficient application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East promoted greater confidence among States in the region. Achieving the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East was the first practical step towards building confidence and was necessary for establishing an NWFZ in that region.

63. For those of its members that were Parties to the NPT, NAM welcomed their conclusion of CSAs with the Agency as non-nuclear-weapon States. NAM noted that all States of the Middle East region except Israel were Parties to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards. It highlighted the accession of the State of Palestine as a Party to the NPT in February 2015 and

welcomed the signing in June 2019 of a CSA between the State of Palestine, as a non-nuclear-weapon State, and the Agency.

64. NAM regretted Israel's continued insistence that Agency safeguards could not be addressed in isolation from the regional peace process. It emphasized that there was no automatic sequence which linked the application of comprehensive safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East with the prior conclusion of a peace settlement, and the former would, in fact, contribute to the latter.

65. NAM noted with regret that the Director General had not been able to make further progress in fulfilling his mandate pursuant to resolution GC(66)/RES/12 regarding the application of comprehensive Agency safeguards covering all nuclear activities in the Middle East. All Member States should work together to reverse that unacceptable situation. NAM encouraged all Member States to participate actively in promoting the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East region as a matter of priority.

66. NAM noted that the Director General would continue consultations in accordance with his mandate regarding the early application of comprehensive Agency safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East region. It welcomed his efforts to encourage the development and consideration of new ideas and approaches that could help in that regard, requesting that he continue to brief Member States regularly on such efforts.

67. Recalling the decision reached by consensus in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the convening, in 2012, of a conference on the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, NAM States Parties to the NPT reiterated their profound disappointment that the 2010 Action Plan had not been implemented. That ran counter to the letter and spirit of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, which constituted the original terms of reference for establishing such a zone, and violated the collective agreement reached at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

68. NAM States Parties to the NPT regretted that, despite intensive consultations, at the 2015 NPT Review Conference it had not been possible to reach agreement on the draft final document, a failure which could have a negative impact on the NPT regime.

69. NAM requested that the Director General continue his efforts and consultations with all Member States on arrangements conducive to the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

70. NAM stressed that the 1995 resolution and other decisions on the subject adopted within the context of the NPT Review Conferences would remain valid until the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East was achieved. Implementation of UN General Assembly decision 73/546 was without prejudice to the validity of the 1995 resolution and other decisions, and should not be construed as their replacement.

71. Lastly, noting that NAM was fully committed to cooperating with the Director General and supporting his efforts to implement resolution GC(66)/RES/12, she said that NAM expected all other Member States to do likewise.

72. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that all countries in the Middle East region, apart from Israel, were Parties to the NPT and had concluded CSAs. It was essential to consolidate efforts to universalize those two instruments, especially CSAs, given their central importance in fulfilling the obligations under Article III of the NPT in accordance with the Agency's Statute.

73. The Group welcomed the entry into force of the CSA signed between the State of Palestine and the Agency, which reflected that country's commitment to all legal frameworks relating to the NPT.

74. The Group regretted that no progress had been made on the implementation of resolution GC(66)/RES/12, despite its adoption by a majority vote. The Agency must do more to implement that resolution, including through additional consultations, in order to break the deadlock on the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. It was not enough to continue simply updating technical reports on the matter. The implementation of the resolution would strengthen the non-proliferation regime and would be consistent with the outcomes of NPT Review Conferences, in particular the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which had laid the legal foundations for the indefinite extension of the NPT. The Group called on all States in the region to implement their international safeguards obligations and to cooperate fully with the Agency in that regard.

75. The Group welcomed the successful outcomes of the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, held in New York in 2022 under Lebanon's able presidency, pursuant to UN General Assembly decision 73/546. Given the relevance of the conference to the Agency's mandated verification and monitoring work, the Group thanked the Agency for participating in the session as an observer. It commended those States that had supported and participated in the first three sessions of the conference and conveyed special thanks to the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom as two of the three NPT depository States and sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, and to China and France, which had attended as nuclear-weapon States. The Group urged those States that had been invited but had not attended — the other sponsor of the 1995 resolution and the remaining States in the region — to reconsider their positions and take part in the future sessions of the conference. The conference process had demonstrated that it did not exclude, isolate or impose conditions and restrictions on any State in the region, especially as consensus had been adopted as the only method of decision-making.

76. The Group looked forward to the active participation of all States in the region and all sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East at the fourth session of the conference, to be held in November 2023 under Libya's presidency, and to objective discussions on drafting a treaty on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

77. More than 25 years since the adoption of the 1995 resolution, the convening of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction had marked the first practical step in reviving the process for establishing such a zone in the Middle East. It was therefore important to capitalize on the opportunity, especially in view of the failure by the Tenth NPT Review Conference to reach agreement on a final document. General Assembly decision 73/546 had joined the library of reference documents on the topic, alongside the outcome documents of the 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences.

78. The Arab Group called on the Agency to continue supporting the conference and requested the Director General to report on its results in his future reports on the application of safeguards in the Middle East.

79. Mr TAMALA (Indonesia) commended the Director General for continuing to hold discussions with representatives of States in the Middle East in an effort to fully implement his mandate in accordance with the relevant resolutions. Indonesia valued the efforts made by States in the Middle East to achieve the universal application of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the region. It was regrettable that resolution GC(66)/RES/12 could not be fully implemented, the Director General having as yet been unable to make further progress in fulfilling his mandate thereunder regarding the application of such safeguards to all nuclear activities in the Middle East. Indonesia urged all States in the region to

participate actively in efforts to bring about the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards, which should be implemented unconditionally.

80. Indonesia underscored the importance of achieving a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, which constituted a key element in the ongoing effort to ensure the security and stability of the region and would make a significant contribution to maintaining international peace and security. In that regard, his country emphasized the importance of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in New York in November 2023, which was long overdue.

81. Mr BERTI OLIVA (Cuba) said that his country had supported the establishment of NWFZs in various regions as part of efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament. Noting that the early establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East formed part of the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, he said that it was regrettable that, 28 years later, the resolution had still not been implemented. The same could be said of the Action Plan and the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

82. Cuba supported the convening of the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and encouraged all States in the Middle East to participate in good faith in negotiations to conclude a treaty on the establishment of such a zone, which would help to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament and mark a significant step forward in the regional peace process.

83. Israel — the only country in the region that had not acceded to, and had not even announced its intention to accede to, the NPT — must relinquish its nuclear weapons, accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and submit all its nuclear facilities to comprehensive Agency safeguards, unconditionally and without delay, in line with the calls of the international community.

84. Cuba was proud that Latin America and the Caribbean had been the first densely populated area in the world to be declared an NWFZ, pursuant to the Tlatelolco Treaty. The establishment of internationally recognized NWFZs strengthened international peace and security and the non-proliferation regime and made an important contribution to achieving nuclear disarmament.

85. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel), said that, in the past, his country had joined the consensus on the General Conference resolution on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, reflecting a shared vision for regional stability and security. However, Israel could not support the language of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.1 in its current form, which implied that adherence to the NPT was a means of enhancing peace and security in the Middle East. Such a concept was inherently flawed as it did not take regional realities into account.

86. While Israel had repeatedly expressed its commitment to the non-proliferation regime, four States in the region — the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic — had failed to comply with their obligations under the NPT. Violations included the development of clandestine nuclear weapon programmes and the covert construction of a military nuclear reactor in Syria. Accordingly, while Israel shared the vision articulated by the draft resolution, the lack of a solid foundation for adherence to agreements in the region, coupled with an absence of mutual recognition and trust, had led it to conclude that the text lacked the required balance, given the regional circumstances.

87. Israel attached high importance to the non-proliferation regime and shared its goals. Nevertheless, the geopolitical situation in the Middle East clearly demonstrated that the NPT did not provide a remedy for the unique security challenges of the region, especially considering the repeated violations of the NPT by several States Parties. Accession to the NPT was not a goal in and of itself. Calls for universal accession to the NPT must also be judged against the views held by some in the region concerning the

State of Israel, the existence of which was not recognized by several Arab States, and the position of Iran, which had openly and explicitly called for Israel's destruction.

88. Lessons learned from other regions had shown that a regional security framework could stem only from the shared political will of all regional parties to engage directly with one another and to take into consideration the security concerns of each and every State on the basis of consensus. A comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East and full compliance by all States of the region with their non-proliferation obligations were prerequisites for the establishment of a zone free of all WMDs. The current regrettable situation in the Middle East and the manifold threats, conventional and non-conventional alike, justified Israel's approach.

89. Israel would therefore be obliged to vote against paragraph 2 of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.1 and to abstain on the draft resolution as a whole; he accordingly requested that separate votes be taken on paragraph 2 and on the draft resolution as a whole.

90. Ms PEÑA ARAQUE (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the effective and efficient application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East promoted greater confidence among States in the region. Achieving the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East was the first practical step towards that goal and was necessary for the establishment of an NWFZ in the region.

91. Venezuela regretted that no further progress had been made in fulfilling the Director General's mandate under resolution GC(66)/12. Her country considered that establishing an NWFZ would be a positive step towards global nuclear disarmament and would greatly enhance regional and international peace and security. Venezuela reiterated its support for the creation of such a zone, pursuant to the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In that connection, her country highlighted the importance of the previous three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

92. Venezuela had insisted in various international forums on the urgent need for Israel to accede immediately to the NPT, place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards in order to remove any doubts about its nuclear programme, and contribute to the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East.

93. Venezuela concluded by stressing that the 1995 resolution, together with other decisions adopted at NPT Review Conferences, remained valid until a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs had been established.

94. Mr ULYANOV (Russian Federation) said that his country had consistently supported the creation of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, believing that it was an important element in strengthening nuclear non-proliferation and regional security. The First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, held in Vienna in August 2023, had demonstrated that the matter remained firmly on the Review Conference's agenda.

95. The next important step in addressing the issue would come at the fourth session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in New York in November 2023. The Russian Federation had gratefully accepted the invitation to participate once again as an observer to the Conference and highlighted the importance of the regular attendance of other Member States, including China, the United Kingdom and France. In addition, there was a need for the active involvement of the Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Implementation Support Unit of the Convention on the

Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction.

96. The positive outcomes of the previous three sessions of the conference had all helped to move the process forward. Moreover, Israel's previous active participation in informal consultations held in Glion and Geneva had proven to be very useful. In that context, his country believed that Israel should perhaps reconsider its negative, suspicious attitude towards the conference: self-isolation was not a constructive approach in the international arena. In that regard, it was prudent that conference participants had left the door open to Israel to join the conference at any time, perhaps initially as an observer and then — once Israel was reassured that the process would not harm its national interests — as an active participant. Dialogue on the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, as an important element of confidence-building, should be integral to efforts to improve relations between States in the region, which were gaining momentum. The participation of all States in the Middle East without exception was therefore more important than ever and in the interests of all.

97. It was regrettable that the USA, by declining to participate in the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, continued to evade its obligations as a sponsor of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which had enabled the indefinite extension of the NPT without a vote. For unjustifiable reasons the USA — which claimed to be a world leader in the area of non-proliferation — continued to sabotage the conference.

98. Participants of the Conference had now begun to make gradual progress in drafting a future agreement on a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. As States in the region were well aware, it was necessary to proceed slowly and with the utmost caution. In that context, it was worth considering the possibility of bringing in experts to support discussions at the conference's fourth session, in particular those concerning the nuclear aspects of the zone. Moreover, there would be tangible benefits to holding discussions in other UN forums; in particular those in Vienna could provide technical expertise in a depoliticized environment.

99. Within the limits of its status as an observer of the conference, the Russian Federation stood ready to provide its good offices to States in the region and would continue to provide the necessary assistance — including political assistance — for making progress towards the establishment of zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East.

100. Recalling that the 1995 resolution was an integral part of the NPT review process and would remain valid until its objectives were achieved, he said that any positive developments were sure to have a favourable effect on its implementation. The participation in the Conference of all States in the region would undoubtedly help to address the situation in the Middle East.

8. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (resumed)

101. The PRESIDENT announced the result of the ballot for the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe.

102. In the election of two members for the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe, the result of the vote was as follows:

<u>Ballot papers returned:</u>	132
<u>Invalid votes:</u>	0
<u>Abstentions:</u>	3

<u>Number of those present and voting:</u>	129
<u>Valid votes:</u>	240
<u>Required majority:</u>	65
<u>Votes obtained:</u>	
Armenia	94
Azerbaijan	67
Ukraine	79

103. Having obtained the required majority and the highest number of votes, Armenia and Ukraine were duly elected to the two fixed seats for Eastern Europe.

104. The PRESIDENT congratulated the 11 Member States elected to the Board of Governors and recalled that, under Article VI.D of the Statute, they would hold office from the end of the current regular session of the General Conference until the end of its sixty-ninth (2025) regular session.

19. Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East (resumed) (GC(67)/17; GC(67)/L.1)

105. Mr MOLEKANE (South Africa) said that, in the interests of time, he would address the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East and Israeli nuclear capabilities in one statement.

106. Through the universalization of the NPT, as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime, a world free of nuclear weapons could be achieved. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons complemented and strengthened the NPT and its goals of non-proliferation and disarmament. The establishment of NWFZs in various regions, including the Middle East, would make a significant contribution towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.1 was an integral step towards achieving that goal.

107. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference had adopted a firm and unequivocal resolution calling on States in the Middle East to take practical steps towards the establishment in the region of a zone free of WMDs and nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. South Africa recalled that the 1995 resolution, the objectives of which were yet to be realized, had been sponsored by certain States present at the General Conference, some of which had since abandoned their responsibilities in that regard.

108. While appreciating the positive actions taken by the States of the region in holding three sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, South Africa regretted that one State of the region had chosen not to participate in those sessions. It was also regrettable that the nuclear programmes of some States in the region remained outside the scope of Agency safeguards.

109. His country therefore called on Israel to become a State Party to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State, and to subject its nuclear programme to the scrutiny of the safeguards regime by signing and ratifying a CSA and an additional protocol.

110. He also called on the sponsors of the 1995 resolution to honour their commitments and support the region in the establishment of a zone free of WMDs. Such an approach would mark significant

progress towards the establishment and maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East and beyond.

111. Reiterating his country's long-standing position that global peace and security could be achieved only with the total elimination of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, and assurances that they would never again be produced, he said that South Africa would vote in favour of the draft resolution.

112. Ms SABRI (Iraq) recalled that General Conference resolution GC(66)/RES/12 affirmed the urgent need for all States in the Middle East to accept the application of full-scope Agency safeguards to all their nuclear activities as an important means of building confidence within the region and as a step towards enhanced peace and security in the context of the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

113. She said that Iraq welcomed the entry into force of the CSA signed between the State of Palestine and the Agency, which reflected that country's commitment to all legal frameworks in relation to the NPT.

114. All States in the region were party to the NPT and had concluded CSAs — except for the Israeli entity, which maintained its claim that the safeguards system and NPT were insufficient to guarantee security and that Agency safeguards and other security issues could not be addressed in isolation from efforts to establish the conditions for regional stability. Such claims represented an intentional effort to hinder the establishment of a much needed NWFZ in the Middle East.

115. Her country had hoped that progress would be made in implementing resolution GC(66)/RES/12 and held on to that hope, especially as the resolution had been adopted by a majority vote. Iraq called for greater efforts to be made and further talks to be held to implement the resolution. Her country called on the three depository States of the NPT, and the international community as a whole, to take the necessary steps to implement all resolutions on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, in particular the resolution adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference — forming the legal framework for the indefinite extension of the Treaty — and the outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which included a road map and principles for moving towards the establishment of such a zone.

116. Iraq praised the efforts made to hold the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in 2022. Her country had participated, alongside most other States in the region, but the Israeli entity had continued to make excuses for remaining outside the non-proliferation regime. Affirming its support for Libya's presidency of the forthcoming fourth session of the conference, her country looked forward to the participation of all relevant parties in the region and reiterated its support for the efforts of the Secretariat and the Director General to exercise the mandate given to them by the General Conference.

117. Iraq reaffirmed its full commitment to all treaties, agreements and international efforts aimed at achieving, promoting and universalizing non-proliferation. Citing Iraq's past as a pretext for disregarding the safeguards regime was a flimsy argument that did not relieve the Israeli entity of its obligation to accede to the NPT as soon as possible. Noting that the Agency firmly rejected attacks against any peaceful facility under the safeguards regime, she recalled the Israeli strike on Iraqi nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards on 7 June 1981.

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

119. Mr OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic), welcoming the conclusion of a CSA by the State of Palestine, said that, since the adoption of the resolution on the Middle East at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference — forming the basis for the indefinite extension of the Treaty — all NPT States Parties in the region had stood ready to take practical action to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. Regrettably, Israel's refusal, with the unqualified support of its allies, to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State had prevented any progress in that endeavour.

120. Anyone following the issue over the preceding quarter of a century would be deeply disappointed by not only Israel's continued defiance but also the USA's constant opposition to any international resolution or initiative to end Israel's possession of nuclear capabilities and bring it into the sphere of international accountability. To divert attention from the threat of those capabilities, the USA resorted to imposing impossible conditions, unilaterally withdrawing from agreements, launching parallel disinformation campaigns or fabricating accusations and lies.

121. Syria had endorsed General Assembly decision 73/546 providing for the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction as a parallel effort to revive the stalled implementation of the 1995 resolution and not as a replacement for the resolution. Since then, his country had been working with the States of the region to establish such a zone, including through active participation in the first three sessions of the conference. Surprised at the refusal of one sponsor of the 1995 resolution to participate in the conference, and its obstruction of the resolution's implementation, Syria stood ready to work seriously and openly with all participating States to achieve a legally binding NWFZ treaty to guarantee regional and international security.

122. Ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons required Israel to demonstrate genuine will by acceding to the NPT and other international conventions on WMDs; regional and international peace and security would remain in jeopardy until it did so. Syria therefore called on Member States to support the draft resolution.

123. Mr TORABI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was regrettable that, 53 years after its entry into force, the NPT was far from being universalized. Some States conditioned accession to the NPT on the establishment of a specific environment, while others were reluctant to accede to it because of the perceived threat from nuclear-weapon States. It was important to acknowledge the seriousness of the issue, which posed a danger to the integrity and credibility of the arms control and disarmament architecture. Considering the increasingly complex dynamics within international relations, where extreme nationalist factors were rising up above established international preferences, Iran believed that it was imperative for all to maintain multilateralism in the interests of humanity as a whole.

124. The issue of the universality of the NPT, and specifically nuclear weapon capabilities in the Middle East, should be addressed without prejudice. His country believed that overlooking such an important issue directly affected regional and international peace and stability. It challenged the established global arms-control norms and damaged the credibility and viability of the Agency and its safeguards regime.

125. Iran stressed that the continued and dangerous presence of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and activities of the Israeli regime could no longer be ignored. Since all in the Middle East region, except the Israeli regime, were Parties to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards, that regime's acquisition of a clandestine nuclear capability, in complete disregard of international law, posed an ongoing serious threat to the security and stability of the region and the world. The situation also provided a compelling reason for the region's States to seek the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East, which was part and parcel of the 1995 resolution providing for the unlimited extension of the NPT, and was long overdue. Opposition to the establishment of such a zone

could be construed as a rejection of all the tangible steps taken by the international community thus far in that regard.

126. By refusing to accede to the NPT, in flagrant violation of all international norms and regulations, the Israeli regime and its supporters continued to ignore legitimate regional and international concerns. The development of any sort of nuclear explosive device anywhere in the world should be a cause for alarm and be condemned promptly and without any prejudice or discrimination. Member States and the Secretariat should therefore engage constructively in efforts to achieve the universal application of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East and reverse the current unacceptable and unsustainable situation.

127. The current nuclear crisis in the Middle East would be remedied only if the Israeli regime promptly and unconditionally acceded to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and placed all its nuclear capabilities, materials and installations under comprehensive Agency safeguards.

128. Iran underlined that nuclear weapons posed a serious threat to security in the Middle East and globally. The legal norms on nuclear disarmament, and the prohibition and proliferation of nuclear weapons, should therefore be upheld so that world peace and security could be strengthened.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

IAEA Scientific Forum 2023 Nuclear Innovations for Net Zero

The sixty-seventh regular session of the General Conference

Ms Sol Pedre (General Manager, CAREM Project, National Atomic Energy Commission, Argentina)

Ms President, Director General, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to present to the General Conference the report on the IAEA Scientific Forum 2023 with this year's theme "Nuclear Innovations for Net Zero".

The annual IAEA Scientific Forum during the General Conference showcases how the peaceful application of nuclear science and technology can help address contemporary challenges.

This year, Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi decided for the Scientific Forum to focus on how innovations in nuclear technologies can help quickly replace fossil-based energy production with safe and reliable low-carbon nuclear power.

Nuclear power, with a proven low carbon footprint and experience of safe, secure and stable operation over decades, provides an alternative to replace fossil energy-based plants and to achieve Net Zero energy systems.

In addition to large water cooled nuclear power plants, new types are being developed to be small, modular, sometimes transportable, and answering specific needs such as supplying backup power to smaller electricity grids, sea water desalination, heating cities, providing steam to industries, or producing hydrogen to decarbonize the industry and transport sectors. Developers worldwide are investigating exciting technologies based on concepts with inherent safety features or that help close the fuel cycle.

In three sessions over two days, leading experts from around the world highlighted the role of new nuclear reactors for energy production; explored the importance of innovations, such as artificial intelligence (AI), digitalization, robotics and advanced manufacturing, in supporting nuclear development; and showcased how nuclear technology can be used to avoid greenhouse gases in industrial applications and other areas.

The Forum was opened by Mr Rafael Mariano Grossi, IAEA Director General, who emphasised the essential role of innovation to advance nuclear power and, ultimately, fight climate change. Nuclear innovations are necessary, important and can be key to support the integration of nuclear energy as part of the solutions that countries need to meet net zero goals, Mr Grossi continued, adding that innovation will play an essential role in further improving the performance, safety and life of existing fleets, and waste management. Mr Grossi stressed the need for a fair and equitable financial environment for nuclear initiatives and achieving a "a level playing field" with other forms of energy production when it comes to financing nuclear projects.

In his address, His Excellency Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana, said that more countries are increasingly interested in nuclear energy. He emphasized Ghana's commitment to a clean energy transition and shared the Government's plans to include nuclear power in the country's electricity generation mix. Ghana is evaluating small modular reactors (SMRs) and collaborating with international partners and industry experts to assess the feasibility of rapid deployment and affordability.

Next, Her Excellency Ms Jennifer Granholm, Secretary of Energy, United States of America, stressed that plans to reaching her Government's 2050 net zero goals depended on at least tripling the country's nuclear energy capacity to 300 gigawatts or more, and on the use of innovative nuclear reactors

for non-electric applications to decarbonize energy intensive industries such as hydrogen production, desalination, district heating, petroleum refining and fertilizer production. She stressed the Government's strong commitment to supporting nuclear power through investment and tax incentives and encouraged more countries to look at nuclear energy to achieve Net Zero.

His Excellency Mr Lee Jong-Ho, Minister, Ministry of Science and ICT (MSIT), Republic of Korea, highlighted the country's focus on developing advanced reactors. In 2012, Korea's first SMR – SMART – received the standard design approval from the Korean regulator. The Korean Government plans to transfer SMART and other advanced nuclear technologies to the private sector to help demonstrate and commercialize new reactors.

In her video message, Her Excellency Ms Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Morocco, explained that the Government is considering adding nuclear power to its energy mix to ensure a reliable energy supply including for desalination, with a focus on SMRs due to their numerous advantages such as the flexibility for integration into medium sized electricity grids.

His Excellency Mr Daniel Westlén, Vice Minister for Climate and the Environment, Sweden, stressed that a stable power system relied on having low-carbon dispatchable energy to meet demand flexibly as part of the energy mix. Nuclear energy was the only available option to meet all these requirements, Mr Westlén pointed out. The history of Sweden's nuclear program proved that large scale nuclear power programs can be implemented swiftly, he said.

His Excellency Mr François Jacq, General Administrator, French Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), France, stressed that providing affordable and sustainable energy was an increasingly difficult task and that innovation in many forms – applications, approaches, technologies, and cooperation between research and technology organizations – was needed to tackle this challenge.

In her keynote speech Ms Isabelle Boemeke, a Brazilian-born nuclear social media energy influencer, reflected on the power of social media to inform young audiences and called upon political leaders to actively reach out and listen to young people. She called on the audience to act as leaders.

The first technical session, entitled “New Nuclear Reactors for Energy Production” concentrated on new reactor concepts, their development, licensing and implementation. Speakers presented various concepts and went into details of some novel reactor concepts. From the presentations, it became evident that SMR projects are reaching a phase of concrete implementation, often with aggressive timelines. All participants agreed that partnerships between the public and private sectors and good interactions with regulators are essential for project successes. On their side, regulators are evolving, preparing for the deployment of SMR's and other uses of nuclear power.

The second technical session, entitled “Innovative Solutions to Support Nuclear Development”, provided insights on nuclear fuel cycle innovations, advanced exploration techniques, the integration of AI and digital technologies in plant operations, and presented innovative solutions like robots and tomography for decommissioning and addressing challenges in Fukushima. Speakers demonstrated concrete applications of novel technologies that rendered improvements in several stages of the fuel cycle from Uranium mining, power plant maintenance and operation, to decommissioning and waste management.

The third and last technical session, with the title “Nuclear Power Going Beyond Electricity Production”, looked at new applications of nuclear power, including floating nuclear power plants for providing electricity to remote areas, seawater desalination, and using nuclear-produced electricity and heat to produce hydrogen and decarbonize industrial processes, for example, in the oil and gas industry.

The panel showed that new reactors provide viable innovative options to decarbonise some of the most emission intensive industries and thus could play an essential role in tackling climate change.

During the panel *Nuclear for NetZero: Youth Leading the Way*, emerging nuclear experts discussed the young generation's perspective on nuclear power. Speakers agreed that storytelling to convey nuclear science was paramount to reaching younger audiences and that nuclear science had the potential to develop an appeal like space exploration or rocket science.

During the "Closing session: The Way Forward", Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and a distinguished panel, including two Ministers, reflected on the Scientific Forum's outcomes and individual countries' perspectives on the future of nuclear power.

His Excellency Mr Kai Mykkänen, Minister of Climate and Environment of the Republic of Finland, pointed out that Finland's nuclear power plants, including Europe's largest nuclear reactor, decisively contributed to price stability and security of supply in the current volatile energy market.

His Excellency Mr Andrew Bowie MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Nuclear and Networks), United Kingdom, described his Government's ambitious plans to expand nuclear power in the United Kingdom and stressed the importance of international cooperation to advance the nuclear sector.

Mr Yu Jianfeng, Chairman of the China National Nuclear Corporation, said that an extensive programme to expand the fleet of large reactors was underway in the country and that China also envisioned using small modular reactors. China's fast and large-scale expansion was possible due to a large base of qualified experts in the country, Mr Yu said.

Mr Peter Baeten, Director General, Belgian Nuclear Research Center SCK CEN, Belgium, stressed the importance of innovations for lifetime extension of existing nuclear reactors and end of cycle solutions. He also highlighted that societal acceptance was paramount regarding new builds.

In her remarks, Ms Sama Bilbao, Director General of the World Nuclear Association (WNA), stressed that the nuclear industry has been innovating for decades, resulting in highly efficient nuclear power plants operating today. Ms Bilbao sees potential for innovation in new forms of financing, licensing, regulatory processes, business models and in attracting new talents. Heat from nuclear reactors could decarbonise concrete, steel, plastics and ammonia production, which are amongst the most greenhouse gas intensive industries.

In his remarks, IAEA Director General Grossi concluded that nuclear power was indeed moving forward on a global level. The development takes different forms and shapes and moves at different paces, the Director General said, but nuclear is now firmly positioned in the global discussion about ways to Net Zero energy systems. He concluded that it is a constant effort of dialogue, and that the Agency is addressing the need for the industry, regulators, politicians, decision makers and scientists to have forums to take this momentum forward.