

# General Conference

**GC(67)/OR.9**

Issued: December 2023

**General Distribution**

Original: English

---

## Sixty-seventh regular session

# Plenary

## Record of the Ninth Meeting

*Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Thursday, 28 September 2023, at 3.15 p.m.*

**President:** Ms MANGKLATANAKUL (Thailand)

### Contents

Item of the agenda <sup>1</sup>		Paragraphs
19	Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East ( <i>continued</i> )	1–17
20	Israeli nuclear capabilities	18–88
21	Status of Palestine in the International Atomic Energy Agency	89–132

---

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

---

<sup>1</sup> GC(67)/24

**Abbreviations used in this record**

CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
G-77	Group of 77
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
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
PMOs	Policy-Making Organs
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TPNW	Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction

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

1. The PRESIDENT recalled that Israel had requested that a separate vote be taken on paragraph 2 of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.1.

2. At the request of Egypt, a roll-call vote was taken.

3. New Zealand, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

4. The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

Against: Israel

Abstaining: Albania, Angola, Bahamas, Canada, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, India, Rwanda, Togo, Uganda, United States of America.

5. There were 114 votes in favour and 1 against, with 11 abstentions. Paragraph 2 of the draft resolution was adopted.

6. Mr MAZUMDAR (India), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had abstained because it believed that paragraph 2 of the draft resolution contained elements that were extraneous to the Agency.

7. The PRESIDENT noted that Israel had requested a vote on the whole of the draft resolution contained in document GC(67)/L.1.

8. At the request of Egypt, a roll-call vote was taken.

9. Mali, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

10. The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

Abstaining: Bahamas, Canada, Israel, Rwanda, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America.

11. There were 115 votes in favour and none against, with 8 abstentions. The draft resolution was adopted.

12. Mr SOLOMON (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country continued to support many of the goals outlined in the resolution just adopted, in particular the long-term goal of a Middle East free of WMDs and their delivery systems, along with comprehensive and durable regional peace. The USA was committed to working with the States in the region to advance that important goal in an inclusive, consensus-based manner that took into account the legitimate regional security concerns of all those States. The USA strongly supported a number of key elements in the resolution, including the importance of confidence- and security-building measures, the need for adherence by States of the region to existing non-proliferation obligations, and the necessity of pursuing those goals in the context of regional peace efforts.

13. The USA welcomed the resolution's recognition of the importance of Agency safeguards as a tool for verifying the exclusively peaceful nature of nuclear activities in the region. With the significant expansion of nuclear energy in that region, including reported interest in nuclear fuel cycle activities, the additional protocol was an essential tool for States to demonstrate a commitment to the strongest non-proliferation standards and to provide the international community with important assurances regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. The USA encouraged all States in the region that had not yet done so to sign and bring into force an additional protocol without further delay and encouraged the four States that had not yet done so to modify or rescind, as appropriate, their outdated SQPs. The USA urged all States in the region to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the Agency in fulfilling their obligations under their CSAs.

14. For many years, the General Conference resolution on safeguards in the Middle East had been adopted by consensus pursuant to a mutually agreed approach among States in the region. Unfortunately, that approach had been abandoned in 2006 in favour of the submission of a draft resolution that could not command consensus and was pursued alongside an unconstructive agenda item aimed at isolating

one State in the region. The USA urged the co-sponsors of the resolution to re-engage with their regional neighbours to return to a consensus-based approach to such issues so that they could be addressed in a more collaborative and productive manner in the future.

15. Ms HOURNAU-POUËZAT (France), speaking in explanation of vote also on behalf of Germany and the UK, said that all three countries had supported the resolution in the same spirit as at previous sessions of the General Conference. They viewed it exclusively in the context of the NPT and the Agency. The word 'relevant' in paragraph 3 clearly related solely to the application of safeguards, in line with the title of the resolution. France, Germany and the UK continued to support efforts to promote a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs and their delivery systems on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among all the States of the region concerned.

16. Mr PINDER (Bahamas), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country associated itself with the statement made by the USA, in that one State should not be isolated by the other States of the region.

17. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), expressing sincere thanks to the States that had supported the resolution, called on the States that had abstained in the vote to reconsider their positions in 2024. They should stand on the right side of history in support of the world's conscience and the collective will of the international community to achieve the lofty goals and concepts laid out in the resolution and to shape a new reality in the Middle East.

## **20. Israeli Nuclear Capabilities** (GC(67)/1/Add.1, GC(67)/15)

18. The PRESIDENT said that the item had been included in the agenda at the request of Arab States that were members of the Agency. It was covered by an explanatory memorandum contained in document GC(67)/1/Add.1 and by document GC(67)/15.

19. Ms ALIZADA (Azerbaijan), speaking on behalf of NAM, said 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.

20. NAM welcomed the fact that its member States party to the NPT had concluded CSAs with the Agency as non-nuclear-weapon States, and noted that all States of the Middle East region except for Israel were party to the NPT and had undertaken to accept comprehensive Agency safeguards.

21. 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.

22. NAM noted with concern that the selective approach to the issue of nuclear capabilities in the Middle East undermined the viability of the Agency's safeguards regime and had resulted in the continued and dangerous presence of Israeli nuclear facilities and activities that were not subject to comprehensive Agency safeguards, despite repeated calls on Israel to sign a CSA.

23. She expressed NAM's great concern regarding the acquisition of nuclear capability by Israel, which posed a serious and continuing threat to the security of its neighbouring and other States, and regarding the continuing provision of access for Israeli scientists to the nuclear facilities of one nuclear-weapon State.

24. All Member States should cooperate to rectify that unacceptable situation and achieve the universality of comprehensive Agency safeguards in the Middle East, first of all by implementing resolution GC(53)/RES/17.

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

26. NAM reiterated its call for the total and complete prohibition of the transfer of all nuclear-related equipment, information, material and facilities, resources or devices and the extension of assistance in nuclear-related scientific or technological fields to Israel.

27. NAM further noted that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, in his letter to the Director General attached to document GC(54)/14, had stated that Israel valued the non-proliferation regime, acknowledged its importance and had, over the years, demonstrated a responsible policy of restraint in the nuclear domain. Regrettably, the official records of the Agency were testimony to the contrary. NAM recalled the various General Conference resolutions issued before 1994 regarding South Africa's nuclear capabilities. Those resolutions had recalled various UN General Assembly resolutions concerning relations between Israel and apartheid South Africa and military and nuclear collaboration with apartheid South Africa, which had strongly condemned the extensive collaboration between Israel and the then racist regime of apartheid South Africa, especially in the military and nuclear fields, in defiance of UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

28. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, recalled that, in September 2009, the General Conference had adopted resolution GC(53)/RES/17 calling on Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards and expressing deep concern about Israeli nuclear capabilities completely outside the non-proliferation regime.

29. The 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences had emphasized in their Final Documents the importance of Israel's accession to the NPT and of embarking on a process leading to full implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The 2010 Review Conference had called on the Secretary-General and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution, in consultation with the States of the region, to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs. The Arab Group regretted the failure to convene the conference in 2012 and the failure of the convening parties to fulfil the mandate given to them by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The international community ought to shoulder its responsibilities and abide by its obligation to rid the world — and the Middle East region in particular — of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

30. Despite immense efforts by its President, the 2015 NPT Review Conference had failed to reach consensus on its draft final document owing to the objection of three States, which had impeded progress in establishing the desired Middle East zone and had obstructed efforts to universalize the NPT in the Middle East. The NPT Review Conference held in August 2022 had also failed to agree on its draft final document, making it impossible to review and build on the implementation of obligations during the previous review cycles, in particular on the subject of the Middle East.

31. The disappointing absence of progress in implementing the 1995 resolution continued to set back international efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs; further international efforts to implement it must not be allowed to fail. Having served as the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, the resolution would remain in effect until its objectives had been achieved.

32. Israel's harmful nuclear practices had been a source of concern for many States in the region and worldwide. Those practices had been discussed in many international bodies over the preceding decades, and a long list of resolutions calling on Israel to accede to the NPT and to place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive safeguards had been adopted by various international organizations.

33. Israel categorically refused to implement those resolutions, preferring to downplay the importance of the NPT by labelling it as ineffective in the Middle East. Israel's failure to accede to the NPT threatened regional peace and security and efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, especially as that country's development of nuclear weapons had been acknowledged by numerous Israeli officials and mentioned in a number of international reports on the subject.

34. Israel continued to pursue policies and practices hostile to Arab States and peoples and to occupy their territories. The Arab Group's concern over Israel's possession of nuclear weapons was heightened by the latter's failure to exercise self-restraint and by its use of indiscriminate force against unarmed civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories.

35. The Group believed that peace efforts were served by any initiative to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East, in particular the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, the third session of which had taken place in 2022 in New York under the presidency of Lebanon. The Group was deeply troubled by Israel's continued refusal to participate in such positive initiatives and its repeated attempts to impose a new order of priorities to enable it to remain outside the NPT indefinitely. Action to prevent nuclear proliferation in the Middle East was a core task assigned to the Agency and a fundamental obligation, bearing in mind the nuclear threat that Israel posed not only to regional stability, but also to international peace and security.

36. The Group regretted that some Member States, including nuclear-weapon States, continued to contradict their publicly stated positions and to disregard the principle of the universality of the NPT, in particular at the General Conference and in the Board of Governors, when it came to Israeli nuclear capabilities and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, thereby clearly demonstrating their double standards. The Group continued to request that the item concerning Israeli nuclear capabilities remain on the agenda of the PMOs.

37. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) said that his country set much store by the goals of non-proliferation and the universalization of the CSA, the fundamental legal instrument underpinning the Agency's work on verifying the peaceful nature of nuclear materials and facilities.

38. Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards undermined efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, especially as the other States in the region had acceded to the NPT. Noting the disappointing lack of progress towards the universalization of the CSA, in particular in the Middle East, Egypt congratulated the State of Palestine on the recent entry into force of its CSA. Efforts to universalize the CSA must be stepped up; maintaining the status quo would harm the credibility of the non-proliferation regime.

39. In view of the support provided by the Agency for development of the safeguards system, Egypt hoped that the Agency would give similar priority to the universalization of the CSA as the main verification standard under the NPT, before considering that of the additional protocol. The implementation of the CSA was a confidence-building measure in the Middle East and an important step towards the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the region.

40. In exchange for approving the indefinite extension of the NPT, participants in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference had adopted, by consensus, a resolution calling for the Middle East

to be rid of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. Although Egypt and other Arab States had striven to implement that resolution, no significant progress had been made owing to unjustified resistance. Nevertheless, the persistent efforts of the Arab States to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East had led to a pivotal development, namely the holding of three successful sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction in New York in 2019, 2021 and 2022.

41. Expressing its appreciation to all the parties that had supported, participated in and contributed to the success of the three sessions of the conference, Egypt noted that the places of the two States that had not attended had been left empty to symbolize that their invitation still stood. His country looked forward to all concerned countries participating in the fourth session of the conference, scheduled for November 2023, in order to build on previous progress and begin a substantive discussion on the provisions of an NWFZ treaty.

42. At meetings of the Board of Governors, some delegations had emphasized that direct regional dialogue was the only means of establishing an NWFZ in the Middle East. Egypt pointed out that States in the region had attempted to hold such dialogue within various frameworks and forums since the 1990s only to be met by an absence of political will and irrational excuses for shunning that goal. Egypt therefore urged Israel to reconsider its position and participate in the upcoming session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. It would be an important opportunity for holding the direct dialogue always called for by Israel and for addressing all relevant concerns through an inclusive process over which all parties had ownership.

43. With preparations already under way for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, including the recent first meeting of the Preparatory Committee, it was increasingly important to take practical steps towards establishing a Middle East NWFZ, as progress in that area would contribute to the success of the Review Conference. To that end, concerted efforts were needed to universalize the CSA and subject all nuclear activities and installations in the Middle East to the comprehensive safeguards system.

44. He concluded by reiterating that the item on Israeli nuclear capabilities was at the core of the Agency's work and mandate, given its key role in the global non-proliferation regime and in the application of the safeguards system. The argument that the issue was beyond the Agency's scope was merely an attempt to shirk responsibility and avoid serious engagement in long-overdue discussions to establish a Middle East NWFZ.

45. Mr ASSAF (Lebanon) said that the item's continued inclusion on the General Conference's agenda reflected the failure to resolve a troubling and critical issue, namely that a single country in the region — Israel — possessed nuclear capabilities outside any international legal or regulatory framework.

46. Unequal legal rights among States and the application of double standards were serious impediments to disarmament efforts and exacerbated the risks of nuclear proliferation. Israel was the only non-party to the NPT in the Middle East and it was not bound by an Agency safeguards agreement, thus creating a recipe for regional and global insecurity and instability. The international community must increase pressure on Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon party and to subject all its nuclear facilities and activities to the Agency's safeguards system, pursuant to numerous international resolutions, in particular General Conference resolution GC(53)/RES/17 of 2009 and UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981).

47. The goal of ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons had been endorsed by the international community through a number of international instruments, in particular those of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 NPT Review Conferences. However, owing to Israel's intransigence, the UN General Assembly,



through its decision 73/546, had established a parallel process, in the form of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to achieve that goal.

48. With the approaching conclusion of its presidency of the third session of the conference, Lebanon called on all concerned States to assume their responsibilities and engage in the process in order to rid the region of all WMDs. Until that aim was achieved, Israel's nuclear capabilities would remain a source of deep concern for the region and the world, and those seeking peace and security in the region would remain determined to keep the item on the General Conference's agenda.

49. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America) said that her country regretted that the item had once again been included on the agenda. Israel had not violated any agreements with the Agency and was a substantial contributor to the Agency's work.

50. While it welcomed the Arab Group's decision not to submit a resolution on Israeli nuclear capabilities, the USA regretted that there continued to be contentious discussions on the issue, which diverted time and energy from the important technical work of the General Conference. The politicized debate under the current agenda item was counterproductive to the shared goal of a Middle East free of WMDs and their delivery systems and seemed increasingly detached from regional, political and security realities. The USA encouraged the States concerned to engage directly with their neighbours in an inclusive and cooperative manner to address regional security concerns.

51. Mr BERTI OLIVA (Cuba) welcomed the Arab Group's initiative to once again include the item on the agenda, as a sensitive subject with serious implications for regional and international peace and security.

52. He reaffirmed his country's support for the early establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs, which would contribute significantly to the peace and security of all the peoples of the region.

53. Israel remained the only country in the Middle East not to have acceded to the NPT, despite the international community's repeated calls for it to do so. Such inaction posed a serious obstacle to creating a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East. The establishment of such a zone would represent a considerable step towards nuclear disarmament and contribute to the peace process in the region. Compliance with all General Conference resolutions on that subject was also essential.

54. Israel must place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. Transforming the Middle East into a zone of peace and security for all required genuine political will, the elimination of double standards with regard to nuclear disarmament, the rejection of the indulgent attitude towards Israel shown by a number of States, and unanimous insistence on the destruction of Israel's nuclear arsenal, under international supervision.

55. Mr AL-ERYANI (Yemen) said that the adoption in 2009 of General Conference resolution GC(53)/RES/17 calling on Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards had reflected Member States' deep concern regarding Israel's nuclear capabilities and the dangers that they posed to regional peace and security.

56. Israel's insistence on maintaining its nuclear capabilities could lead to a Middle East arms race, thus heightening regional tension and seriously undermining efforts to achieve regional and international peace, security and stability. Moreover, Israel's nuclear facilities also had the potential to cause a nuclear accident with catastrophic repercussions for the region's inhabitants and environment.

57. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East had become increasingly urgent because of the major threat posed by such weapons to the security and stability of the countries of the region and their detrimental impact on the balance of power. Israel's continued refusal to accede to the NPT and to place its nuclear installations under comprehensive Agency safeguards constituted a serious challenge for the States concerned, all of which had acceded to the NPT and complied with all international instruments on nuclear non-proliferation.

58. It was therefore important to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the Middle East, in accordance with the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and the action plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. It should also be underscored that the 1995 resolution would remain in force until all its goals and objectives had been achieved.

59. Ms AL KHALEEL (Iraq) said that, as her Government had stated in various international forums where disarmament was discussed, double standards were being practised when applying the principles underpinning the non-proliferation regime to the Middle East. Although the NPT was the cornerstone of the regime, the Israeli entity was alone in the region in not acceding to it, and was allowed to remain so with impunity. That had led the 2015 NPT Review Conference to fail, owing to the lack of consensus on the draft final document, in particular the objection of three States that had supported the Israeli entity's efforts to remain outside the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

60. Iraq called on the international community to assume its moral and political responsibility to persuade the Israeli entity to accede to the NPT so that it would be required to apply the Agency's comprehensive safeguards and subject all its nuclear activities to Agency verification and inspection. The Israeli entity's accession would be the first step towards confidence-building — a goal that it had itself demanded — in order to advance the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East.

61. A Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs was vital for regional security and stability. It was equally vital to convene further sessions of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, in accordance with the action plan agreed upon at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, given the potential positive impact of that conference, in both political and security terms, for the sensitive Middle East region.

62. Iraq praised the efforts already made towards establishing such a zone, in particular at the third session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction. Iraq had participated in that session, whereas the Israeli entity had continued to make excuses for remaining outside the non-proliferation regime. Affirming its support for Libya's presidency of the upcoming fourth session, Iraq looked forward to the participation of all relevant parties in the conference.

63. Given the clear justification, Iraq requested that the item remain on the agenda of the Agency's PMOs and that the international community, through its various forums, assume its moral and professional responsibility to implement paragraph 5 of UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981), calling on the Israeli entity to place all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards.

64. Mr AL-JABRI (Qatar) said that credible international reports and many Israeli officials had confirmed Israel's development of nuclear weapons. That activity, together with Israel's settlement policies and arbitrary oppression of the Palestinian people and its rejection of a two-State solution, undermined regional peace and security and the credibility of international resolutions. It was therefore essential to intensify international efforts to ensure that Israel acceded to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and placed all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards, as called for

over some 50 years in multiple international resolutions, including those of the Agency, of the United Nations — in particular Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991) — and the resolution on the Middle East adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

65. Qatar therefore called on the international community, and in particular the three NPT depositary States — which bore a special responsibility as permanent Security Council members and the sponsors of the 1995 resolution — to take tangible steps to implement those resolutions, as Israel's accession to the NPT and placement of all its nuclear facilities under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system was a prerequisite for the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East.

66. Resisting nuclear proliferation in the Middle East was central to the Agency's mandate. Qatar looked forward to the Director General launching consultations with the States of the region, as mandated by General Conference resolutions, to break the current deadlock and facilitate the swift application of full-scope safeguards to all nuclear activities in the region as a necessary step towards the establishment of an NWFZ.

67. Finally, he requested that the issue of Israel's nuclear capabilities remain on the agenda of the Agency's PMOs.

68. Mr OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Israel had secretly been strengthening its nuclear military capabilities, away from international oversight, for decades. Certain States in the West had provided Israel with the weapons-producing Dimona reactor, along with the nuclear technology and materials required for it to gain possession of a massive arsenal of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery, and helped it divert attention from its nuclear capabilities in international forums.

69. UN Security Council resolution 487 (1981) called on Israel urgently to place its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards, while the Agency's General Conference resolution GC(53)/RES/17 called on Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive Agency safeguards. Israel had persistently ignored those calls. It was regrettable that several member States — including nuclear-weapon States — flagrantly applied double standards in that regard, turning a blind eye to Israel's nuclear capabilities while claiming to support the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. The USA had consistently opposed any international resolution or initiative that put an end to Israel's possession of nuclear capabilities, ensuring that it remained beyond the sphere of international accountability.

70. Israel — which continued to possess nuclear capabilities while remaining outside the NPT and the safeguards system — posed a serious threat to the non-proliferation regime. Its rejection of all initiatives to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East and its continued refusal to place all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards undermined regional and international security and stability. Israel was therefore in no position whatsoever to make accusations of others' non-compliance with the NPT.

71. It was time for the international community to set aside its policy of condoning Israel's dangerous practices and to take a clear decision and serious practical steps to compel Israel to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to subject all its nuclear facilities, unconditionally and unreservedly, to Agency inspection.

72. Finally, Syria requested that the item remain on the agenda of the PMOs.

73. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), welcoming the absence of a resolution on Israel's nuclear capabilities at the current session of the General Conference, said that her country remained disappointed that the issue had again been included on the agenda, as it was a divisive political matter that should not affect the work of a technical organization such as the Agency. The UK remained fully committed to the establishment of a zone free of all WMDs and their delivery systems in the Middle East and had

long held the view that all processes relating to such a zone should be based on consensus and be freely arrived at by all the States of the region.

74. Mr ALFASSAM (Kuwait) said that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which had served as the basis for the indefinite extension of the NPT, would remain in force until its goals and objectives were achieved. Moreover, in its annual resolutions on Israel's nuclear capabilities and on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, the General Conference urged Israel to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards system.

75. While all other States in the region were committed to upholding the NPT and implementing their CSAs, Israel continued to stubbornly refuse to engage in any initiatives or take any serious steps aimed at enabling the Agency to apply comprehensive safeguards in the Middle East and at establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

76. Underscoring the Agency's competence to verify the peaceful nature of nuclear programmes, he stressed that upholding the NPT and establishing a Middle East NWFZ would have a direct impact on regional stability and would strengthen international peace and security. Given that discussions in the PMOs were focused on the importance of strengthening the nuclear safety and security environment and enhancing the Agency's ability to fulfil its role regarding the effective application and verification of comprehensive safeguards, it was essential that the international community pay attention to the threats posed by Israel's nuclear capabilities and persuade it to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive safeguards.

77. He concluded by requesting that the item remain on the agenda of the PMOs.

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

79. The European Union noted the Arab States' decision not to table a resolution on Israeli nuclear capabilities at the current session of the General Conference but was disappointed that the divisive issue had again been included on the agenda. The European Union remained convinced that a consensus approach, as set out in the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, was the only way to make progress towards the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

80. Mr TORABI (Islamic Republic of Iran) recalled that, at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, the NPT States Parties had adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East. The ultimate goal of that zone was to consolidate efforts towards peace and security in the region by strengthening global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms. Furthermore, under the action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, all States Parties had committed themselves to work towards the establishment of such a zone. That goal had yet to be achieved.

81. Although all the nuclear-weapon States that had sponsored the 1995 resolution had unequivocally committed themselves to supporting a conference to be held in 2012 to explore how to establish an NWFZ in the Middle East, some had regrettably boycotted the event. In Iran's view, such a biased and unconstructive approach not only continued to jeopardize the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East but also called into question the integrity of the NPT and the undertakings of the NPT review conferences. Furthermore, that approach had emboldened the Israeli regime to continue to acquire WMDs and develop its nuclear weapons programme.

82. Three decades had passed since the adoption of the 1995 resolution, but the Israeli regime's clandestine military nuclear programme and the absolute support from a nuclear-weapon State had stymied any progress towards its objective.

83. It was indisputable that nuclear weapons posed the most serious threat to regional and international peace and security; ignoring the realities on the ground in the Middle East no longer served the region's best interests. All in the Middle East region, except Israel, were NPT States Parties, and it was regrettable that the Israeli regime remained outside of the purview of the Treaty.

84. The universalization of the NPT had been in jeopardy for many years owing to the Israeli regime's continued clandestine nuclear weapons programme. As any attempt to establish an effectively verifiable Middle East NWFZ would be futile in the absence of Israel's full accession to the NPT, the international community should put maximum pressure on that regime to stop developing its nuclear weapons programme and to place all its nuclear activities and installations under comprehensive Agency safeguards. That was the only way to remedy the current nuclear crisis in the Middle East and to pave the way for the establishment of an NWFZ in the region.

85. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel) said that it was extremely unfortunate that the item was repeatedly raised by the Arab States at the General Conference; the issue was completely unrelated to the agenda of the General Conference and beyond the scope of the Agency's mandate. The item politicized the Agency to a significant extent, undermined its professional integrity and diverted attention from the real problems and challenges faced by the Agency and the non-proliferation regime.

86. By rejecting unconstructive draft resolutions containing political bias under the agenda item in the past, Member States had reaffirmed their position that politically motivated initiatives aimed at singling out any Member State had no place at the General Conference. The repeated rejection of the draft resolution should also send a clear message to its co-sponsors that the only way to advance regional security in the Middle East was through direct dialogue and consensus among all States of the region.

87. Trust and confidence were essential building blocks of regional security that would not be achieved by avoiding the challenge that lay ahead and by opting instead to single out Israel for political reasons. While a draft resolution had not been tabled under the agenda item that year, Israel regretted the inclusion of the item on the General Conference's agenda once again at the Arab Group's request.

88. Israel wished to live in a safe, secure and peaceful region and believed that its neighbours shared that vision. However, the path to regional safety and security could not be paved with continuous resolutions and active denouncements of Israel. His country called upon the Arab Group to honour the will of Member States, cease its obstructive behaviour and refrain from the item's inclusion at future sessions of the General Conference.

## **21. Status of Palestine in the International Atomic Energy Agency** (GC(67)/1/Add.5, GC(67)/22; GC(67)/L.5)

89. The PRESIDENT said that the item had been included in the agenda at the request of Arab States that were members of the Agency. It was covered by an explanatory memorandum contained in document GC(67)/1/Add.5 and by document GC(67)/22. The General Conference also had before it a draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.5.

90. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Member States and introducing the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.5, said that the historic document provided for Palestine's redesignation as the 'State of Palestine' at the Agency, including in all Agency documents and TC activities, and granted its long-awaited rights as a non-member observer State. The draft resolution was

a landmark in the General Conference's efforts to uphold inclusiveness and justice and promote cooperation.

91. The adoption of the draft resolution would bring about an important and overdue change. Having become eligible to participate in the Agency as an observer in 1974, the Palestinian Liberation Organization had been granted that status officially in 1976 and was subsequently redesignated as Palestine in 1989. It had also been granted a number of privileges in 1998 by General Conference resolution GC(42)/RES/20 on Palestine's participation in the Agency's work, which had been supported by the overwhelming majority of Member States.

92. However, the State of Palestine had been unable to enjoy its full rights at the Agency as it had in other UN and international forums, because the Agency had not kept pace with the milestones reached within the United Nations, most notably historic UN General Assembly resolution 67/19 of 2012 granting Palestine non-member observer State status in an unambiguous reflection of the international community's desire for that State's exercise of its full rights.

93. The adoption of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.5 would restore balance and fairness by correcting Palestine's designation to 'State of Palestine' within the Agency and granting it additional rights, in accordance with its status as a non-member observer State and with General Conference decision GC(XXXVIII)/DEC/18 of 1994. That would enable the State of Palestine to participate more effectively in the Agency's activities, thus allowing the international community to benefit from its participation and promoting the peaceful uses of atomic energy in the Middle East.

94. Noting that the tabling of the draft resolution coincided with the entry into force of the CSA of the State of Palestine, Egypt emphasized that the draft resolution was the product of several months of intensive consultations between the State of Palestine and the co-sponsors of the draft resolution, and interested various countries and geographical groups. The text reflected the observations made during those discussions, was fully consistent with the relevant resolutions and Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, and built on the rights established in resolution GC(42)/RES/20.

95. Recognizing the State of Palestine's right to enjoy its most basic rights was not merely an option for the international community but a moral, political and legal obligation. The draft resolution reflected the minimum rights owed to the State of Palestine and finally rectified a situation that could no longer be ignored.

96. Egypt therefore called on Member States to adopt the draft resolution by consensus and convey a sincere message to the world that they stood in solidarity with the State of Palestine and remained unflinchingly committed, in word and deed, to ensuring its fair treatment at the Agency. They must stand on the right side of history in support of the world's conscience and the collective will of the international community to uphold truth and achieve equality and justice.

97. Mr TAMALA (Indonesia) said that his country reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to supporting the State of Palestine in the pursuit of its rights as a State, including full rights and privileges in line with the Statute, the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Board of Governors and the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. Such rights and privileges were crucial to ensuring that the State of Palestine could fulfil its obligations and exercise its rights effectively in its relationship with the Agency, as previously outlined in General Conference resolution GC(42)/RES/20.

98. Due consideration should be given to the State of Palestine's status as a State party to a number of relevant treaties, including the NPT, the CPPNM and the TPNW, and its commitment to fulfilling its obligations under its CSA. Extending support for the State of Palestine's additional rights and privileges within the framework of the Agency would contribute to the fulfilment of those obligations.

99. Supporting the State of Palestine in that endeavour would serve as an impetus and provide positive momentum for the international community's collective efforts to maintain a secure and peaceful Middle East region and for promoting technical cooperation and capacity building between the Agency and the State of Palestine, particularly in the context of the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

100. Mr BERTI OLIVA (Cuba) said that his country welcomed the Arab Group's initiative to include the item on the agenda of the General Conference. Cuba had strongly supported the accession of the State of Palestine, as a full member, to the United Nations and its recognition as a State. Accordingly, it supported the call for the General Conference to adopt a resolution to that end, in line with UN General Assembly resolution 67/19. The State of Palestine had demonstrated, through its international conduct, that it was capable of fulfilling its obligations on an equal footing with other States.

101. The State of Palestine's participation in the work of the Agency as an observer had been recognized since 1976; it was also an active member, as a State with full rights, in other consultative groups, such as NAM, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the G-77 and China. In addition, it was worth noting that the designation 'State of Palestine' was used in the meetings and documents of the United Nations. His country therefore considered it to be an act of justice to respond to the State of Palestine's call concerning its status in the Agency, which would contribute to greater universality and transparency in the Agency's work, to strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, with positive repercussions for the peace process in the region, and to promoting the timely establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs.

102. Cuba maintained its historic and steadfast position in defence of and in solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people. Moreover, it noted with deep concern the increase in tensions and human rights violations perpetrated in the Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem. Israel's annexation policy was intensifying and its illegal colonization activities were increasing. Homes and property were being destroyed and more Palestinian families were being forcibly displaced while the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements continued. Violence against and the arrest, detention, imprisonment and killing of Palestinian civilians, including children, also continued.

103. Despite the long-standing calls by the United Nations, NAM, the League of Arab States, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and other international stakeholders, the UN Security Council continued to fail to take action to end the Israeli military aggression and occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

104. Cuba reaffirmed its unreserved support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the establishment of two States, which would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination and to have an independent and sovereign State with pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return of refugees.

105. Ms HERNANDEZ (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country supported the draft resolution and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus, so that the designation 'State of Palestine' would finally be used in place of 'Palestine' in official Agency documents, in line with the practice of the rest of the United Nations system. Venezuela also hoped that the State of Palestine would be granted additional rights and privileges to participate in the work of the Agency in a long-awaited act of justice. The State of Palestine was party to the NPT, had signed a safeguards agreement with the Agency and had acceded to other Agency instruments, thereby demonstrating its willingness to contribute to the Agency's work.

106. Mr NUSBAUM (Israel) said that it was regrettable that the item had been imposed on the agenda of the General Conference, as it dangerously politicized the work of the Agency and diverted its attention and resources from the well-known urgent challenges it was facing. Given the extensive past experience in other international organizations where the issue had been raised, there was a genuine concern that

the Agency and its mechanisms would be drawn into political disputes and used as a platform to advance a narrow political agenda. Israel therefore objected to the draft resolution.

107. As stated in Article II of the Statute, the Agency's objective was to seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. While the Agency had a working relationship with the United Nations, it was not obliged to adopt UN General Assembly resolutions, even those related to the Agency itself. It was therefore important to emphasize that the Agency was not required to adopt a resolution applying General Assembly resolution 67/19 within the Agency.

108. It should be stressed that any resolution on the status of the Palestinian entity adopted by the General Conference would be solely of a declarative nature and would have no substantive bearing. Israel would therefore be obliged to vote against the draft resolution as a whole; he accordingly requested that a vote be taken on the draft resolution.

109. Mr ELMOLLA (Egypt) reiterated that the draft resolution sought to change Palestine's designation to 'State of Palestine' in all external and internal dealings and documents of the Agency, including those relating to the TC programme, and to accord additional rights to the State of Palestine within the Agency's existing framework and rules, without attempting to make any alteration to its status of observer.

110. He recalled that General Conference resolution GC(42)/RES/20 allowed Palestine to contribute to the Agency's mission in areas related to nuclear energy, safety and security, to participate in the general debate, to inscribe its name on the list of speakers for all agenda items at plenary meetings, to co-sponsor draft resolutions and decisions, to exercise the right of reply and to raise points of order, albeit in a limited manner.

111. It was in that spirit that the proponents of the draft resolution set out in document GC(67)/L.5 proposed granting additional rights to Palestine consistent with its status as a non-member observer State. That aspiration emanated from the awareness of the importance of officially adopting the designation 'State of Palestine' within the Agency, as currently used in all UN documents and other international legal instruments, in line with UN General Assembly resolutions 67/19 of 2012 and 73/5 of 2018. It was about time that the Agency followed suit. Additionally, the draft resolution aimed to accord the State of Palestine further long-overdue rights, which would allow it to participate more actively in the Agency's work, specifically within the framework of the General Conference. Those rights, as contained in the annex of the draft resolution, would only apply for the duration of the State of Palestine's chairmanship of any relevant group of States and were a necessary step that would ensure greater inclusivity and efficacy in the Agency's work.

112. All States should be mindful of the precedent set in their collective pursuit of inclusivity and justice, and should uphold the principles of equality, equitable representation and cooperation for which the Agency stood. Together, States could set a positive example for international organizations and make further progress in the process that had been initiated nearly three decades previously. The adoption of the draft resolution would set the course for the years to come. He thus called on all Member States to vote in its favour.

113. The PRESIDENT, noting that Israel had requested a vote on the draft resolution contained in document GC(67)/L.5, invited the Conference to vote by show of hands. In accordance with Rule 70 of the Rules of Procedure, the required majority was a simple majority of Members present and voting.



114. There were 92 votes in favour and 5 against, with 21 abstentions.<sup>2</sup> The draft resolution was adopted.

115. Mr MOLEKANE (South Africa), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country was proud to have voted in favour of the resolution. The fact that the State of Palestine was party to the NPT, the TPNW and the CPPNM and its Amendment was evidence of its status as a responsible member of the international community and of its dedication to the goals, objectives and principles of the Agency and the global non-proliferation regime. That should be reflected in the State of Palestine's ability to participate in the Agency to the fullest extent, in line with its status as an observer.

116. South Africa remained fully committed to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State that existed side by side in peace with Israel within the internationally recognized borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with all relevant UN resolutions, international law and internationally agreed parameters. The resolution was but one step towards achieving that goal and ending the draconian oppression of the people of Palestine.

117. Mr SCHMIDT-BREMME (Germany), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country had voted in favour of the resolution. However, with respect to previous statements and in reference to Germany's respective position on the State of Palestine, specifically in relation to UN General Assembly resolution 67/19, the new designation should not be construed as recognition of the State of Palestine by Germany.

118. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country regretted that the resolution had been brought to a vote and adopted. The USA remained committed to advancing a comprehensive and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians and to working towards the goal of Palestinians and Israelis enjoying equal measures of freedom, security, opportunity, justice and dignity. Her country was convinced, however, that the only path to achieving those goals was through direct dialogue aimed at preserving and realizing the vision of two States for two peoples, not through efforts to enhance Palestinian status in international organizations. The USA feared that such efforts were detrimental to those goals and would only drive the parties apart. The adoption of the resolution and any associated changes in practice by the Agency regarding the designation used to refer to the Palestinian delegation in no way affected the status under international law of the so-called State of Palestine. Nor did it imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Agency concerning the legal status of any country or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers. The USA hoped that the Director General and the Secretariat would continue to be clear in that regard in all relevant reports and statements. Moreover, the USA emphasized that attendance and participation in the meetings of the Board of Governors was the sole prerogative of the Board pursuant to the Statute and the Board's Provisional Rules of Procedure.

119. Regarding several claims made in the preambular paragraphs of the resolution, she drew attention to the letter sent by the USA to the former Director General dated 1 March 2018, circulated to all Agency Member States as GOV/INF/2018/2, which continued to reflect the USA's views on the issues concerned.

120. Mr RYDMARK (Norway), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country had voted in favour of the resolution. Norway supported the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and Palestine's aspiration to statehood and had, in the past, supported the granting of additional rights of representation to the Palestinians at such international organizations as the United Nations and the Agency. However, he emphasized that Norway's vote in favour of the resolution should in no way be interpreted as its recognition of Palestine as a State. His country's position was that it would recognize

---

<sup>2</sup> Sri Lanka later advised the Secretariat that it wished to register its vote as "in favour" instead of "abstention".

Palestine as a State when that recognition could best contribute towards reaching a negotiated solution to the conflict. Norway was convinced that a two-State solution was the best way to resolve the conflict for both Israelis and Palestinians.

121. Mr BIGGS (Australia), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country's long-standing position was in support of a negotiated two-State solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Australia remained a committed supporter of the Palestinian people and their aspirations to statehood. A future Palestinian State could only be realized through a directly negotiated agreement between the two sides. His country did not consider the resolution and associated change in designation to confer statehood on Palestine or to alter the Palestinian delegation's status as an observer.

122. Ms TANG (Singapore), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country had voted in favour in order to facilitate Palestine's participation in the work of the General Conference when it chaired a group. However, her country's support for the resolution should not be interpreted as recognition of Palestinian statehood. Singapore's principled and long-standing position on the issue of Palestine was well known and remained unchanged: it supported a negotiated two-State solution consistent with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, with Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace and security.

123. Mr LATROCH (Algeria), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country welcomed the adoption of the resolution by a majority vote. Despite its importance, the resolution reflected only the minimum status that the State of Palestine should have in the Agency. Algeria therefore looked forward to seeing the State of Palestine become a full member of the Agency.

124. The adoption of the resolution was consistent with international efforts to strengthen the State of Palestine's legal status, in line with historic UN General Assembly resolution 67/19 granting it UN observer status, which had been adopted by a majority vote in November 2012.

125. Since then, the State of Palestine had demonstrated its ability to be a strong and active member of the international community, through its presence in many UN committees and specialized bodies and in other international organizations, in addition to its successful, professional and highly efficient chairing of the G-77 and China in 2019 in New York. Moreover, the State of Palestine had been accorded additional rights and privileges by General Conference resolution GC(42)/RES/20, and it had proven its genuine commitment to international non-proliferation and disarmament mechanisms by acceding to the NPT in 2015, ratifying the TPNW in 2018, and concluding a CSA, which had entered into force in July 2023.

126. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country's decision to abstain should not be misconstrued as recognition of a Palestinian State. The UK reserved the right to recognize a Palestinian State bilaterally at a time when it best served the objective of peace. Ultimately, a negotiated two-State solution was the only means of giving the Palestinian people the State they needed and deserved, and the Israeli people the security and peace to which they were entitled.

127. Mr PABERZS (Latvia), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his country's vote in favour of the resolution did not indicate any change in its position and should in no way be interpreted as recognition of Palestinian statehood.

128. Ms GIL (Colombia), speaking in explanation of vote, said that her country had recognized the State of Palestine in 2018. Colombia welcomed the adoption of the resolution and was convinced that the more rights that were recognized for the State of Palestine, the better the chances for peace.

129. Mr SHOJA'AADIN (Yemen) said that the landmark vote was an important step towards the State of Palestine gaining its rightful place in the Agency as an independent, sovereign State recognized by the international community. His country looked forward to the State of Palestine obtaining all rights

and privileges granted to it by the Agency and other international organizations so that it could serve its people like any other State.

130. Ms ABIDA (Jordan) said that her country remained fully committed to supporting the State of Palestine to obtain its rights and privileges in all international forums and to establish itself as an independent and fully sovereign State within the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international resolutions.

131. The resolution just adopted contained rights indispensable in enabling the State of Palestine to implement its obligations and strengthen its cooperation with the Agency. Being party to the NPT, the TPNW and other legal frameworks on disarmament, the State of Palestine's record attested to its fulfilment of its obligations. The resolution and the entitlements therein were long overdue.

132. Mr ABDEL SHAFI (State of Palestine), thanking the States that had co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution, said that the remaining States should reconsider their positions. Under international law, his country was recognized as a State and therefore entitled to join many international conventions and organizations. The claim to support a two-State solution was unconvincing if only one State was recognized. Recognition of the State of Palestine was not dependent on the approval of the racist Israeli occupying State.

**The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.**