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President: Mr HAM Sang Wook (Republic of Korea)

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Abbreviations used in this record

2030 Agenda	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
E3	France, Germany and the United Kingdom
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
LDC	least developed country
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OAS	Organization of American States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PMO	Policy-Making Organ
Revised Guiding Principles	The Revised Guiding Principles and General Operating Rules to Govern the Provision of Technical Assistance by the Agency
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WMD	weapon of mass destruction

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2023 (continued) (GC(68)/2)

1. Mr SAJJADI (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the international community was once again witnessing terrorist and criminal acts committed by the Israeli regime in full impunity against the innocent Palestinian people in violation of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter and international law, in particular international humanitarian law. The decisions and measures taken by the Palestinian resistance were firmly rooted in the fundamental principle of self-determination and were a completely legitimate response to more than seven decades of genocide, oppressive occupation, apartheid and atrocities from the Israeli regime.

2. Iran continued its constructive technical cooperation with the Agency in line with its rights and obligations under the NPT and its CSA. The country's decision to stop fulfilling its commitments under the JCPOA was fully in accordance with its inherent rights under paragraphs 26 and 36 of the Plan and followed the USA's unlawful withdrawal from the JCPOA, coupled with the failure of the E3 to fulfil their commitments. The current situation could therefore not constitute a basis for the E3 to refrain from implementing their commitments. Iran's nuclear activities, including enrichment at various levels, were completely peaceful, in line with the country's rights under the NPT and under the safeguards monitoring and verification of the Agency. Its remedial measures under the JCPOA had no impact on the Agency's ongoing monitoring and verification under Iran's CSA. Iran had shown both in words and deeds its desire for constructive engagement but stood ready to react resolutely and appropriately to any counterproductive position or action.

3. Mr ULYANOV (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, recalled that, as a matter of principle, his country opposed the politicization of specialized international institutions and forums, including the Agency. Unfortunately, opponents of the Russian Federation did not share that view and invariably introduced politically charged attitudes into the Agency's activities. A case in point was the draft resolution proposed by Canada on nuclear safety, security and safeguards in Ukraine, the co-sponsors of which were attempting to vest the General Conference with the powers of the Security Council, raising issues such as war and peace, territorial integrity and sovereignty, and the withdrawal of troops. The national statements of Western countries at the current session of the General Conference had also been politicized.

4. Turning to the important topic of the role of Western countries in the Ukrainian tragedy, he said that, after the collapse of the USSR, numerous Western governmental and non-governmental organizations had actively engaged in 'brainwashing' the Ukrainian population, primarily the younger generation, into loyalty to the West and hostility towards the Russian Federation. They had been relatively successful for 30 years, thereby creating the preconditions necessary for the emergence of a serious conflict situation.

5. In early 2014, Western countries had actively supported the coup d'état in Ukraine. He recalled that the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs had handed out pies in the Maidan, encouraging the opposition to continue the protests, and then discussed in a phone call with the US Ambassador to Ukraine who should be appointed Prime Minister of Ukraine, which showed the attitude of the USA towards Ukrainian independence and sovereignty.

6. At the same time, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Germany and Poland had attempted to act as mediators between the legitimate authorities of Ukraine and the opposition, assuming the role of guarantors in regard to compliance with the agreement between President Yanukovich and the opposition. The opposition forces had, however, violated the agreement the following morning and the so-called guarantors had simply washed their hands of it.

7. The new Ukrainian authorities had immediately embarked on a policy of infringing the rights of minorities, facing strong opposition from the populations of Crimea and Donbas that had stood up for the rights of their families. The authorities, in violation of the constitution, had then launched a military operation against their own population in Donbas, which at that time had still been part of Ukraine. Between 2014 to 2022, approximately 14 000 people had been killed, including 150 children, to whom there was now a monument on the Alley of Angels in Donetsk. Throughout that period, Western countries had pretended that nothing worrying or terrible was taking place, thereby encouraging the Ukrainian authorities to continue the war against their own people, as the people in that region at that time had still been part of the population of Ukraine.

8. At some point, an attempt to reach a peaceful solution had been made, with negotiations between the leaders of France, Germany, the Russian Federation and Ukraine resulting in the Minsk agreements. Ukraine, however, had immediately begun to sabotage the agreements openly, with Western countries providing the Ukrainian authorities with political cover, including when discussing the issue at the OSCE. The former Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, had recently admitted that the purpose of the Minsk agreements, from Germany's perspective, had not been to achieve peace but to buy time to prepare Ukraine for a major war, with her words having been confirmed by another participant in the Minsk negotiations, the former President of France, François Hollande.

9. By the end of March 2022, following bilateral negotiations, the Russian Federation and Ukraine had come so close to signing a peace agreement that it had even been initialled. However, as confirmed in a television interview by the chief negotiator for Ukraine, who was close to President Zelenskyy, the former Prime Minister of the UK, Boris Johnson, had come to Kyiv in April 2022, forbidden President Zelenskyy from signing the peace agreement and insisted on the continuation of hostilities, promising massive deliveries of weapons from Western countries. In September 2024, the former US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, confirmed in a television interview that a peace agreement had actually been reached during the bilateral Russian-Ukrainian negotiations. The Ukrainians, however, had then decided to consult with the United States, which had not recommended signing the peace agreement as drafted during the bilateral talks. The UK and US Governments therefore bore full responsibility for the continuation of hostilities in Ukraine, as there had been a genuine opportunity to establish peace in 2022.

10. In conclusion, the Russian Federation reiterated its absolute and categorical rejection of the propositions of its Western opponents, in particular their assertion that his country had allegedly carried out an 'unprovoked' invasion of Ukraine. In fact, both the Ukrainian authorities and Western countries had been doing everything for eight long years to provoke, or even force, the Russian Federation to take decisive action.

11. Mr BOHN (Germany), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the Russian Federation had almost given a history lesson on Ukraine after claiming that he did not want to politicize the discussions at the General Conference, and had referred several times to Germany in his statement.

12. Germany did not wish to politicize discussions at the General Conference further but drew attention to the undeniable fact that, in 2022, the Russian Federation had launched a completely unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, a sovereign State.

26. Examination of delegates' credentials (GC(68)/27)

13. 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. After discussion, the Committee had recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in paragraph 7 of its report contained in document GC(68)/27, with the reservations and positions expressed in the report.

14. 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 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 Jerusalem, or to the Syrian Golan Heights.

15. Mr NASR (Egypt) said that his country's acceptance of Israel's credentials by no means constituted recognition of Israel's claims to the territories occupied since 1967, including East 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.

16. Mr NAZIRI ASL (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.

17. The PRESIDENT took it that, with the reservations and positions expressed, the General Conference was prepared to adopt the draft resolution contained in paragraph 7 of document GC(68)/27.

18. It was so decided.

8. Election of Members to the Board of Governors (GC(68)/3 and 23)

19. The PRESIDENT drew attention to document GC(68)/3, containing the designations of members to serve on the Board of Governors from the end of the sixty-eighth (2024) regular session until the end of the sixty-ninth (2025) regular session of the General Conference.

20. 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, he referred to paragraph 2 of document GC(68)/23, 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.

21. There were 11 seats to be filled: three for Latin America, two for Western Europe; one for Eastern Europe; two for Africa; one for the Middle East and South Asia; one for South East Asia and the Pacific; 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 Africa.

22. Paragraph 3 of document GC(68)/23 listed the 24 Member States which had been either elected by the General Conference in 2023 in accordance with Article VI.A.2 of the Statute, and which would therefore continue to serve on the Board until the end of the regular session of the Conference in 2025, 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 2025.

23. 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. He stressed that the note was purely informal in character and provided information insofar as it had been made available to him and to the Secretariat.

24. He 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.

25. Any delegations wishing to make statements related to the elections were requested to do so after the election process.

26. The PRESIDENT said that Argentina, Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had submitted their candidatures for the three elective places to be filled for Latin America. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Argentina, Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

27. Argentina, Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela were duly elected.

28. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Italy and Luxembourg to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.

29. Italy and Luxembourg were duly elected.

30. The PRESIDENT said that Georgia had submitted its candidature for the one elective place to be filled for Eastern Europe. There being no other candidates, he took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Georgia to the one vacant seat for Eastern Europe.

31. Georgia was duly elected.

32. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Ghana and Morocco to the two vacant seats for Africa.

33. Ghana and Morocco were duly elected.

34. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Pakistan to the one vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.

35. Pakistan was duly elected.

36. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Thailand to the one vacant seat for South East Asia and the Pacific.

37. Thailand was duly elected.

38. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference wished to suspend Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure and elect Egypt to the one so-called floating seat.

39. Egypt was duly elected.

40. Mr JOHNSON (Ghana) said that his country was profoundly grateful for its election to the Board. It welcomed the opportunity, at a critical time of enormous global challenges and uncertainty, to enhance cooperation — not only among Board members but also among Member States — towards the promotion of the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology for sustainable development.

41. Mr FARHANE (Morocco) said that his country thanked the African Group for unanimously supporting its candidature for the Board. With Agency support, Morocco had developed expertise in various nuclear-related fields and shared that experience with other African States. The country intended to use its membership of the Board to support the Agency's role in providing technical assistance, especially to African countries, and to promote dialogue, negotiation and multilateral action in the fields of nuclear technology transfer, nuclear safety and security, and technical cooperation.

42. Mr NASR (Egypt) thanked Member States for electing his country to the Board of Governors by consensus and expressed particular appreciation to the African Group for its nomination. Egypt would continue to fly the flag for the African continent at the Board with the aim of promoting the use of peaceful nuclear applications in African States to achieve the SDGs. It would also continue to support the Agency's efforts to enhance nuclear safety and security and to universalize the comprehensive safeguards system. Egypt attached priority to achieving that objective in the Middle East as part of efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs in the region.

43. Ms HOLGATE (United States of America) said that her country respected the long-standing tradition at the General Conference of deferring to the nominations from regional groups for elected seats. However, that process had not served the General Conference well at the present session, as it was deeply regrettable that Venezuela had been nominated and elected to the Board.

44. On 28 July 2024, the people of Venezuela had overwhelmingly and unequivocally expressed their desire for democratic change, but the post-election repression carried out by the Maduro administration had forced the winning candidate, Mr González Urrutia, into exile and had resulted in the deaths of at least 24 people and the imprisonment of over 2000 Venezuelans.

45. The international community had clearly signalled to the representatives of Mr Maduro that election results and the will of the people could not simply be swept aside. The OAS had adopted a resolution by consensus calling for transparency and impartial review and protection of electoral integrity in line with the region's collective commitment to uphold the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

46. Furthermore, although the USA recognized that Member States, owing to various factors, might have a temporary lapse in the payment of the Regular Budget assessed contributions, Venezuela had not paid for more than ten years and currently owed over €21 million, with most of the amount having been due for more than two years. Venezuela was responsible for approximately 75% of the total long-overdue arrears in the Agency and that long-standing failure to meet the most basic responsibilities to the organization underscored Venezuela's lack of commitment to the Agency's essential missions.

47. Noting that the current situation was not the first time that Agency traditions had not fully met their purpose in enabling the Board to fully represent the Agency's membership, the USA encouraged each of the regional groups to consider how they could do better to serve the Agency in that regard.

48. Ms SALERNO CALDERA (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), expressing her country's appreciation for its election to the Board, said that it was regrettable that a Member State believed it had the right to interfere in the decisions of a regional group to which it did not belong following an election process that had been transparent and fully in line with the Agency's rules and regulations. It was also important that the matter was not used to distract the Agency from issues that required immediate attention.

49. The significant amount of money that Venezuela owed the Agency was a direct result of the sanctions imposed on the country by the USA, which had blocked Venezuela's economic capacity and its access to financing and international financial mechanisms. If the USA wanted Venezuela to pay, the first step it should take was to lift the sanctions.

50. Venezuela was honoured to represent Latin America and the Caribbean, which had been declared a zone of peace in 2014 and was the first region in the world to become free of nuclear weapons. A focus was needed on the principles that guided Member States to work together towards the Agency's objectives, in particular in relation to peace and development. Irrelevant and fruitless political debates should not be allowed to contaminate the Agency and distract from the Agency's vital work. A just, peaceful and prosperous future for all could only be built on the basis of respect, peaceful diplomacy and multilateralism.

51. Ms MUÑOZ MERA (Ecuador) said that, under the silence procedure, her country had not endorsed the candidature of Venezuela owing to Ecuador's principled position regarding the humanitarian, economic, political, human-rights-related and security crisis faced by the Venezuelan people.

52. At various UN and OAS forums, Ecuador had expressed its deep concern over the progressive deterioration of the situation in Venezuela, where tensions had escalated with allegations of human rights violations, such as arbitrary detentions of political opponents, journalists and demonstrators, including women and children, as well as violent and disproportionate repression of a population demanding respect for its electoral decision, namely the majority vote on 28 July 2024 against the Maduro regime. On 2 August 2024, Ecuador had recognized Mr González Urrutia as the legitimate winner of the presidential elections in Venezuela after the blatant manipulation of the electoral results by Venezuelan authorities.

53. More than 7.7 million Venezuelans had emigrated in search of better opportunities since the start of the current crisis, 6 million of whom had settled in other Latin American countries, which could become a direct threat to regional stability and international security. The international community had a duty to support the restoration of democracy, values, human dignity and freedom in Venezuela.

54. Mr MARTINSEN (Argentina), expressing his country's thanks for its election to the Board, said that discussions of the situation in Venezuela should take place in the relevant international organizations, such as the UN, the OAS and Human Rights Council, and not in the Agency, which was a technical organization. Argentina thanked Paraguay for its coordinating role within GRULAC which had brought the election to a successful conclusion.

55. Mr USTINOV (Russian Federation) congratulated all those countries that had been elected as members of the Board and gave his assurance that the Russian Federation would work with existing and new members.

56. He noted, however, that the level of politicization of the discussions and work of both the Board and the General Conference was extreme, such as in the statement of the USA on the current agenda item, in relation to which his country once again recalled the Statute and the Rules of Procedure. The criteria for the election of a State to the Board were listed clearly and comprehensively in Article VI of the Statute and all those criteria had been fully met by the candidates, including by Venezuela. All the other demands that had been made were unreasonable and constituted interference in the internal affairs of the State, and of the region proposing those candidates, which was unacceptable.

57. Ms MURILLO CENTENO (Nicaragua) said that her country sincerely congratulated Venezuela on its election, which was a reflection of the strength of a people that had defended its sovereignty with dignity. The attempts of some countries to break the Vienna spirit of consensus and manipulate interests in favour of other agendas failed when faced with the integrity and determination of a population that stood its ground. Efforts to destabilize and undermine the unity of the Global South had been defeated by the force of cooperation and solidarity among sovereign nations.

58. Nicaragua categorically rejected the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on fellow countries, such as Venezuela. Such actions, which sought to undermine dignity and sovereignty, would continue to fail. Those that aimed to use the General Conference to impose their own interests had seen mutual respect for the self-determination and dignity of the peoples of the South prevail.

59. Nicaragua reaffirmed its commitment to the principles of multilateralism, technical and scientific cooperation, and respect for the sovereignty of peoples, which were essential for the pursuit of peace, development and justice. It also celebrated the election of Venezuela as a victory for the peoples of the Global South that reaffirmed their unity and determination to defend their rights against any attempted interference or manipulation. Nicaragua remained committed to the common struggle for sovereignty, justice and peace.

60. Mr BERTI OLIVA (Cuba) said that it was regrettable that General Conference sessions were being used by some Member States to address issues beyond the Agency's mandate and to interfere in the internal affairs of States in violation of the UN Charter. There was no place for politicization and double standards at the Agency, which was a technical organization.

61. Cuba reiterated its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the systematic aggression against Venezuela and the attempts to incite violence and disturb the peace needed by the Venezuelan people to address and heal the deep damage caused to the national economy by the criminal policy of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures used by some, including the State that had questioned Venezuela's membership of the Board, as the main weapon against States that did not cede to their designs.

62. Cuba stood in solidarity with the Venezuelan people and their legitimate re-elected President, Nicolás Maduro Moros, and had no doubt that Venezuela would contribute to the Board's discussions.

63. Mr BIGGS (Australia) said that his country shared the concern of other Member States regarding Venezuela's election to the Board. Australia had already expressed its concerns that the results of the presidential election in Venezuela on 28 July 2024, as announced by the Venezuelan authorities, did not reflect the democratic vote of the people. Australia was also troubled by the growing number of arbitrary detentions and acts of violence carried out by the Venezuelan authorities and supported international calls for full respect for democratic process and freedom of assembly.

64. Mr LILLY (New Zealand) said that, although his country respected the long-standing tradition of deferring to regional groups for the nomination of States to serve in elected seats, it also shared the concerns of other Member States that the process had certain flaws. New Zealand had reservations as to whether Venezuela, with its long overdue arrears and inability to provide transparency in its own democratic process, was the right candidate for a position where it was expected to safeguard the integrity of the Agency and its processes.

65. Mr LI Song (China) expressed support for the election of the 11 new members of the Board in accordance with Article VI of the Statute based on the nominations from seven regional groups and in accordance with the practice of the Board and General Conference. China welcomed Argentina, Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, Ghana, Italy, Luxembourg, Morocco, Pakistan, Thailand and Venezuela to the Board and looked forward to strengthening communication and cooperation with them while working together to advance the Board's work.

66. Mr NAZIRI ASL (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that it was regrettable that several Member States had questioned the decision making right of regional groups. Such assertions ran contrary to the Vienna spirit and were not in line with the UN Charter, under which interference in the national affairs of Member States was prohibited.

67. Ms KITSELL (United Kingdom) said that her country fully respected the process by which Member States were elected to the Board in accordance with Article VI of the Statute and the long-standing practice of the nomination of candidates by regional groups. It was regrettable, however, that Venezuela had been nominated to the Board, as it was clearly stated in Article IV.C of the Statute that all members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, should fulfil in good faith the obligation assumed by them in accordance with the Statute. Although the UK recognized that Member States, for various reasons, might temporarily lapse in the payment of their contributions to the Agency, Venezuela had failed to pay its contributions for over a decade and currently stood in arrears to the Agency for €21 million, accounting for 75% of the Agency's total arrears.

68. The full and timely payment of assessed contributions was vital to the functioning of the Agency. As Venezuela had not indicated any plan or intention to fulfil its financial obligations, its conduct fell short of that expected of a Board member, particularly at a time when several Member States were being unfairly prevented from seeking election to the Board.

69. Ms SALERNO CALDERA (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated that the fact that each region was responsible for electing its own representatives had been established under the Statute. In addition, discussion of issues relating exclusively to the internal affairs of Member States wasted time and had no place at the General Conference. She therefore requested, in line with the rules governing the General Conference, that comments not directly related to the agenda item under discussion should not be reflected in the report of the meeting.

70. Furthermore, Venezuela would be perfectly able to pay its contributions if it were not for the sanctions imposed on the country by the UK and the USA and if, for example, the UK returned the US \$100 billion that it had sequestered in a bank.

71. 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 seventieth (2026) regular session.

– **Interim oral report by the Chair of the Committee of the Whole**

72. Mr LODDING (Sweden), the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, reported on the outcome of the Committee's deliberations on agenda items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23 and 25.

73. Under item 9, "The Agency's Financial Statements for 2023", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/4.

74. Under item 10, "The Agency's Budget Update for 2025", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt draft resolutions A ("Regular Budget Appropriations for 2025"), B ("Technical Cooperation Fund Allocation for 2025") and C ("The Working Capital Fund for 2025") set out in document GC(68)/5.

75. Under item 11, "Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft decision set out in document GC(68)/L.7.

76. Under item 12, "Scale of assessment of Member States' contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2025", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out on page 3 of document GC(68)/12.

77. Under item 15, "Strengthening of the Agency's technical cooperation activities", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.4.

78. Under item 17, "Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards", the Committee recommended that the Conference adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.5.

79. Under item 23, "Promotion of Efficiency and Effectiveness of the IAEA Decision Making Process", he said that the importance of maintaining and promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of the Agency's decision making processes and strengthening the Agency and its governing bodies in a fair and balanced manner had been highlighted. The expansion of the Board's membership, enhancing the role and authority of both the General Conference and the Board, and the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between the two bodies had also been underlined. The importance of the direct engagement and participation of all Member States in the decision making process on issues related to the Agency's work had been emphasized, as had the issue of sovereign equality among Member States in the Agency's PMOs in order to enhance their representation in those organs. The relevance and importance of the process currently under way for the timely ratification of the amendment of Article VI of the Statute had been referred to, and some views and suggestions had been expressed in that context. The issue of the use of electronic voting by the General Conference — following the example of the UN General Assembly — had also been raised.

80. Under item 25, "Elections of the Agency's Staff Pension Committee", the Committee recommended that the General Conference elect Ms Evelyne Ong'ayo of Kenya as a member and Ms Vania Alexandra Lijaya of Indonesia as an alternate member of the Agency's Staff Pension Committee.

81. Issues remained pending in relation to three agenda items, namely item 13, “Nuclear and radiation safety”; item 14; “Nuclear security”; and item 16, “Strengthening the Agency’s activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications”, specifically section B, “Nuclear power”.

82. Expressing appreciation to all the Committee members for their flexibility, he looked forward to the continuation of their constructive approach to reach consensus on the outstanding agenda items.

83. The PRESIDENT thanked the Chair for his report and commended his management of the Committee’s work.

9. The Agency’s Financial Statements for 2023

84. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/4 was adopted.

10. The Agency’s Budget Update for 2025

85. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, draft resolutions A, B and C set out in document GC(68)/5 were adopted.

11. Amendment to Article XIV.A of the Statute

86. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft decision set out in document GC(68)/L.7 was adopted.

12. Scale of assessment of Member States’ contributions towards the Regular Budget for 2025

87. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out on page 3 of document GC(68)/12 was adopted.

15. Strengthening of the Agency’s technical cooperation activities

88. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.4 was adopted.

89. Ms GIL (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcoming the adoption by consensus of the resolution, reaffirmed the Group's principled position concerning the Agency's mandate with regard to technical cooperation, namely that the promotion and transfer of nuclear technology and equipment for sustainable socioeconomic progress in developing countries was the Agency's main statutory function and that the TC programme was the main delivery vehicle for that function.

90. The TC programme was a shared responsibility and its success depended on the combined efforts of the Department of Technical Cooperation, other relevant Agency departments and Member States. The planning and implementation of the TC programme needed to be tailored to the evolving needs and priorities of individual Member States, in particular developing countries, in line with paragraph 4 of section 2 of the resolution just adopted (GC(68)/RES/10).

91. The Agency's regional programmes were an essential tool for promoting technical cooperation among developing countries, fostering the exchange of best practices, and promoting networks among Member States. The Group requested that the Secretariat continue its efforts, which were much appreciated, to enhance the effective and efficient management of regional TC programmes. It supported the Secretariat's endeavours to enhance the effectiveness of TC programme delivery to new Member States, including LDCs and small island developing States, through the development of tailored capacity building support.

92. The Group, underscoring the importance of the TCF for the successful implementation of the TC programme, called once again on all Member States to pay their contributions in accordance with the indicative scale of assessment, in full and on time. It also requested the Secretariat to work closely with Member States to improve the rate of attainment on pledges and payments to the TCF. The Group thanked those Member States that had already pledged their contributions to the TCF for 2025.

93. The Group noted with concern that, despite the increasing number of developing countries receiving technical cooperation from the Agency, the financial and human resources for the TC programme had not increased accordingly. The situation was even more striking when the TCF was compared to the funds available for non-promotional activities.

94. The Group remained concerned that the resources available to the TC programme were still not sufficient, assured and predictable to meet the objectives mandated in Article II of the Statute. The Group also reiterated its call for sufficient human resources and adequate funding to be assigned to the management of the TC Programme, in order to facilitate its successful delivery in light of growing demand.

95. Although the Group appreciated the extrabudgetary contributions from Member States, the private sector and other non-traditional donors to the TC programme, it emphasized that such contributions could not be a reliable source of funding. The Group therefore remained concerned about the increased reliance on extrabudgetary contributions for TC programme delivery and the potential impact on the sufficient, assured and predictable nature of the funding. Extrabudgetary contributions should not and could not replace the TCF, which was the primary funding mechanism essential to a stable and strategic TC programme.

96. Taking note of the important contribution that the TC programme could make to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, the Group welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to help Member States to benefit from the synergies between the 2030 Agenda and the TC programme, while recognizing their specificities. Alignment with the SDGs should not constitute a limitation or condition for TC projects or be used as a tool for their reprioritization. The SDGs entailed greater demands for additional resources to address increasing socioeconomic challenges and to meet the developmental needs of developing countries.

97. The Group restated its position that technical cooperation must not be subject to any form of conditionality, which would be inconsistent with the Statute and with the Revised Guiding Principles and General Operating Rules, as contained in document INFCIRC/267, to which the Secretariat should continue to adhere. The Group emphasized the Agency's role in conducting capacity building activities across its programme of work, in particular for emergency preparedness and response.

98. The Group reiterated its call on the Agency to address long-standing obstacles, such as delays and denials of equipment, as well as travel and visa restrictions arbitrarily imposed by a number of Member States, which negatively affected programme delivery and the implementation rate.

99. Underscoring the importance of cancer control in developing countries, the Group urged the Agency to continue building capacity in such countries, including those that still did not have access to nuclear medicine, radiation medicine techniques and radiotherapy. The Group encouraged the Agency to continue addressing Member States' requirements for comprehensive cancer control capacity, through PACT, Rays of Hope and to foster more regional PACT programmes.

100. Recalling the outcome document of its Third South Summit, held in January 2024, in Kampala, the Group underscored the importance of respecting and implementing the relevant UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as the provisional measures and orders of the International Court of Justice. In that regard, the Group was deeply troubled by the ongoing situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip, and was gravely concerned by the devastating and continuous attacks on the health infrastructure, including hospitals for cancer care. The attacks had so far led to the destruction of 24 of the 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip, some of which contained radioactive sources. The Group called on the Agency to consider undertaking measures to examine the magnitude of the threat that those sources posed to public health and the environment. The Group underscored the Agency's role in strengthening radiation therapy and medical imaging to meet national needs for diagnosis, management and treatment in general, and highlighted the urgent needed support for operational medical facilities that were receiving internally displaced people seeking imaging and treatment services in the Gaza Strip.

101. The Group also requested the Agency to enhance its support through the TC programme in the West Bank. It encouraged the Secretariat to provide support and contribute to the effective delivery of cancer diagnosis, management and treatment in the Occupied Palestinian territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip, by providing, upon request, equipment and strengthening human resource capabilities, including through Rays of Hope. The Group supported the discussions between the State of Palestine and the Secretariat on the planning of a possible off-cycle TC project to be implemented in the Gaza Strip.

102. Mr LI Song (China) welcomed the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on strengthening of the Agency's TC activities and praised the Vienna spirit of cooperation shown during the negotiation process. The TC resolution was among the most important resolutions for developing countries. Promoting development — the key to solving the challenges of the moment — through international cooperation was vital. The UN General Assembly resolution of 21 December 2023² reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation — including North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation — and urged developed countries to continue providing assistance to developing countries to better harness science, technology and innovation to achieve the SDGs in the Global South. The TC resolution underscored the important role played by the Agency's TC programme to that end.

² A/RES/78/167.

103. During negotiations on the resolution, China had put forward the concept of ‘Atoms for the Global South’, which had been broadly welcomed among developing countries. The idea was not to suggest that atoms should serve only the Global South, but rather to emphasize the more pressing need in those countries for peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear technologies, and to highlight the significance of the Director General’s commitment, with Member States’ support, to assisting in the development of the Global South. China encouraged developed countries to provide increased financial support for technical cooperation and urged the Secretariat to allocate more resources to TC activities so as to better help countries of the Global South, and other countries, to strengthen their capacity building and make better use of nuclear technology to achieve the SDGs.

104. The year 2024 marked the 40th anniversary of China’s accession to the Agency. Those years of successful cooperation had seen China’s nuclear industry — and its nuclear science and technology sector — grow and develop, and his country had begun to open up and share those benefits with the international community. During the Conference, China had announced its latest initiative to expand the sharing of its nuclear research facilities, with 12 facilities to be opened up to countries in the Global South and around the world. The facilities were an important international public good for promoting technological innovation and development cooperation.

105. China would take the opportunity of the anniversary to actively implement its Global Development Initiative, vigorously promote comprehensive cooperation with the Agency and Member States, share its experience in developing nuclear energy and nuclear technology, and make greater contributions to fulfilling the vision of ‘Atoms for Peace and Development’.

106. Ms SALERNO CALDERA (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her country welcomed the adoption of the resolution by consensus, which reflected the huge importance that all Member States attached to the TC programme as a fundamental mechanism for bringing the benefits of nuclear science and technology to developing countries.

107. Venezuela reaffirmed its strong and long-standing support for the Palestinian people, who were victims of decades of violence and Israeli occupation. The people of Venezuela had always spoken in defence of Palestine, demanding respect for its inalienable right to self-determination, peace and sovereignty. Palestine must be recognized as a State with full rights in the multilateral system.

108. In that regard, Venezuela strongly supported the provision of Agency technical assistance to Palestine, in particular for addressing the urgent need to rehabilitate the hospital infrastructure that had been severely damaged by attacks. In view of the extremely grave situation faced by the Palestinian people, Venezuela called on the Agency to designate a technical mission, as a matter of urgency, to address the priorities determined by the State of Palestine. The humanitarian crisis and significant damage to the health infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank required an immediate response. Venezuela also urged the Agency to assess the nuclear risks in the areas attacked by Israel, address the essential requirements for ensuring the continuity of medical services, provide the necessary equipment to treat cancer patients, and ensure radiological protection in the damaged hospitals.

109. Venezuela underscored the crucial importance of the TC programme, which was a fundamental pillar for the socioeconomic development of developing countries. The countries of the Global South now needed to unite and help each other, strengthening cooperation and the mechanisms that were essential for their development and solidarity.

110. Venezuela demanded an end to Israel’s occupation and violent attacks against Palestine and urged the States that supported the massacre and genocide to stop the conflict immediately. She recalled that Hugo Chávez had said that the peace of Palestine was the peace of the world. When one people suffered and its rights were violated, the whole world shared that pain.

All nations, not only Venezuela, should be committed to healing such wounds and ensuring that Palestine achieved peace, justice and the dignity it so richly deserved.

111. Mr ZABALGOITIA TREJO (Mexico) said that, for his country, technical cooperation was one of the key topics of the General Conference. Mexico thanked the Director General and the Deputy Director General for Technical Cooperation for their work in promoting and expanding the Agency's TC programme, and noted that narrowing the focus of TC projects to four or five main areas of work had allowed for greater efficiency and the achievement of specific results in the vast majority of countries involved.

112. All Member States had something to contribute, and much to receive, from technical cooperation. Countries such as Mexico were deeply grateful for the contributions that Member States in a privileged technological and financial position provided for the Agency's TC activities. It was also easy to lose sight of the fact that regional disparities and inequalities in terms of development existed, not only between but also within Member States, and that the TC programme could help to narrow those gaps.

113. The TC programme must continue to be supported and strengthened, including through the provision of the funding for the TCF. All Member States were therefore urged to meet their financial commitments to the Agency in a timely manner.

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

114. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.5 was adopted.

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

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

116. It was so decided.

25. Elections of the Agency's Staff Pension Committee

117. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the Conference elected Ms Evelyne Ong'ayo of Kenya as a member and Ms Vania Alexandra Lijaya of Indonesia as an alternate member of the Agency's Staff Pension Committee.

– Report on the Scientific Forum

118. The PRESIDENT, recalling that the theme of the Scientific Forum 2024 had been “Atoms4Food – Better Agriculture for Better Life”, invited the Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2024, Ms Larraín Barth, to report to the General Conference.

119. Ms LARRAÍN BARTH (Rapporteur of the Scientific Forum 2024) read out the report (annexed hereto).

120. The PRESIDENT thanked Ms Larraín Barth for the interesting report and commended the Secretariat on its excellent preparation of the Scientific Forum 2024.

17. Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of Agency safeguards (resumed)

121. Ms GOPINATH (India) said that she reaffirmed her country’s position on paragraph 8 of the resolution, namely that Agency safeguards should apply to all Member States and other relevant parties, in accordance with their respective legal obligations.

122. Mr SHAUL (Israel) said that his country wholeheartedly supported improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of Agency safeguards. His country noted with regret, however, that paragraph 8 contained wording that was not within the mandate of the Agency and did not allay the concerns expressed by some Member States. Achieving universal application of comprehensive Agency safeguards was contingent on international obligations which each State took upon itself and was therefore beyond the scope of the Agency’s mandate.

18. Implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (GC(68)/15; GC(68)/L.3 and Add.4)

123. Mr LULASHNYK (Canada), introducing the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.3 and Add.4, said that, following its circulation, the draft resolution was being presented on behalf of 63 Member States.

124. In negotiating the draft resolution, the DPRK Core Group had sought to build on the text contained in resolution GC(67)/RES/12, which had been adopted by consensus in 2023. The Core Group had focused on factual revisions consistent with the Director General’s latest report, set out in document GC(68)/15, including in relation to the DPRK’s commissioning of a light water reactor, ongoing maintenance at the test site and recent political announcements from the DPRK regarding its nuclear policy.

125. The Director General’s latest report had made it clear that the DPRK’s nuclear activities remained a cause for serious concern and a clear violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions. It was therefore imperative that the General Conference continue to send the DPRK a strong and united message that it must halt all such activities, that it could not have the status of a

nuclear-weapon State under the NPT, and that it must comply fully with its obligations. Recent developments, in September 2024, that suggested that the DPRK was continuing to expand its uranium enrichment capacity further underscored the critical importance of the resolution under consideration.

126. In drafting the text, the Core Group had engaged in a constructive and transparent process aimed at achieving consensus, as had been the case in recent years. The Group had circulated the text among all Member States before the General Conference and had sought feedback but had received no substantive comments. In addition, the Group had ensured that the text closely reflected the Director General's report and its scope in order to avoid politicization and thereby protect the carefully negotiated balance of the text that had enabled the consensus adoption of resolutions on the topic for many years.

127. Over the preceding three decades, the General Conference had repeatedly sent a unified message regarding the importance of the Agency's work with respect to the DPRK. Noting that the resolution called once again on the DPRK to cooperate promptly with the Agency in the full and effective implementation of Agency safeguards, Canada commended the impartial efforts of the Director General and the Secretariat on the issue, including their continued reporting and enhanced readiness activities.

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

129. Mr KOSAREV (Russian Federation) said that, for the past 30 years, his country had worked with the co-sponsors to achieve a balanced text. He reiterated that dialogue with the DPRK should be based on specific and practical incentives for engaging the country in negotiations, rather than on threats and escalatory rhetoric. The ritual of listing endless claims against the DPRK was diplomatic manipulation and completely divorced from reality. Interested States were trying to impose a draft resolution customized to suit their national foreign policy priorities. The sole purpose of the States proposing the resolution was to point the finger at the DPRK and present themselves as supporters of peace on the Korean Peninsula, which was not, in fact, the case.

130. The USA, together with Japan and the Republic of Korea, was increasing military activity, including unprecedented large scale exercises, with the openly stated purpose of preparing for confrontation with the DPRK. The USA's true intentions had become apparent in April 2023 with the signing of the Washington Declaration with the Republic of Korea, namely that the USA was once again moving closer to a non-nuclear-weapon State and giving it an unprecedented role in strategic planning and decision making.

131. The work of the joint USA–Republic of Korea Nuclear Consultative Group was well under way, having already finalized guidelines for a nuclear deterrence policy and posture. In August 2024, the Republic of Korea and the USA had conducted a joint Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise with a nuclear component, and a staff simulation exercise had been held under the framework of the Nuclear Consultative Group in September 2024. US nuclear submarines had entered ports of the Republic of Korea more than once and a B-52 strategic bomber had landed at one of the air bases of the Republic of Korea.

132. Such recklessness had an extremely negative impact on regional security and undermined the entire architecture of Security Council resolutions aimed at finding a diplomatic solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

133. Unlike the USA and its allies, the DPRK refrained from genuinely aggressive actions in the nuclear sphere, continuing to adhere to the moratorium on nuclear tests announced on 21 April 2018.

In return, the DPRK had received no easing of the sanctions regime but rather the establishment around it of a hostile alliance with a nuclear component. It seemed that the USA and its allies were deliberately provoking the DPRK to take radical and tough steps.

134. He recalled that the Security Council resolutions on the DPRK contained a clause under which the Security Council should be ready to strengthen, modify, suspend or cancel measures depending on the DPRK's compliance. The fact that Western countries were blocking the possibility of easing sanctions in response to the nuclear restraint shown by the DPRK was a violation of the relevant provisions of those resolutions.

135. It was regrettable that the approach of the co-sponsors of the draft resolution had not changed over the years, despite the geopolitical situation in the region having changed. The proposed text simply did not correspond to present realities. The Russian Federation was no longer willing to accept that tired approach and was therefore not prepared to join consensus on the text of the proposed 'anniversary' resolution, considering it useless, inadequate and harmful.

136. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution set out in document GC(68)/L.3.

137. It was so decided.

138. Mr KAIFU (Japan), speaking also on behalf of the Republic of Korea and the USA, said that the three countries were united in their steadfast commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, consistent with relevant Security Council resolutions.

139. The adoption, by consensus, of the resolution on the implementation of the NPT safeguards agreement between the Agency and the DPRK sustained an encouraging tradition that had prevailed since the resolution had first been introduced in 1993, when the Board had found the DPRK to be in non-compliance with its safeguards agreement. The General Conference's adoption of the 32nd such annual resolution manifested the deeply troubling reality that the DPRK's nuclear programme had continued to develop and become more sophisticated over the preceding three decades.

140. The DPRK's nuclear activities and ballistic missile programmes were in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions and undermined the global non-proliferation regime. The three countries therefore strongly urged the DPRK to comply fully with all its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions; to take tangible steps towards abandoning all its nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner; and to return at an early date to, and fully comply with, the NPT and Agency safeguards.

141. As clearly documented in the Director General's report set out in document GC(68)/15, the DPRK had continued its unlawful nuclear programme, from the production of fissile material to weaponization. In September 2024 alone, it had revealed images of a uranium enrichment facility for the first time and had launched several ballistic missiles. Furthermore, the DPRK had engaged in irresponsible nuclear rhetoric regarding the exponential increase of its nuclear arsenal and the possibility of pre-emptive use of tactical nuclear weapons. The DPRK's repeated ballistic missile launches, even when characterized as a 'satellite launch' constituted a clear violation of relevant Security Council resolutions that prohibited any launches by the DPRK using ballistic missile technologies. The three countries urged the DPRK not to conduct any further destabilizing or provocative actions, including any nuclear tests or launches, in particular any that used ballistic missile technologies.

142. The DPRK's unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile programmes constituted substantive threats to peace and security both in the region and beyond. The three countries therefore strongly condemned the increasing military cooperation between the DPRK and the Russian Federation, including the

export by the DPRK and the procurement by the Russian Federation of ballistic missiles, in direct violation of Security Council resolutions, and the use of those missiles by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Russian Federation's veto of the proposed Security Council resolution to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) made it easier for the DPRK to evade UN sanctions. It was therefore all the more important for all Member States to fully, comprehensively and immediately implement all relevant Security Council resolutions, including the ban on the transfer of all arms and related material to and from the DPRK. Member States should send a clear signal that the international community could not and would not tolerate the DPRK's unlawful and irresponsible nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes.

143. The three countries remained committed to dialogue with the DPRK with no preconditions and urged it to cease all provocations and destabilizing actions, to return to dialogue and to focus its resources on improving the well-being of its people.

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

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

146. Mr KOSAREV (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the accusations of alleged transfers of arms and military cooperation with the DPRK made by the previous speaker had not been supported by evidence, which should be at hand before making such allegations. In relation to the claim that those weapons were allegedly still being used in Ukraine, he drew attention to the fact that the supply of arms to Ukraine by Western countries did not require any proof, as it took place openly. It was, in fact, those weapons that continued to fuel the Ukrainian conflict, in which Ukrainian people, among others, were being killed.

147. With regard to the extension of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1718 (2006), he recalled that his country had already provided detailed explanation on the matter to the Board. The Russian Federation had vetoed a decision on the matter six months previously, as it believed that the Panel of Experts was no longer relevant to the current realities surrounding the Korean Peninsula. Over the years, international restrictive measures had not managed to change the security situation in the region for the better. On the contrary, the lack of mechanisms for reviewing sanctions measures with a view to relaxing them was a significant impediment to building confidence and supporting political dialogue.

148. His country had taken a constructive approach and had offered alternative proposals, which had been rejected by Western countries. The Russian Federation had even been prepared to agree to extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts subject to the possibility of reviewing the sanctions. That was completely standard practice, but Western countries had unfortunately not been willing to follow it.

149. In conclusion, he said that it was irrelevant to act according to the old models being followed by Western countries, as such action did not meet existing realities and challenges.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

IAEA Scientific Forum 2024 Atoms4Food, Better Agriculture for Better Life

The sixty-eighth regular session of the General Conference

Dr María Angélica Larrain, (Associate Professor, Department of Food Science and Chemical Technology, Faculty of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Chile, Chile)

Ms President, Director General, Distinguished Delegates,

I am honoured to present to the General Conference the report on the IAEA Scientific Forum 2024 with this year's theme "Atoms4Food, Better Agriculture for Better Life".

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 highlight the essential role of nuclear science and technology innovations, under the framework of Atoms4Food, in enhancing crop improvement, animal production, disease and pest management, precision agriculture, food safety and nutrition.

For 60 years, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have applied nuclear techniques to improve food security and safety. Launched in October 2023, Atoms4Food is a joint IAEA and FAO initiative to boost food security using nuclear science and technology. This initiative offers tailored solutions for Member States to enhance agricultural productivity, reduce food losses and waste, ensure food safety, improve nutrition and adapt to climate challenges.

In three sessions over two days, leading experts from around the world highlighted nuclear science and technology for sustainable agriculture development, partnership building and resource mobilization. The forum stressed nuclear technology's role in agrifood systems transformation, exchanged good practice examples, discussed sustainable adoption and scaling-up of research and development results, and explored innovative financing and partnerships.

The Forum was opened by Rafael Mariano Grossi, IAEA Director General, who emphasized the significant role of nuclear science and technology under the framework of Atoms4Food initiative in addressing food insecurity and malnutrition. Mr Grossi highlighted that leveraging nuclear techniques in food and agriculture is crucial for improving crop yield, pest control, and climate resilience, contributing towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In his address, Mr Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, President of the OPEC Fund for International Development, underscored the importance of international cooperation to ensure food security, particularly in developing countries. He emphasized that nuclear technology plays a vital role in improving agricultural productivity and sustainability.

His Excellency Mr Musalia Mudavadi, Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Kenya, stressed the importance of nuclear technology in supporting sustainable agricultural practices in Africa. He highlighted Kenya's efforts to adopt innovative nuclear techniques to improve food production and address malnutrition.

Mr Liu Jing, Vice Chairman of the China Atomic Energy Authority, China, showcased China's advancements in nuclear applications for agriculture, including through space mutagenesis with the development of high-yield, resilient crop varieties that can withstand climate change impacts and improve food security.

His Excellency Mr Sidi Tiémoko Touré, Minister of Animal and Fisheries Resources, Côte d'Ivoire, emphasized the critical role of nuclear techniques in improving livestock production. He

noted that applying nuclear technologies to optimize breeding and disease control can help enhance food security and nutrition in Côte d'Ivoire.

Her Excellency Ms. Leila Benali, Minister of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, Kingdom of Morocco, highlighted the country's efforts in integrating nuclear technology into agriculture, focusing on sustainable practices that increase productivity while addressing environmental concerns. She pointed out Morocco's focus on climate-resilient farming practices.

His Excellency Mr Fernando Mattos, Minister of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries, Uruguay, discussed Uruguay's initiatives to apply nuclear technologies in livestock management to improve meat production, enhance disease control, and reduce the environmental impact of agriculture.

Mr Giorgio Silli, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy, stressed the need for global cooperation in applying nuclear technologies for sustainable agriculture. He reiterated Italy's commitment to supporting international efforts in food security through innovative nuclear solutions.

Session 1 of the forum focused on addressing food insecurity and malnutrition by leveraging nuclear science and technologies to achieve relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The discussions highlighted the essential role of nuclear techniques in improving agricultural productivity, ensuring food safety, and enhancing human health. This session was divided into two panels, each covering different but complementary aspects of how nuclear innovations contribute to sustainable agrifood systems and animal and human health.

The first panel of Session 1, "Innovations for Enhancing Agricultural Productivity," concentrated on the application of nuclear and isotope techniques to advance agricultural outcomes. Experts presented various innovations to improve crop yields, enhance livestock production, and increase climate resilience. Key topics included the use of mutation breeding to develop disease-resistant and drought-tolerant crops, nitrogen management strategies to optimize soil health, and agroforestry techniques as effective measures to mitigate climate change. The presentations underscored the potential of nuclear technologies to support sustainable farming practices, ultimately contributing to greater food security.

In the second panel of Session 1, "Innovations for Enhancing Plant, Animal, and Human Health and Food Safety," the focus shifted toward the broader role of nuclear technologies in improving food safety, animal and human health and supporting international trade. Presenters discussed the development of disease-resistant plant varieties, the benefits of food irradiation for ensuring safety and extending the shelf life of food products, and the importance of food traceability and authenticity for global trade. The session also explored how nuclear techniques can be employed to enhance the nutritional value of foods and address public health concerns, such as combating malnutrition and monitoring of marine bio-toxins and harmful algal blooms. The successes of the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT) and its benefits for agricultural industry and animal health, especially in controlling transboundary animal diseases were also discussed.

Session 2 focused on the interconnectedness of agricultural practices with environmental conservation and socioeconomic equity. Speakers highlighted how the use of nuclear science and technology in improving agricultural productivity and food irradiation also opened new international markets and bolstered country's economy, while also ensuring the safety of domestic food products.

The session also explored innovations in food safety, such as isotope analysis for verifying food authenticity. In addition, speakers emphasized the importance of climate-resilient crop varieties and sustainable farming practices, including family farming and solidarity economies to strengthen rural livelihoods and in addressing poverty and hunger, underlining the role of nuclear science and technology in fostering both environmental sustainability and economic equity.

The third session of the forum, titled "Fostering Partnership Building and Mobilizing Resources for Sustainable Impacts," focused on the importance of partnerships and innovative funding

mechanisms in ensuring the long-term sustainability of agricultural initiatives. Speakers emphasized the need for enhanced synergies among the diverse stakeholders and better coherence in program definition and coordination to avoid duplications and increase impact. Presentations showcased successful public-private partnerships between international organizations, private sector entities, and local stakeholders to improve food security, animal health, and agricultural resilience.

Participants also emphasized the timely initiation of the Atoms4Food initiative, which is seen as pivotal for harnessing nuclear technologies to address food security challenges and promote sustainable agricultural practices. The initiative was praised for its potential to accelerate technological solutions, and international cooperation, particularly in regions most vulnerable to food insecurity. The session also explored the importance of flexible funding, such as pooled funding, to prioritize support where it is most needed and achieve larger shared outcomes regardless of the amount contributed, with reduced transaction costs and fragmentation of support. Key challenges, such as the competition between humanitarian and development priorities in the food and agriculture sector resource mobilization and coordination among partners were also addressed.

During the closing session, Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, alongside a distinguished panel of international experts, reflected on the critical role of partnerships and resource mobilization in advancing sustainable agricultural practices through nuclear technologies.

His Excellency Mr Anxious Jongwe Masuka, Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Rural Development of Zimbabwe, highlighted Zimbabwe's commitment to leveraging nuclear technology to enhance agricultural productivity. He emphasized the need for capacity-building and partnerships to address food security challenges and promote sustainable agricultural practices, particularly in drought-prone regions.

His Excellency Mr Amadou Dicko, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Animal Resources, and Fisheries of Burkina Faso, discussed the importance of integrating nuclear techniques into national agricultural strategies. He underscored Burkina Faso's efforts to address food insecurity through innovative technologies aimed at improving crop yields and livestock health, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between countries and south-south cooperation.

Ms. Ismahane Elouafi, Executive Managing Director of CGIAR, spoke on the role of scientific research in advancing food security. She pointed out that nuclear technology has contributed to the development of resilient crops, improved soil management, and more sustainable food systems, highlighting the importance of global partnerships in achieving these goals. She reflected on the need to produce more with less to mitigate the impact of agrifood systems on the environment and land use and how nuclear techniques provide solutions in that regard.

Mr Lloyd Day, Deputy Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), emphasized the need for cross-sector collaboration in addressing food security challenges in the Americas. He discussed IICA's work in fostering partnerships between governments, international organizations, and the private sector and how nuclear technologies support both consumers and farmers.

Ms. Kelley Cormier, Chief of the Food Safety Division at the Center for Nutrition, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stressed the importance of ensuring food safety through nuclear science. She emphasized how food safety measures, such as irradiation, contribute to international trade and public health, and encouraged increased cooperation to expand these technologies globally. She also underscored the role of youth in nuclear science and technology.

Mr Germán Guido Lavalle, President of the National Commission on Atomic Energy of Argentina, highlighted Argentina's achievements in using nuclear technologies to improve crop resilience, food safety, and agricultural sustainability. He emphasized that agriculture and food challenges are not local problems and that collaboration within countries are essential for example against transboundary diseases through South-South and triangular cooperation.

Mr Prihasto Setyanto, Senior Executive Advisor of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Indonesia, presented Indonesia's long experience in integrating nuclear techniques to boost food production and manage natural resources sustainably. He emphasized the importance of public communication in raising awareness about nuclear technologies to mitigate misconceptions.

In his remarks, IAEA Director General Grossi concluded the session by emphasizing the significance of partnerships and international cooperation in mobilizing resources to advance the Atoms4Food initiative. He reiterated that nuclear science and technology plays a pivotal role in transforming agrifood systems and addressing global food security challenges.