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FORTY-THIRD (1999) REGULAR SESSION

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna
on Wednesday, 29 September 1999, at 10.20 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America)

Later: Mr. BENMOUSSA (Morocco)

Later: Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America)

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[*] GC(43)/27.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(43)/INF/15/Rev.1.

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MEASURES TO STRENGTH INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN NUCLEAR,
RADIATION AND WASTE SAFETY

(GC(43)/9, 10 and 11; GC(43)/INF/4, 5, 6 and 8)

- DRAFT RESOLUTION ON MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL
CO-OPERATION IN NUCLEAR, RADIATION AND WASTE SAFETY (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN, inviting the Committee to continue its consideration of the draft resolution contained in document GC(43)/COM.5/L.12, recalled that towards the end of the previous meeting the representative of the Russian Federation had called for the inclusion of an additional operative paragraph reading something like “Requests the Secretariat to resume the preparation of annual reviews on technological safety, starting with a review for 1999” and had offered to provide him with a copy of a document on technological safety which had been before the Board of Governors in March 1998.

2. He now had a copy of the document in question (GOV/INF/1998/8, entitled “Technology and Engineering: Contributing to the Safety of Nuclear Power and Radioactive Waste Management”), which dealt basically with how the safety of nuclear power could be enhanced “through technological advances and engineering improvements that support the design, operation and decommissioning of nuclear power plants and their related fuel cycles”.

3. The document had been considered by the Board in March 1998 together with the Nuclear Safety Review for the year 1997. According to the summary record, in his summing-up the Chairman of the Board had stated - inter alia - that some Board members had expressed the view that the Agency’s activities in the area of nuclear energy should be the subject of a report entitled “Nuclear Energy Review”.¹ Although the Board as a whole had not requested such a review, it appeared that the Department of Nuclear Energy was preparing one.

4. In the light of that information, he wondered what the Committee’s views were regarding the idea of the inclusion in the draft resolution under consideration of an additional paragraph on the lines envisaged by the representative of the Russian Federation.

5. Mr. SUGANUMA (Japan) said that, although technological safety was important, his delegation was not in favour of the Secretariat’s preparing documents on the subject over and above the annual Nuclear Safety Review. He proposed modification of the paragraph envisaged by the representative of the Russian Federation so that it read “Requests the Secretariat to include in future Nuclear Safety Reviews information, as appropriate, on the contribution of technology and engineering in enhancing nuclear safety”.

6. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) said that it might be advisable to leave the matter to the Board, which would presumably have before it, in due course, the document being prepared by the Department of Nuclear Energy. The contents and format of the Nuclear Safety Review had been altered over the years in response to requests made by the Board and by individual Member States.

¹ See document GOV/OR.938, para. 70.

7. Mr. PAPADIMITROPOULOS (Greece) agreed that the matter should be left to the Board.
8. Mr. SENSENEY (United States of America), expressing support for the proposal made by the representative of Japan, said that his delegation would not like to see a separate series of reports on technological safety.
9. Mr. SCHMID (Austria) said that his delegation was concerned about the risk of too many reports being produced by the Secretariat for consideration by the Board and the General Conference.
10. Mr. BENINSON (Argentina) expressed support for the proposal made by the representative of Japan.
11. Mr. TITKOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation, which would not press for separate reports on technological safety, would like to see fuller coverage of the subject in the annual Nuclear Safety Review. It could accept the additional paragraph proposed by the representative of Japan if “, as appropriate,” were deleted.
12. Mr. GONZÁLEZ (Director, Division of Radiation and Waste Safety) said that in his view the annual Nuclear Safety Review dealt adequately with the subject of technological safety.
13. Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia) said that his delegation would not like “, as appropriate,” to be deleted. There might well be periods when no significant technological safety developments occurred - and hence there was nothing regarding technological safety to report in the Nuclear Safety Review.
14. The CHAIRMAN suggested that “additional” be inserted in the wording proposed by the representative of Japan, so that it read “Requests the Secretariat to include in future Nuclear Safety Reviews additional information, as appropriate, on the contribution of technology and engineering in enhancing nuclear safety”.
15. Mr. TITKOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation would still like to see “, as appropriate,” deleted.
16. The CHAIRMAN suggested that it be left to the Department of Nuclear Safety and the Department of Nuclear Energy to decide what additional information was appropriate.
17. He asked the Committee whether it wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution contained in GC(43)/COM.5/L.12 with the three paragraphs from the draft resolution contained in document GC(43)/COM.5/L.11 as agreed during the previous meeting, with the insertion of “particularly” before “in all areas” in operative paragraph 1, with the replacement of “standards” by “levels” in operative paragraph 5, with the deletion of “until the end of 1999” in operative paragraph 6, with the replacement of “last week” by “at its September 1999 session” in operative paragraph 8, with the deletion of “ministerial-level” in operative paragraph 10 and with the addition of a paragraph reading

“Requests the Secretariat to include in future Nuclear Safety Reviews additional information, as appropriate, on the contribution of technology and engineering in enhancing nuclear safety” after operative paragraph 10.

18. It was so agreed.

MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE YEAR 2000 (Y2K) ISSUE
(GC(43)/7, GC(43)/INF/14)

19. The CHAIRMAN, recalling that the draft resolution whose adoption the Committee had just agreed to recommend touched on the Y2K issue, suggested that the Committee simply recommend to the General Conference that it take note of the reports contained in documents GC(43)/7 and GC(43)/INF/14.

20. It was so agreed.

Mr. Benmoussa (Morocco) resumed the Chair.

EXTENSIVE USE OF ISOTOPE HYDROLOGY FOR WATER RESOURCES
MANAGEMENT
(GC(43)/21)

21. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India), introducing the draft resolution contained in document GC(43)/COM.5/L.2, drew attention to an element that had not appeared in the previous General Conference resolutions on the topic under consideration - a reference to “the work of the Agency on dam sustainability”.

22. Mr. QIAN (Deputy Director General for Technical Co-operation) said that he understood “the work of the Agency on dam sustainability” to mean the Agency’s isotope hydrology activities relating to - for example - the study of sediment build-up in reservoirs, the location of dam leakage points and the identification of the causes of landslides associated with dams.

23. The CHAIRMAN, speaking as the delegate of Morocco, said that, when a dam in his country had recently been found to be leaking badly, an Agency-organized team of experts in isotope hydrology had soon located the leakage point. Accordingly, he proposed that “dam sustainability” in preambular paragraph (g) and operative subparagraph 2(b) be modified to read “dam leakage detection and sustainability”.

24. Mr. ARAR (Turkey) expressed appreciation of the Agency’s activities summarized in document GC(43)/21, especially those relating to the use of isotope techniques in helping to ensure dam safety. He suggested that the phrase just proposed by the Chairman be modified to read “dam leakage detection, safety and sustainability”.

25. Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia) expressed support for the suggestion made by the representative of Turkey.

26. Ms. VOLKOFF (Director, Division of Planning, Co-ordination and Evaluation, Department of Technical Co-operation), replying to a request for clarification from Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia) and Mr. MULTONE (Switzerland) concerning the expression “regional resource centres” in operative paragraph 1(c), said that the expression was now being used consistently instead of the expression “regional centres of excellence”.

27. Mr. QASHUT (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) emphasized the importance attached by his country to the Agency’s activities in support of the use of isotope hydrology for water resources management.

28. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) asked whether the action envisaged in operative subparagraph 2(a) would entail additional Agency expenditures.

29. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India) said that in the view of the draft resolution’s sponsors no additional Agency expenditures would be necessary in order to implement that subparagraph.

30. Mr. QIAN (Deputy Director General for Technical Co-operation) said that it was also his view that no additional Agency expenditures would be necessary.

31. Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America), pointing out that courses were increasingly being taught at a distance using satellite technology or the videotaping of lectures, proposed that the phrase “through the use of advanced communications techniques” be inserted in operative subparagraph 2(a).

32. Mr. QIAN (Deputy Director General for Technical Co-operation) expressed support for the proposal made by the representative of the United States.

33. The CHAIRMAN proposed - after comments by Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) and Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America) - that the Committee recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(43)COM.5/L.2 with “dam sustainability” replaced by “dam leakage detection, safety and sustainability” in preambular paragraph (g) and operative subparagraph 2(b) and with operative subparagraph 2(a) modified to read “... through appropriate courses, at universities in Member States, through the use of advanced communications techniques and at regional training centres, designed to provide ...”.

34. It was so agreed.

PLAN FOR PRODUCING POTABLE WATER ECONOMICALLY (GC(43)20)

35. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India), introducing the draft resolution contained in document GC(43)/COM.5/L.7, said that it had been strengthened relative to resolution GC(42)/RES/16 adopted in 1998 through the addition of three paragraphs, including preambular paragraph (l) - “Noting with concern the decreasing extrabudgetary support for

the Agency's activities on SMRs [small and medium-sized reactors] and nuclear desalination".

36. Mr. BOURITA (Morocco) said that some 1.5 billion people around the world were having to live without safe water, that about 30 million instances of morbidity a year were caused by water pollution and that the transboundary sharing of water resources had been acknowledged to constitute a potential threat to international peace and security. The topic under consideration was therefore a vital one.

37. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was an area in which the Agency could make a unique contribution, it was seawater desalination through the use of nuclear power.

38. Mr. ARAR (Turkey) expressed strong support for the Agency's activities relating to seawater desalination through the use of nuclear power and to SMR development.

39. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) suggested that preambular paragraph (1) be redrafted so as to sound less negative.

40. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the paragraph was intended to draw the attention of policy-makers to a very regrettable trend.

41. Mr. BOURITA (Morocco) pointed out that in paragraph 27 of document GC(43)/20 the Director General had drawn attention to the problem of decreasing extrabudgetary support.

42. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) said that his delegation would not block a consensus in favour of acceptance of preambular paragraph (1).

43. Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia), referring to operative paragraph 6 of the draft resolution, said that he would have preferred wording more like that of operative paragraph 6 of resolution GC(42)/RES/6.

44. Mr. ESPINO (Director, Division of Budget and Finance), referring to operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, said that in his view the question of the upgrading of a technical co-operation project from a footnote a/ to a full core project was one best left to the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Committee.

45. Mr. SUGANUMA (Japan) expressed support for what had been said by the previous two speakers.

46. Mr. STRATFORD (United States of America) expressed misgivings about the phrase "... to increase the seed money from the Regular Budget in order to fully implement all Agency activities relating to ..." in operative paragraph 6.

47. Mr. DELACROIX (France), expressing doubts about operative paragraphs 6 and 7, said his delegation considered that for many developing countries SMRs were not an economically viable option and was not entirely convinced that the proliferation risk problems associated with SMRs had been resolved.

48. Ms. FREDERIKSEN (Denmark), calling for deletion of the phrase “to increase the seed money from the Regular Budget” in operative paragraph 6, said that it prejudged the negotiations which would be taking place on the Regular Budget for 2001.

49. Mr. BOURITA (Morocco) suggested that the second part of operative paragraph 6 be reworded to read “... and to seek seed money from the Regular Budget in order to contribute to the implementation of Agency activities relating to ...”.

Mr. Stratford (United States of America) took the Chair.

50. Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia) said that his delegation was not necessarily opposed to the provision of seed money from the Regular Budget, but felt that it should be considered along with all other demands for financial resources during the normal budget formulation process.

51. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) said that in his delegation’s view it would be better to consider the question of the provision of seed money from the Regular Budget and that of the upgrading of the interregional technical co-operation project on “Integrated nuclear power and desalination system design” in the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Committee.

52. Mr. PIGRAM (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was concerned about the precedent which would be set by adoption of the draft resolution with paragraph 6 as it stood.

53. Mr. SENSENEY (United States of America) suggested that operative paragraph 6 be modified to read something like “Further invites the Director General to secure appropriate funding from extrabudgetary resources and to seek seed money in order to catalyze the Agency’s activities relating to nuclear desalination and SMR development”.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.