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President: Mr. KADRI (Algeria)
Later: Mr. ADAM (Belgium)

CONTENTS

<u>Item of the provisional agenda*</u>		<u>Paragraphs</u>
7	General debate and Annual Report for 1998 (continued) Statement by the delegate of: Namibia	1 - 7 1 - 7
5	Arrangements for the Conference	8 - 14
	(a) Adoption of the agenda and allocation of items for initial discussion	8 - 12
	(b) Closing date of the session and opening date of the next session	13 - 14
-	Requests for the restoration of voting rights	15 - 18

[*] GC(43)/1, Corr.1 and Add.1-2.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(43)/INF/15/Rev.3.

For reasons of economy, this document has been printed in a limited number.
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CONTENTS
(Contd.)

<u>Item of the provisional agenda*</u>	<u>Paragraphs</u>
7 General debate and Annual Report for 1998 (resumed)	19 - 122
Statements by the delegates of:	
Tunisia	19 - 25
Germany	26 - 30
Russian Federation	31 - 36
Nigeria	37 - 45
France	46 - 65
Bangladesh	66 - 72
Algeria	73 - 79
Senegal	80 - 88
Pakistan	89 - 104
Kuwait	105 - 110
Sri Lanka	111 - 122

Abbreviations used in this record

AFRA	African Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ASSET	Analysis of Safety Significant Events Team
Basic Safety Standards	International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
IRRT	International Regulatory Review Team
Kyoto Conference	Third Conference of the Parties to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
LWR	Light-water reactor
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
MOX	Mixed oxide
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
PWR	Pressurized water reactor
RAPAT	Radiation Protection Advisory Team
RCA	Regional Co-operative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (for Asia and the Pacific)
SAGTAC	Standing Advisory Group on Technical Assistance and Co-operation
SILVA	Laser-based isotopic separation of atomic vapour (France)
START	Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
TCDC	Technical co-operation among developing countries
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
Y2K	Year 2000

GC(43)/OR.3
page 4

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1998 (continued)

1. Ms. AMATHILA (Namibia), having expressed appreciation for the technical assistance provided to her country by the Agency, drew attention to - inter alia - the establishment, with assistance from the United States, of Namibia's first radiotherapy centre; her country's involvement in a regional project on the sustainable management of groundwater and the assistance provided by Japan to that project; and the entry into operation of a national thermoluminescence dosimetry system making it possible to monitor all radiation workers in the country. Equipment provided by the Agency had also made it possible to inspect medical facilities that used radiation equipment and to train radiation protection inspectors locally. Namibia was in the process of setting up a National Atomic Energy Board and reorganizing its National Regulatory Authority so as to ensure smooth co-ordination between the Government and the Agency.
2. Welcoming the progress made within the AFRA framework, she confirmed Namibia's readiness to host the next AFRA regional meeting, to be held in the year 2000, and invited AFRA participants to attend the annual meeting of the AFRA technical working group to be held in Windhoek; also, she invited the Director General to visit Namibia on that occasion.
3. Namibia had set up a national committee and a number of sectoral committees to deal with Y2K problems. Most of Namibia's biomedical equipment had been independently certified as being Y2K-compliant, and contingency plans had been drawn up to deal with any difficulties that might arise.
4. Namibia would soon enter into negotiations on a protocol additional to its safeguards agreement with the Agency. She called on other countries that had not yet concluded safeguards agreements or additional protocols to do so as soon as possible.
5. Financial contributions to the Agency's Regular Budget were essential to enable the Agency to discharge its statutory responsibilities. In that regard, she was pleased to announce that Namibia had paid both its assessed contribution and its share of the target for voluntary contributions to the Technical Co-operation Fund (TCF).
6. With regard to the long-standing Article VI amendment issue, she trusted that with the prevailing spirit of compromise it would be possible to agree upon an expansion of the Board of Governors - which Africa had first called for twenty years previously.
7. Finally, having commended the Director General's efforts hitherto, she appealed to him to recruit more women, particularly from developing countries, to serve in the Secretariat; it was time to achieve equal representation of women at all levels of Agency employment.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONFERENCE

(a) ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ALLOCATION OF ITEMS FOR INITIAL DISCUSSION

8. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee recommended that the agenda for the current session consist of all the items on the provisional agenda set forth in document GC(43)/1 and the supplementary item contained in document GC(43)/1/Add.1.

9. With regard to the allocation of items for initial discussion, the Committee recommended that all the items listed in documents GC(43)/1 and GC(43)/1/Add.1 and Corr.1 be taken up for discussion as indicated in those documents.

10. With regard to the order of items, the Committee recommended that the order of items proposed in document GC(43)/1 be maintained; the supplementary item in document GC(43)/1/Add.1, relating to Article XIV of the Statute, should be included immediately after item 10, relating to the Agency's budget for 2000, with the remaining items renumbered accordingly. The Committee gave the President the flexibility, in the exercise of his discretion, to deal with the renumbered item 24 ("Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East") and item 25 ("Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat") in the order and at the time he felt appropriate.

11. All of the General Committee's recommendations regarding the agenda for the current session were accepted.

12. The agenda was adopted.

(b) CLOSING DATE OF THE SESSION AND OPENING DATE OF THE NEXT SESSION

13. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee recommended that the Conference set Friday, 1 October 1999, as the closing date of the forty-third regular session and Monday, 18 September 2000, as the opening date of the forty-fourth regular session, which would be held in Vienna.

14. The Committee's recommendation was accepted.

REQUESTS FOR THE RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS

15. The PRESIDENT said that the General Committee had had before it requests from Iraq and Belarus for the restoration of voting rights under Article XIX.A of the Statute.

16. With regard to the request from Iraq, the Committee, with some reservations, recommended that Iraq's right to vote during the present session not be restored. As to the request from Belarus, the Committee recommended that its right to vote in the Agency be restored until the beginning of the next regular session of the General Conference.

17. The Committee's recommendations with respect to the requests from Iraq and Belarus were accepted.

18. The PRESIDENT said that Palestine's participation in the work of the Agency would be in accordance with the resolution GC(42)/RES/20 adopted by the General Conference the previous year, in addition to previous General Conference resolutions on the subject.

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1998 (resumed)

19. Mr. BEN AHMED (Tunisia) said that his country was very interested in small and medium-sized reactors which could be used for the production of electricity and potable water. Noting Tunisia's participation in the work of the expert group on seawater desalination, and its recent hosting of an international meeting on the subject, he urged the Agency to redouble its efforts in the area of seawater desalination. With regard to other nuclear applications, he said that Tunisia had, with the assistance of France and the Agency, set up a semi-industrial pilot food irradiation plant.

20. Turning to questions of co-operation, he said that the Arab Atomic Energy Agency - based in Tunisia - had objectives similar to those of the Agency, which should therefore strengthen its co-operation with that regional organization. Tunisia, for its part, was making every effort to strengthen co-operation with other African countries.

21. Tunisia was committed to fulfilling its obligations vis-B-vis the Agency. It had consistently paid its assessed contributions to the Regular Budget and voluntary contributions to the TCF, and it had pledged its share of the TCF target for 1999.

22. Nuclear, radiation and waste safety was a prerequisite if the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes was to be further developed; illicit trafficking was also an area that had to be addressed. Tunisia had acceded to all international instruments aimed at ensuring nuclear, radiation and waste safety and to all those aimed at ensuring non-proliferation, such as the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (the Pelindaba Treaty). His country was now considering concluding a protocol additional to its comprehensive safeguards agreement in order to further the objective of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

23. In that connection, Tunisia was particularly concerned at Israel's continued refusal to accede to the NPT and place all its nuclear installations under international control within the framework of a safeguards agreement. His country would like to see a nuclear-weapon-free zone established in the Middle East. To that end, Israel must be persuaded to comply with the will of the international community.

24. Tunisia, located as it was near a particularly sensitive sea route, shared the concerns of other countries about the danger posed by the maritime transport of nuclear waste. It favoured increased controls on the transport of such waste and considered that the subject should receive the same attention as the safety of nuclear facilities.

25. With regard to the question of amending Article VI of the Statute, he said that Tunisia supported the African demand for an increase in the number of Board seats allocated to Africa. It also supported the Arab position regarding the composition of the MESA Group, particularly since a minimum level of understanding and harmony among the members of an area group was a prerequisite for political co-ordination.

26. Mr. GERLACH (Germany) said that, since the previous session of the General Conference, a fundamental change had taken place in his country's energy policy with the Government's decision to phase out nuclear power and to place greater emphasis on efficiency improvements at non-nuclear power plants, renewable energy sources and energy conservation. Negotiations were under way on a schedule for the decommissioning of Germany's 19 nuclear power plants that would ensure that the utilities got an appropriate return on their investments, in order to avoid compensation claims against the Government. It was understood that, pending their decommissioning, the plants would continue to produce electricity in accordance with stringent safety standards.

27. Effective safeguards were crucial to maintaining public confidence in a credible non-proliferation regime. The conclusion of additional protocols by all States would help to improve the efficiency of the safeguards system, and he was confident that the necessary parliamentary procedures for the ratification of Germany's additional protocol would be concluded by the end of the current year. The efficient integration of the additional measures into the existing safeguards system and the new provisions regarding additional information and complementary access represented a good opportunity for rationalizing the existing procedures and improving the detection of undeclared activities. The Agency would face a new challenge in the years ahead with the verification of weapons-excess material.

28. The outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference would depend on whether tangible progress could be achieved beforehand in the area of nuclear disarmament. He appealed to all States to sign and ratify the CTBT, especially those States whose ratification was a condition for its entry into force, and urged India and Pakistan to fulfil their declared intention to become parties to the CTBT. A treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons was the next logical step, but it had regrettably not been possible to confirm the consensus reached in August 1998 to establish an ad hoc working group of the Conference on Disarmament and start negotiations. Verification of such a cut-off treaty should be entrusted to the Agency, making use of its expertise in the field of safeguards.

29. The Convention on Nuclear Safety was helping to improve nuclear safety worldwide. The first review meeting - in April 1999 - had been a promising start, and the national reporting and review process had contributed considerably to the improvement of national safety programmes. The second review meeting - to be held in 2002 - should clearly distinguish between those obligations arising out of the Convention which had been fulfilled and those which had not. For its part, the Agency had long-standing experience of promoting national and international safety regimes through its ASSET, OSART and IRRS missions and was playing an increasingly important role in the development of international safety standards.

30. In the area of radioactive waste, Germany was currently reviewing its waste management policy, as there were some doubts whether the existing planned final storage projects were adequate, and trying to pinpoint a suitable final storage location in a deep geological formation. It looked forward to co-operating with the Agency and other Member States in developing commonly accepted waste safety criteria with a reliable scientific basis.

31. Mr. ADAMOV (Russian Federation) said that the international community had to make a choice between, on one hand, the intensive development of nuclear power technology on the basis of new approaches from the safety, environmental and economic point of view and, on the other, the relegation of the peaceful atom to a secondary role in the energy sphere. If the latter option were chosen, the international community would not be able to carry out the tasks arising out of the decisions taken at the Kyoto Conference. It would be practically impossible to reduce emissions to the 1990 level given the current structure of the energy sector.

32. While recognizing the need for the development of renewable energy sources, it was important to realize that the only true industrial-scale option in the twenty-first century would be nuclear power, provided that its economic competitiveness was improved, serious accidents could be prevented, ecological security could be assured and the nuclear non-proliferation regime was strengthened. The Scientific Forum being held concurrently with the General Conference's session was providing a unique opportunity to discuss such issues, and the Russian Federation would be submitting to the Forum a "white book" setting out its approach to them.

33. His country believed that - from the point of view of safety, economics, non-proliferation and public acceptance - nuclear power based on fast reactors of inherently safe design and fuel not requiring separation of plutonium at any stage would be the optimum. The fuel cycle should provide for the burning of plutonium and for the transmutation of other long-lived radionuclides so as to prevent the return to the Earth's crust of radioactivity in excess of the radioactivity in the mined uranium ore. The engineering specifications for a demonstration model of such a reactor, the Brest-3000, with a pilot fuel cycle would be ready before the end of the current year.

34. The Russian Federation would like to see the Agency assuming responsibility for ensuring that the right nuclear power development choice for the twenty-first century was taken. An international project to that end, implemented under the auspices of the Agency, would not only be of benefit to Member States but also confirm the Agency's scientific and technical authority.

35. The Russian Federation was in favour of the Agency's co-operating with other international organizations in addressing the problems of the future development of nuclear power, but such co-operation should not lead to the relinquishment by the Agency of basic functions provided for in the Statute.

36. Finally, he expressed the conviction that nuclear power offered mankind a chance to win the race against environmental degradation caused by the use of fossil fuels.

37. Mr. LUKMAN (Nigeria) said that, with the expected doubling of Nigeria's energy demand by the year 2030, the challenge to his country as an oil producer was to determine what role the nuclear option could play in its energy policy.

38. The Agency's activities in the field of pesticide residues, human health, water resources management, and the physical and chemical sciences were of direct relevance to Nigeria. Moreover, his country would like to see the Agency giving higher priority to its activities directed to helping make potable water available to those who lacked it.

39. Nigeria was currently benefiting from technical assistance projects relating to agriculture, health care, radiotherapy and oncology, nuclear activation analysis, neonatal hypothyroidism screening, the monitoring of pesticide residues in foodstuffs, the cross-breeding of indigenous cattle to improve milk production, and the monitoring of occupational exposures to environmental pollutants. Also, it was participating in several AFRA projects. However, it would appreciate it if further steps were taken to enable developing countries to gain more experience of techniques for the improvement of food production.

40. The Nigerian Government was committed to facilitating early completion of the ongoing miniature neutron source reactor project following the reactor's installation and approval of a legal instrument for the establishment of a National Regulatory Authority. With the completion of the project, Nigeria would be able to concentrate on pressing areas in radiation science and its applications in human health, agriculture and industry.

41. As a demonstration of its commitment to the Agency's activities, Nigeria was pledging US \$28 470 as its contribution to the TCF for 2000. Given the increasing demands being made upon the Agency by Member States, it believed that the principle of zero real budgetary growth should be reviewed.

42. Nigeria would like to see more of its nationals being accepted by the Agency for regional and interregional training courses and for scientific visits. It would also like to see an expansion of training opportunities, rather than the currently envisaged reduction.

43. Turning to safeguards, he said that the appropriate Nigerian authorities were reviewing, in the light of his country's nuclear energy development plans, the Model Additional Protocol with a view to the conclusion of a protocol additional to the safeguards agreement between Nigeria and the Agency.

44. With regard to the staffing of the Agency's Secretariat, he welcomed the efforts being made to improve the representation of developing Member States, but believed that much more could be done to recruit staff "on as wide a geographical basis as possible" and to ensure that a due share of Secretariat posts went to nationals of African countries.

45. As to the question of amending Article VI of the Statute, he urged that Member States build upon the consensus already reached and not throw away the gains made. The African Group had a legitimate wish to see the Board more balanced and fully representative. Resolution of the Article VI issue would enable the Agency's policy-making organs to devote their energies to other issues requiring their urgent attention.

46. Mr. d'ESCATHA (France) said that his country, which had signed the protocol additional to its safeguards agreement with the Agency on 22 September 1998, was eager to see it implemented as swiftly as possible. The major task of identifying which enterprises and organizations would be covered by strengthened Agency safeguards was almost complete, and it should soon be possible to produce a first draft of an expanded declaration to be agreed with the European Commission and the Agency. Apart from the technical issues involved, the obligations arising from the additional protocol would need to be incorporated into French law; the French authorities would have to be given the power to demand - where necessary - the information required under Article 2 of the protocol and to ensure that Agency inspectors were granted complementary access; and, finally, the protocol would have to be ratified by Parliament. Every effort was being made to ensure that the ratification process was as short as possible.

47. His country, for which the NPT remained the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime, would spare no effort to ensure that the NPT Review Conference scheduled for April 2000 demonstrated the international community's renewed confidence in the NPT. The fact that the overwhelming majority of States had become parties to it showed that the proliferation of nuclear weapons was a major concern to all, and it made even less acceptable the attempts of the DPRK to obstruct the efforts of the Agency to achieve full implementation of the safeguards agreement between it and the DPRK. The stalemate in Iraq was equally worrying. In December 1998, UNSCOM and the Agency had been forced to withdraw from that country; their inspection activities had been halted for almost a year, and the international community could not be sure that Iraq no longer possessed or was not developing weapons of mass destruction. That situation was particularly regrettable since the last report of the Agency's UNSC 687 Action Team had hinted at the possibility of moving over to ongoing monitoring and verification. Iraq must resume co-operation with UNSCOM and the Agency without delay and meet its obligations in full.

48. It was important that the CTBT, which had been open for signature for three years, enter into force soon. Fourteen of the fifteen members of the European Union had already ratified the CTBT, including all those whose ratification was required for its entry into force. France and the United Kingdom were so far the only nuclear-weapon States to have ratified it. His country would particularly like to see those States whose accession to the CTBT was necessary for its entry into force making good their statements of intent in that regard without delay.

49. Over a year previously, the Conference on Disarmament had decided by consensus to embark upon the negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty. Unfortunately, no concrete results had as yet been achieved, owing to a failure to agree on the Conference's work programme. France had, like other nuclear-weapon States, taken a unilateral decision to stop producing weapons-grade fissile material; however, it had then gone a stage further and started to dismantle its production facilities. The members of the Conference on Disarmament must overcome their differences and work towards the early opening of negotiations on a universal, non-discriminatory, truly verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty.

50. The Kyoto Conference and subsequent meetings had highlighted the difficulty of reconciling growing energy requirements with the need to limit greenhouse gas emissions in a context of sustainable development. Nuclear power could fully demonstrate its advantages only if the general public were convinced that it was environmentally friendly and safe. There, too, international co-operation was indispensable.

51. The frank discussions at the first review meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, held in April 1999, had culminated in a useful summary report. The second review meeting, due to take place in three years' time, should provide an opportunity to verify whether the recommendations contained in that report had been acted upon. The Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, which had been signed by France on the day of its being opened for signature, would shortly be ratified by the French Parliament.

52. His country would continue to support the Agency's activities relating to the safety and security of radiation sources, particularly following the International Conference on the Safety of Radiation Sources and the Security of Radioactive Materials held in Dijon in September 1998. That conference had highlighted shortcomings in the management of radiation sources which had caused serious radiological accidents. In his country's view, however, a code of practice would be a more appropriate way of dealing with such shortcomings than an international convention, which might take a long time to elaborate.

53. With regard to the consideration being given within the Agency to the advisability of revising the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, he said that the mechanisms provided for by the Convention had made it possible to adapt the relevant international standards through the regular updating of recommendations. That had been possible only thanks to the flexibility and non-binding nature of the recommendations. In his country's view, therefore, a revision of the Convention in order to incorporate the technical provisions contained in the recommendations did not seem desirable. Moreover, instituting an international peer review system like that provided for by the Convention on Nuclear Safety would run counter to the nature of physical protection, which implied confidentiality.

54. In recent years, there had been great efforts to make the Agency's technical assistance activities more effective and efficient, with fruitful results. His country would like to see a continuation of those efforts and a further increase in the commitment of the beneficiary countries. Of course, sustained support from donor countries was crucial, and France, which had consistently paid its full TCF target share, was determined to maintain that record.

55. Activities in response to the increasing demands being made of the Agency could not be financed merely by cutting costs. It was for that reason that France, while in favour of streamlining efforts, had advocated a flexible attitude to zero-real-growth budgeting. That practice had forced the Agency to rely more and more on extrabudgetary resources, the use of which was an expedient that undermined the control of Member States and should be limited to exceptional cases. It was equally undesirable to create a multiplicity of special funds. In particular, the verification of fissile material no longer needed for defence purposes should be financed from the Regular Budget. Arms reduction measures were in the interest of all.

56. Turning to developments in France during the preceding year, he said that the installed capacity of France's 58 PWRs (the latest, Civaux 2, due to start operation soon) had been 63 GW(e) at the end of 1998; those reactors were providing 76% of the country's electricity. Availability remained at around 81%, and safety levels also continued to be high; for example, the average occupational exposure dose had dropped from 2.6 mSv in 1997 to 2.3 mSv in 1998.

57. One incident in 1998, at Civaux 1, had been classified at level 2 on the International Nuclear Event Scale; the problem had been resolved and the plant had resumed operations.

58. France was engaged - together with Germany - in economic optimization studies relating to a European PWR design. Work was continuing on extrapolation of the SILVA uranium enrichment process from laboratory scale to industrial scale, together with an assessment of the costs. Since commencing operations in 1995, the MELOX fabrication plant for MOX fuel had produced around 300 tonnes of such fuel; it had just received authorization to diversify its output for export. As regards the back end of the fuel cycle, COGEMA's plant at La Hague had processed 1633 tonnes of irradiated fuel in 1998; since 1976, over 14 300 tonnes of irradiated fuel from LWRs had been reprocessed at the plant.

59. The management of long-lived high-level waste was one of the major problems facing nuclear power, and France had therefore intensified its research in three areas of relevance.

60. The first was the transmutation of long-lived radionuclides, for which an evaluation of the relative advantages of different reactor types (thermal, fast, hybrid) was under way. The Phénix fast reactor would be starting up again in the second half of the year 2000 following renovation work, and the programme of transmutation experiments using it should be completed by the end of 2004. It was hoped that the results of the transmutation studies, which relied heavily on international co-operation, would be available by 2006.

61. The second area of research related to disposal in deep geological formations. In December 1998, the French Government had taken a decision in favour of building two underground laboratories for retrievable disposal studies. The first laboratory was to be built in a clay formation in eastern France, and the Government had authorized the National Agency for Radioactive Waste Management (ANDRA) to begin work. The search for a granite formation for the second laboratory had started.

62. The third area of research related to conditioning and long-term surface or sub-surface storage. A report on sub-surface storage had been submitted to the Government at the end of 1998, and work was continuing with a view to a decision being taken in 2006.

63. The French Government had reaffirmed the broad outlines of its energy policy. Nuclear power was to remain the principal component of the electricity generation sector, but more emphasis was to be placed on energy conservation and renewable energy sources. The aim was to keep the nuclear option open until 2010, when the oldest nuclear power plants would be nearing the end of their lives.

64. Particular attention would be paid to the controls applied in the nuclear industry and the industry's transparency and to ensuring that the expertise drawn on in the fields of radiation protection and safety was independent and diverse. To that end, the Government would shortly submit to Parliament a nuclear industry control bill providing for the establishment of an independent authority. The Institute for Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety (IPSN), which would provide the independent authority with technical support, would, in order to ensure its independence, be detached from the Commissariat à l'énergie atomique.

65. The main thrust of France's energy policy had many points of contact with the goals of the Agency, whose essential role in promoting international co-operation was greatly appreciated by his country, which would continue to participate fully in its activities.

66. Mr. NOOR UDDIN KHAN (Bangladesh) said that - as emphasized by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina - Bangladesh remained firmly committed to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of atomic energy and was very appreciative of the technical assistance it had received from the Agency.

67. Bangladesh shared the Director General's view that for many countries nuclear power was a viable option and welcomed the Agency's endeavours to improve the socio-economic conditions in many parts of the world.

68. Bangladesh's nuclear applications programme encompassed areas such as agriculture, industry and the environment. There had been a particularly strong expansion of the applications of ionizing radiation in medicine, a field in which Agency technical assistance had been invaluable.

69. Only about 14% of the population had access to electricity in his country, where per capita electricity generation was currently about 90 kW. However, the need for energy was growing rapidly as the country pursued its development goals. For Bangladesh, which had inadequate indigenous sources of energy, nuclear power was a feasible option. Its nuclear power programme was, however, running up against problems. An action plan to expedite implementation of the long-standing Rooppur nuclear power project was being finalized, and the Agency had recently helped organize a national training workshop on nuclear power project planning. Bangladesh looked forward to receiving further Agency assistance with the development of human resources. Also, it hoped for support for its nuclear power programme from countries belonging to the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

70. Bangladesh had received important assistance through both the technical co-operation programme and the research contract programme of the Agency, and the results were being applied in different sectors of the economy to good effect. In addition, it was involved in various RCA projects offering valuable opportunities for the sharing of experience.

71. Bangladesh, which had passed a Nuclear Safety and Radiation Control Act in 1993, had signed most Agency-sponsored treaties and conventions and had incorporated the bulk of the Basic Safety Standards into its Nuclear Safety and Radiation Control Rules (1997). It was establishing a central radioactive waste processing and storage facility - an activity for which it would need Agency support.

72. Bangladesh intended to contribute to the attainment of the Agency's goals and would do its utmost in the sphere of non-proliferation so as to ensure the survival and future prosperity of mankind.

73. Mr. REGUIEG (Algeria) said that his country was endeavouring to establish the national regulatory framework required in order to respond to the new obligations associated with the strengthening of the safeguards system. The Algerian Atomic Energy Commission had initiated steps to establish an organization capable of ensuring the effective management of nuclear material at the national level. Algeria intended to set up a nuclear material accounting and control laboratory, and to that end it had submitted a technical assistance request to the Agency. Despite its importance, however, the project in question had been classified only as a footnote-a/ project. He wished to assure potential donor States that Algeria was ready to co-finance it.

74. In the area of nuclear and radiation safety, Algeria's recently established national regulatory body was working in close co-operation with the National Nuclear Safety Commission to draw up guidelines for the implementation of a comprehensive safety strategy. There were plans to complement the existing regulations governing the possession and utilization of radiation sources by the establishment of an authorization procedure prior to the importation of radiation sources. Information on illicit trafficking disseminated by the Agency was passed on systematically to the relevant national institutions, for whose personnel specialized training programmes had been held. Periodic unannounced inspections of all users of radiation sources were carried out in order to monitor compliance with the current national regulations. With regard to the transport of radioactive substances, an amended regulatory text was to be promulgated by the Ministry of Transport in the near future.

75. The Agency's technical co-operation activities were crucial, and any steps to reduce or freeze the level of assistance provided would be detrimental to developing Member States. It was therefore essential that the Agency have sufficient, assured and predictable resources for those activities.

76. The problem of potable water shortages was one of his Government's major concerns, and Algeria was therefore very much involved in the Agency's various activities connected with nuclear desalination. Algeria also attached great importance to the use of isotope hydrology in groundwater management, and its Isotope Hydrology Laboratory, which had the status of a regional laboratory, was being used to help meet the needs of several Member States.

77. Noting that AFRA had now been in existence for ten years, he said that, despite the achievements to date, greater commitment on the part of the Agency and all States parties to AFRA was necessary in order to meet the legitimate demands of the African region.

78. Turning to the application of safeguards in the Middle East, he pointed out that all States in the region, with one notable exception, had acceded to the NPT and concluded comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency. Israel's nuclear capabilities were a

legitimate concern to Algeria, which believed that Israel should make a firm, genuine commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East by acceding to the NPT and placing all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards. The international community should step up its efforts to ensure that all States in the region took tangible steps towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone there.

79. Following the recent substantial expansion in the Agency's membership, there was clearly a need for a corresponding expansion in the Board of Governors, and Algeria had been the first country to call for an amendment to Article VI in order to allow for such an expansion. It was extremely regrettable that the Board had failed during the previous week to reach a consensus on the issue; his country hoped that a consensus would be reached by the General Conference.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) took the Chair

80. Mr. DAFFE (Senegal) said that during the previous 20 years his country had carried out many projects in major sectors of its economy thanks to Agency technical assistance. The use of radioisotopes had produced results in several fields which would have been difficult to achieve using traditional research techniques.

81. The organization in Senegal responsible for the promotion of nuclear techniques, training in the use of such techniques, radiation protection and nuclear equipment maintenance and repair was the Institute of Applied Nuclear Technology (ITNA), which had been established in 1980 through a UNDP project executed by the Agency.

82. The ITNA's facilities, which had mostly been provided through the Agency, comprised radiation monitoring equipment, a radiochemistry laboratory, an electronics laboratory, X-ray fluorescence equipment and a nitrogen liquifier. Also, the Agency had helped to upgrade the facilities of the radiocarbon laboratory of IFAN (Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire) through a project funded from extrabudgetary resources.

83. The National Agricultural Research Centre (CNRA) at Bambey, part of the Senegalese Agricultural Research Institute (ISRA), was a major beneficiary of Agency technical assistance. The well-equipped radioisotope laboratory at Bambey, built with Agency co-operation, was carrying out research on soil-water-plant relations and fertiliser utilization. Using radioisotope techniques, ISRA had - inter alia - identified drought-resistant millet and groundnut varieties and selected niébé and groundnut cultivars capable of fixing large quantities of nitrogen.

84. The Agency had helped the National Laboratory for Livestock Rearing and Veterinary Research (LNERV) to establish a capability for the radioimmunoassay determination of reproductive hormones and had helped the Inter-State School of Veterinary Science and Medicine (EISM) to introduce radioimmunoassay and related techniques for bovine reproduction and animal nutrition studies. The Agency's assistance to the LNERV had made it possible to virtually eradicate rinderpest in Senegal.

85. Agency-supported projects in nuclear medicine had improved the diagnostic facilities at the A. Le Dantec Hospital. Scintigraphy and in vitro assay equipment had been provided for the biophysics laboratories at that hospital and at the Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD). Liver, kidney, bone, brain and thyroid scans could now be carried out at those laboratories.

86. Since 1982, UCAD's Department of Geology had benefited from several Agency technical co-operation projects aimed at gaining more extensive knowledge of Senegal's groundwater and surface water resources. It had established a hydrochemistry laboratory where isotope techniques were being used, and the isotopic data now available had helped in the development of mathematical models for reassessing the groundwater resources in and around Dakar. Also, Senegal was participating in the Model Project on "Isotopes in groundwater resources development", whose objective was to improve water resources management in arid and semi-arid zones of Africa.

87. In radiation protection, a RAPAT mission had been followed by a technical co-operation project leading to the establishment, at the ITNA, of an occupational exposure dosimetry service and to the training of personnel for a national radiation protection service. In addition, Senegal had benefited from the services of experts in thermoluminescence dosimetry and in the preparation of legislation and regulatory documentation and been provided with a wide range of dosimetry and radiation protection equipment. Subsequently, the legislative and regulatory framework for ensuring the safe use of nuclear techniques and the safe management of radioactive waste had been established.

88. As a party to the NPT and a member of the OAU, Senegal wanted Africa to remain a nuclear-weapon-free region and hoped that the international community would support the countries of Africa in ensuring that it did - in the interests of world security and prosperity.

89. Mr. AHMAD (Pakistan) said that, with the approach of a new millennium, it was useful to look back at some of the momentous events of the present century. Mankind's technical achievements - particularly the progress made in fields such as information technology, space exploration, genetic engineering, disease control and power production - had been unprecedented, but the most remarkable progress had been in nuclear physics and nuclear technology. President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" programme in the nineteen-fifties, aimed at a wider sharing of the benefits of nuclear research, the Geneva conferences on the peaceful uses of atomic energy and the establishment and activities of the Agency had all played a major role. The Agency had made commendable contributions to increasing the use of nuclear energy in power production, agriculture, medicine, industry, hydrology and other fields and hence to improving the socio-economic conditions of the developing world. The accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl and the petroleum price crash in the nineteen-eighties might have drastically reduced the demand for new power reactors, but there could be no doubt that the period of reduced demand would not last much longer.

90. Disappointingly, the contribution of nuclear power to total world electricity generation had remained static for many years, at 16-17%, although nuclear power was the most environment-friendly energy source. If greenhouse gas emissions were to be reduced in response to the call of the Kyoto Conference, nuclear power would have to be adopted as a

preferred energy option and the developed world would have to subsidize the expansion of nuclear power in the developing world.

91. Water would undoubtedly become a precious commodity in the twenty-first century, and the development of fresh groundwater resources should therefore be given very high priority. The role of nuclear techniques in the control of aquifer pollution and in optimizing the use of water in agriculture would assume greater importance. The "International Programme for Isotopes in the Hydrological Cycle", launched recently by the Agency in collaboration with UNESCO and WMO, was a very laudable initiative. Moreover, nuclear desalination might also become a necessity in several parts of the world.

92. The lessons of Chernobyl should not be forgotten in the context of the safe development of nuclear power. The role of the Agency in providing information and advice to all of its Member States on safety-related issues and its active involvement in safety assessments through ASSET, OSART and similar missions were widely appreciated. The Convention on Nuclear Safety was helping States to improve their safety culture. A peer review of Pakistan's National Safety Report at the first review meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention had shown that the safety of its installations was second to none. In that connection, the Agency's support in upgrading the safety of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant and its advice regarding the safety of the Chashma Nuclear Power Project had been invaluable. Also, its initiative in providing Y2K-related information and assistance to Member States was highly commendable.

93. Another essential Agency activity was safeguards, and Pakistan remained fully committed to complying with its safeguards obligations. It realized that, in the present political climate, the Agency's safety and safeguards activities were going to expand further, but it would not like to see the expansion taking place at the expense of the Agency's promotional role.

94. For developing countries, technical co-operation and technology transfer were the most important Agency activities. Pakistan therefore welcomed the fact that the financial implementation rate for technical co-operation had reached 76.7% in 1998. As the Chairman of SAGTAC, he hoped that the advice given by SAGTAC - particularly regarding synergism between the Department of Technical Co-operation and other Departments of the Secretariat and the promotion of TCDC - would prove valuable.

95. Pakistan, as a recipient of Agency technical assistance, saw it as a duty of those developing countries which had reached a certain level of advancement to assist other developing countries. It had consequently provided the services of many experts and training opportunities for many Agency fellowship holders. Such interaction among developing countries would, it was to be hoped, facilitate the establishment of regional resource centres.

96. The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics, in Trieste, was an outstanding international success. The Agency should continue to support the Centre and to derive benefit from it.

97. As far as the past year's activities of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) were concerned, its two research reactors had continued to operate safely. PAEC was grateful to the Agency for assisting with the overhaul of the turbine of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant. Construction work was proceeding well at the Chashma Nuclear Power Plant, which was expected to start producing electricity on a regular commercial basis soon. The Pakistan Institute of Nuclear Science and Technology (PINSTECH) had continued its academic and applied programmes in nuclear and related disciplines.

98. The research conducted over the years by the three PAEC agricultural centres, using mutation methods, had resulted in 35 varieties of food and cash crops - such as wheat, rice and cotton - with improved yields and increased disease and pest resistance; six varieties had been introduced during the current year alone. "Biopower" fertilizer, introduced by PAEC's Institute for Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering and originally developed for rice and legumes, had now been developed for wheat. Also, the Institute had reached an advanced stage in the development of transgenic cotton resistant to the leaf curl virus.

99. Eleven nuclear medical centres were operating in different parts of the country, and a twelfth would start operating later in the year. For some years PAEC had also been providing expert advice on the establishment of nuclear medical centres in the private sector.

100. Pakistan remained committed to the goals of non-proliferation and disarmament. The events initiated in its neighbourhood in May 1998 had forced it to conduct its own nuclear tests in order to restore the strategic balance. It had acted with great restraint and a sense of responsibility, announced a unilateral moratorium on further testing and emphasized the need to prevent a nuclear arms race in the region. To that end it had proposed a strategic restraint regime for the region based on maintaining nuclear deterrence at the minimum level. Pakistan was still committed to not exporting nuclear and other sensitive technologies. As a responsible State that deeply respected the sentiments of the peace-loving international community, it had remained in the forefront of global efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, with total nuclear disarmament as the final goal. The ultimate objectives of non-proliferation and disarmament could be achieved only through non-discriminatory, equitable and verifiable global measures accompanied by credible confidence-building efforts and open co-operation in technology interchange between advanced and developing countries. The imposition of coercive restrictions and embargoes on scientific knowledge and technology could only be counter-productive.

101. The tasks assigned to the Agency were scientifically challenging, technically complex, politically sensitive and financially demanding, and it was a sign of the confidence of Member States in it that they felt assured when placing new responsibilities on its shoulders. Despite that, the Agency had been forced to operate under the constraints of zero real budgetary growth for over a decade and a half. If positive real budgetary growth was not yet possible, at least the Agency should not be subjected to even more severe budgetary constraints.

102. It was regrettable that, for the first time, the TCF target for 1999 provided for only zero real growth and the envisaged TCF target for the year 2000 was no higher. At all events,

despite financial difficulties, Pakistan had already, in line with a long tradition, pledged its full share of the envisaged TCF target for the year 2000.

103. Pakistan had made great efforts over the past two decades to bring about an increase in the representation of the Agency's developing Member States on the Board. A consensus regarding an expansion of the Board was now very close, and it was to be hoped that the General Conference would succeed in resolving the long-standing Article VI issue.

104. In conclusion, he commended the initiative of the Director General in promoting a "one house" culture within the Secretariat and also the Director General's idea of holding a Scientific Forum in conjunction with the General Conference's current session.

105. Mr. AL-GHAIS (Kuwait) said that his country was currently studying the Model Additional Protocol with a view to concluding a protocol additional to its comprehensive safeguards agreement with the Agency.

106. The application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East was an important issue for Kuwait, whose opinion regarding it was set out in Annex 3 to document GC(43)/17/Add.1. There was a clear link between the application of safeguards in the region and the declaration of the region as a nuclear-weapon-free zone; if such a zone were to be declared, Israel would have to accede to the NPT and place all of its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards. His country hoped that the Middle East would soon be rid of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

107. The Agency's activities in Iraq were crucial to the security of the region, and it was therefore essential that those activities not be limited in any way by Iraq.

108. Kuwait was also concerned at the non-compliance of the DPRK with its safeguards agreement with the Agency. The DPRK must fully respect that agreement and facilitate the Agency's verification activities.

109. With regard to the Article VI issue, Kuwait's position had been set out in a letter dated 7 June 1999 which he had sent to the Chairman of the Board in response to a proposal by the Chairman contained in a letter dated 17 May 1999. The acceptance of the Chairman's proposal by the Council of Arab Ambassadors attested to the Council's wish to resolve the issue in a manner reflecting the principle of equitable geographical representation.

110. Kuwait greatly appreciated the Agency's technical co-operation activities and was pleased with the way in which the technical co-operation strategy described in document GOV/INF/824 was being implemented. It would continue to welcome a strong Agency role in upgrading the capacities of developing countries relevant to radiation safety, to nuclear applications in industry, agriculture, medicine and environmental studies, and to a wide variety of other important technical areas.

111. Mr. POOLOKASINGHAM (Sri Lanka) said that, like many other developing Member States, Sri Lanka had benefited significantly from Agency technical assistance, particularly in the areas of health care, agriculture and industry. It was accordingly taking

steps to ensure the prompt payment, despite serious financial constraints, of assessed programme costs.

112. Sri Lanka welcomed the efforts of the Department of Technical Co-operation to develop concepts and tools for project design; they had led to a significant improvement in the project proposals being submitted for the 2001-2002 biennium. At the same time, it was concerned about the steady decline in financial resources for technical co-operation.

113. Referring to the section entitled “**Collection of Data on Project Achievements/ Outcomes/Impact**” in the Technical Co-operation Report for 1998, he called for improvements in the collection, storage and presentation of such data.

114. His Government, which had recognized the contribution which nuclear techniques could make in numerous fields, had earmarked 93 million rupees for the construction of a new building to accommodate the laboratories of the Atomic Energy Authority, and adequate resources were being made available for the development of the laboratories.

115. Sri Lanka, which had benefited greatly from the Agency’s efforts to upgrade the radiation protection infrastructures in Member States, felt that the regional Model Project for East Asia and the Pacific on infrastructure upgrading should be allowed to run for an additional two years in order that all of its objectives might be achieved.

116. The RCA had brought considerable benefits to Sri Lanka, which welcomed the improvements being made to the RCA’s management structure. At the same time, his country felt that there should be closer co-ordination between the Agency’s Secretariat and Member States with regard to decisions concerning the implementation of RCA programmes.

117. Many issues remained unsolved in the field of disarmament and arms control. The size of nuclear arsenals was not dramatically lower now than when the NPT had been opened for signature, over 30 years previously. Very little had been done to achieve nuclear disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the NPT.

118. Sri Lanka was pleased that a large number of States had signed the CTBT, but was concerned that only 21 of the 44 States whose ratification was required for the CTBT to enter into force had ratified to date. It was also pleased that France and the United Kingdom had ratified it, and hoped that the other nuclear-weapon States would follow suit soon. For its part, Sri Lanka, which shared the view that the nuclear-weapon States should refrain from undertaking any tests that contravened the spirit of the CTBT, would take steps to ratify at an appropriate time. Currently, preparations were being made to bring into operation the CTBT monitoring station established in Colombo.

119. Sri Lanka welcomed India’s and Pakistan’s commitment to the process of disarmament and hoped that those two countries would become parties to the CTBT and the NPT sooner rather than later.

120. His country would like to see the establishment, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, of an ad hoc committee to negotiate a fissile material cut-off

treaty, which, if non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable, would usefully complement the CTBT and the NPT.

121. While his country welcomed the bilateral negotiations between the Russian Federation and the United States and would welcome ratification of START II by the Russian Federation, it shared the view that the negotiations on nuclear disarmament should not be the preserve of the nuclear-weapon States only.

122. Finally, successful completion of the negotiations on a convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism would strengthen the international mechanisms designed to prevent terrorism, which had become a global threat.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.