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## FORTY-THIRD (1999) REGULAR SESSION

### RECORD OF THE SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna  
on Thursday, 30 September 1999, at 11.55 a.m.

President: Mr. Ki-Moon BAN (Republic of Korea)

Later: Mr. KADRI (Algeria)

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[\*] GC(43)/27.

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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. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their own copies of documents to meetings.
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Abbreviations used in this record

ARCAL	Regional Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
Bangkok Treaty	Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
Basic Safety Standards	International Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
Early Notification Convention	Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
SEAP	South East Asia and the Pacific
TC	Technical co-operation
TCF	Technical Co-operation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
Y2K	Year 2000

GENERAL DEBATE AND ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1998 (continued)  
(GC(43)/4)

1. Mr. NIITENBERG (Estonia) said that Estonia, which neither had nor planned to have nuclear power facilities, was nevertheless responsible for the decommissioning and safe management of nuclear sites which were the legacy of Soviet nuclear activities. Owing to a lack of national funding and expertise, almost all decommissioning activities at those sites were being supported through multilateral and bilateral projects. His country was extremely grateful to the Agency, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the United States and the European Commission for their invaluable assistance in that and in other areas.
2. Estonia was rapidly developing national legislation on radiation protection and radioactive waste management with the aim of ensuring the implementation of internationally accepted principles and standards. Its Radiation Protection Act of 1997, which had been amended in 1998, was based on concepts and limits set forth in the Basic Safety Standards and relevant EURATOM directives. Several regulations for implementation of the Act had been approved by the Government and relevant ministries, but there was a need for better regulations concerning a number of aspects of decommissioning and waste management. Draft regulations based on international and European Commission recommendations were being prepared and, it was hoped, would be adopted before the end of the year.
3. As required by existing legislation, a national policy for decommissioning and radioactive waste disposal was being formulated.
4. A law on the import, export and transit of strategic goods had been adopted by the Estonian Parliament in June 1999 and supplemented by relevant regulations. That law, together with the use of advanced techniques by the Border Guard Administration and Estonia's participation in the Agency's illicit trafficking database programme, would, it was hoped, contribute to international efforts to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear materials.
5. Estonia had ratified the CTBT and had joined other countries in requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene a conference for the purpose of expediting the CTBT's entry into force.
6. The 2000 NPT Review Conference would be an opportunity to work together towards a stronger nuclear non-proliferation system and further nuclear disarmament. Meanwhile, it was time that the Conference on Disarmament took a decision to start substantive negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. It would be most unfortunate if a further year was lost.
7. Mr. NIÑO DE GUZMAN (Bolivia) reiterated his country's firm commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, to the peaceful uses of atomic energy and its application for the benefit of mankind, and to a policy of sustainable economic and socially equitable development. Bolivia had demonstrated its dedication to peace by acceding to the Tlatelolco Treaty in 1969, by subsequently signing and ratifying a safeguards agreement in connection with the Tlatelolco Treaty and the NPT, and - more recently, in 1999 - by ratifying the CTBT.

8. Bolivia had taken important initiatives to introduce nuclear technology for development and, in order to increase public acceptance thereof, it had held, with Agency support, a public information seminar on the subject in 1998.

9. The Agency's technical co-operation programme was having an enormous impact in Bolivia in such areas as human and animal health, agriculture, radiation protection, control of ionizing radiation and water resources. Much work had been done in the past year to raise the quality of Bolivia's technical co-operation programmes, to enhance its project presentation and to improve the results attained. A national workshop on the preparation of nuclear technology projects had been organized with Agency support. Eight technical co-operation projects were currently being implemented in Bolivia and it was participating in a further ten projects under the ARCAL programme. The latter was a valuable instrument for facilitating regional co-operation, strengthening national capabilities and finding the best solutions to common needs. He paid tribute to the achievements of ARCAL over its 15 year existence, now consolidated by the intergovernmental Co-operation Agreement signed a year ago.

10. Progress continued to be made in the field of nuclear safety. The 1997 radiation protection law was now being implemented, with responsibility for control of radiation sources being assigned to the Bolivian Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology (IBTEN). The Radiation Protection Centre was participating in the Agency's regional Model Project on upgrading radiation protection infrastructure, and a recent Agency mission had concluded that Bolivia's achievements in that sphere set an example for the international community. Further important legislative work remained to be done, consisting mainly of drawing from relevant Agency conventions. Bolivia was also participating in a project on radiation protection supported by PAHO.

11. Bolivia was grateful for the documentation prepared by the Agency on the Y2K problem and was looking forward to receiving Agency experts in the near future to evaluate its medical facilities. Still in the health field, it was planning to set up oncological centres and brachytherapy facilities.

12. In the field of radioactive waste management, Bolivia was in the process of collecting and controlling radium sources on its territory.

13. Agricultural research activities in Bolivia had concentrated on plant improvement and the study of crop genetics, as well as physical and chemical analysis of soils, water and organic, geological and mineral samples. In the field of hydrology, tracer techniques were being applied to study the flow of rivers and basin tributaries.

14. Turning to verification matters, he stressed the importance of strengthening of the Agency's safeguards system in order to provide a real guarantee of peace and security for the world.

15. His country was pleased to note that the Agency's financial situation was sound enough to enable it to carry out its main activities. Bolivia, for its part, had paid its contribution to the Regular Budget. It had also made a partial payment of its assessed programme costs for TC and had submitted a proposal to the Agency for paying off the remainder. It was essential for

a healthy TCF to be maintained, as the technical co-operation programme provided all Member States with the possibility of benefiting from the Agency's principal statutory function of accelerating and enlarging the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Each Member State should contribute in accordance with its ability to do so.

16. In conclusion, he said that Bolivia was extremely proud to have been elected as a representative of the area of Latin America on the Board of Governors for the period 1999-2001. It would tackle that new challenge with great dedication.

17. Mr. URRUELA PRADO (Guatemala), having announced that his country had recently signed the CTBT, said that it greatly appreciated the contributions being made by nuclear techniques to the implementation of its development agenda. For example, nuclear techniques were being used - in addition to conventional ones - in studies relating to the contamination and eutrophication of various water bodies in Guatemala.

18. Technical assistance from the Agency, which was co-ordinated by the General Directorate for Energy and Mines, was especially important in improving the population's quality of life, and Guatemala was eager that it should continue. In that connection, his country had recently committed itself to establishing a mechanism designed to help increase the impact of Agency technical assistance.

19. In view of the important role played in Guatemala by Agency technical assistance, his Government was committed to paying its full TCF target share and to providing the support necessary for ensuring that Agency technical co-operation projects achieved their objectives.

20. Guatemala was ready to host regional Agency training courses and to accept Agency fellows, since the resulting exchanges of experience would contribute to the much-needed development of the Latin American region. Already it had organized a number of regional meetings within the framework of ARCAL.

21. Co-operation with the United States Department of Agriculture had led to successes in the field of pest control, particularly in the control of the medfly.

22. There had been considerable progress in Guatemala's geothermal power sector, with the construction of new power plants at Amatitlán and Zunil. Three further areas of geothermal activity were being explored, the ultimate aim being a total geothermal power capacity of 430 MW(e). It was hoped that the use of isotope techniques would expedite the explorations.

23. Mr. NGUYEN XUAN HONG (Viet Nam), having welcomed Angola and Honduras as members of the Agency, said that, with the Conference taking place at the turn of the millennium, it was a good time to take stock.

24. On the non-proliferation front, the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone was an important contribution by ASEAN to common efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction from the world. In order to ensure full implementation of the Bangkok Treaty

establishing the zone, it was essential that all nuclear-weapon States accede to the Protocol of the Treaty.

25. Being a party to the NPT and a supporter of the non-proliferation regime, Viet Nam had done its best to comply with all commitments under its safeguards agreement with the Agency. It also supported the strengthening of the safeguards system, so he was pleased to report that the necessary internal steps were being taken towards Viet Nam's signing of the Additional Protocol.

26. With regard to the financing of possible Agency verification of nuclear arms control and reduction measures, his country shared the view of many members of the Group of 77 that that issue called for thorough examination to ensure that the promotional activities of the Agency were not affected.

27. The year 1999 had seen further developments in the peaceful use of atomic energy in different sectors in Viet Nam. Notable successes had been obtained with the development of high-yielding varieties of rice and other agricultural crops through mutation, the application of radioisotopes in diagnosis and therapy, the application of nuclear techniques in industry and environmental studies, and the radiation sterilization of medical products and tissue grafts and membranes for clinical use. With Agency assistance a new <sup>60</sup>Co irradiation facility had recently been completed in Ho Chi Minh City.

28. In the years to come, nuclear technology would be applied to improve the existing national public health service, with a model radiology and radiotherapy centre planned to be set up in Hanoi.

29. The provision of clean drinking water being a major worldwide concern, Viet Nam strongly supported the draft resolutions on the application of isotope hydrology for water resources management and on the production of potable water, and hoped that due attention would be accorded thereto under the Agency's TC programme.

30. With funding support from the Government and with Agency assistance, the radiation protection infrastructure had been considerably improved in all aspects. Viet Nam was making great efforts to foster a safety culture in the national institutions dealing with radiation sources. Within the framework of Model Project RAS/9/021, a series of documents had been drafted with the aid of Agency experts, and national training activities had been organized for persons working with radiation sources, particularly for those in charge of radiation protection in provinces of Viet Nam.

31. Noting that sustainable development was closely linked to the sustainable development of energy sources, he said that nuclear power was one of the options among the energy mix in his country. The nuclear power option had been the subject of an Agency TC project evaluation which had shown that the first nuclear power plant with a capacity of 3000 MW should be introduced into the national electricity generating system in Viet Nam around the years 2017-2020. Before then it would be necessary to develop an adequate infrastructure, including a nuclear regulatory system and qualified manpower. He hoped that the Agency would continue to help promote public understanding of nuclear power development in the

country, particularly through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In that connection, he informed the Conference that, in co-operation with the Agency, Viet Nam would be organizing a national workshop on the CDM and nuclear power that October.

32. Since the previous General Conference, the Agency had carried out a lot of effective TC activities for which the Secretariat was to be congratulated. Viet Nam remained committed to paying its full assessed contribution to the Regular Budget and TCF target share despite its financial constraints.

33. In conclusion, referring to the proposed amendment of Article VI of the Statute, he stressed that the formula for the distribution of additional seats to the area groups should take into account the interests of non-designated developing member countries.

34. Mr. YENNIMATAS (Greece) said he would address the three main Agency programme components and, first, nuclear safety. Although the responsibility for the safe design and operation of nuclear facilities rested with individual States, the Agency had a fundamental role in ensuring the application of proper safety standards through international co-operation. The first review meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety in April that year had shown how international co-operation could prompt States to implement high standards in the field of nuclear safety through greater transparency. It had also provided an opportunity to collaborate with neighbouring countries in nuclear safety issues of mutual interest. Greece was therefore happy to reconfirm its commitment to the objectives and the obligations of the Convention.

35. Although the Agency already had in place a programme related to the decommissioning of nuclear facilities, Greece considered it of paramount importance for that programme to be expanded beyond the present limited stage of training and consultancy. It should start to deal with the practical problems associated with the decommissioning process and provide the necessary assistance for the strict implementation of safety measures.

36. Turning to non-proliferation and safeguards, he said Greece staunchly supported the verification role of the Agency. It was the duty of the international community to highlight the need for disarmament and to strengthen the safeguards system. His country was dedicated to the principle of universality of the NPT, which remained the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime.

37. The world with NPT was better than the world without NPT but the Treaty needed to be reaffirmed and revitalized. That could be achieved, on one hand, by expediting acceptance and implementation of the Additional Protocol and, on the other, by reducing the number and salience of nuclear weapons. It was vital for the international community to find new approaches to reduce the nuclear threat but that would require a vision and a road map of how to resolve complex issues which had emerged in recent years. The 2000 NPT Review Conference should pave the way for the resolution of unexpected challenges.

38. He welcomed the initiative taken by the Agency, the United States and Russia aimed at ensuring that nuclear material removed from weapon programmes could not return to military use and exploring ways of subjecting surplus fissile material stocks to Agency verification.

39. Greece participated in all fora concerned with non-proliferation and would continue to subscribe to any international or multinational treaty which would advance that goal. It had ratified the CTBT and hoped that more countries would follow suit.
40. Greece was also gratified at the commitment undertaken by a number of States related to the management of plutonium.
41. All the various potential new verification activities had prompted the Director General to propose a special fund to finance them. Detailed discussions on the necessary arrangements would be required if the Agency were to respond adequately to a worldwide demand for it to assume a key expanded role in the field of peace and security.
42. Whilst applauding the Agency's activities with regard to physical protection and illicit trafficking, Greece would like to see more practical involvement by the Agency, not only in the field of training or co-operation in developing safety guides but also in providing assistance to Member States with the procurement of monitoring equipment for use at border controls.
43. In that context, he mentioned that a recent Greek ministerial order obliged all customs authorities in the country, as well as factories processing scrap metal, to be equipped with appropriate instruments for detecting radioactive material or radiation sources.
44. As regarded the safety and security of radiation sources, the Agency should develop a comprehensive database for the central monitoring of radiation sources in co-operation with the suppliers and receivers of such sources.
45. As the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material had been in force for several years and many things had changed, there was an urgent need to consider widening the scope of the Convention to cover, inter alia, materials in transit.
46. The process of ratification by the Greek Parliament of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management was now in its final stages and was expected to be completed in the near future.
47. Finally, on technical assistance, he declared that Greece, as both a donor and recipient of technical assistance, would continue to contribute in full to both the Agency's Regular Budget and to the TCF.

Mr. Kadri (Algeria) took the Chair.

48. Mr. ARMOUTI (Jordan) expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Agency to meet its statutory objectives with respect to nuclear non-proliferation and promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Jordan also welcomed the work it had done to consolidate international co-operation through such conventions as the Early Notification Convention, the Assistance Convention, and the recent Joint Convention concerned with spent fuel and waste management.

49. The Agency should take advantage of the positive trends in the Middle Eastern political climate, which could lead to the hoped-for lasting peace. Oman had signed the NPT and a safeguards agreement between it and the Agency had been drawn up. Now, all the Arab countries without exception were party to the NPT. Most of the countries in the Middle East were prepared to take whatever steps were necessary to transform the region into a nuclear- and also a chemical- and biological-weapon-free zone. However, Israel, which refused either to sign the NPT or to submit its nuclear facilities to Agency safeguards, continued to pose a nuclear threat and that could lead to a destructive arms race. Jordan was confident that the General Conference would take all measures to remedy that situation in accordance with its resolution on the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East.

50. Amendment of Article VI of the Statute to provide more equitable representation in the Board of Governors for the areas of Africa and of the Middle East and South Asia was more necessary than ever, not least because the members of those area groups had made substantial progress in the nuclear field.

51. Jordan supported the Agency's efforts to find a solution to the Y2K problem, particularly with respect to nuclear power stations, fuel processing and waste treatment plants and medical facilities.

52. The Agency had shown itself to be a real leader in development issues. Even greater emphasis should be placed on the Agency's technical co-operation activities, to enable the developing countries to improve their technological capabilities. Sustainable development was to be achieved by providing assistance not only in setting up nuclear facilities but also in training the necessary manpower to operate them properly.

53. In addition, Jordan hoped that the Agency would assist countries in moves to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. Efficient controls were needed to ensure that such materials were accounted for at all times and to minimize the risk of accidents which were harmful to human health and the environment.

54. Population growth in many countries meant an increasing demand for resources. Jordan welcomed the Agency's programme to promote regional nuclear desalination facilities capable both of providing potable water and generating electricity. It also supported the Agency's continuing efforts to promote the use of isotope hydrology for water resources management.

55. The Arab Atomic Energy Agency in Tunis made its nuclear facilities available to many countries in the Arab world and to Agency Member States. However, it lacked financial support. More co-operation with the Agency would enable nuclear technologies to be disseminated much more widely.

#### ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS (GC(43)/3 and 26)

56. The PRESIDENT recalled that in 1989 the General Conference had approved a procedure whereby, when there was agreement regarding the candidate or candidates from a

particular area, no secret ballot would be held; balloting would only take place for those areas where no candidate had been agreed upon. That procedure considerably facilitated the rational use of the General Conference's time, particularly when elections could be concluded without a vote. Accordingly, he proposed that Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which provided that elections to the Board should be by secret ballot, be suspended in respect of those areas for which there was agreement. He was happy to report that agreement had been reached in all area groups on their candidates for the vacancies to be filled.

57. Drawing attention to document GC(43)/3, containing a list of the Agency Member States which the Board of Governors had designated to serve on the Board from the end of the present session until the end of the forty-fourth (2000) regular session, he recalled that, under Rule 83 of the Rules of Procedure, he had to inform the General Conference of the elective places on the Board which had to be filled and accordingly invited delegates to refer to document GC(43)/26. That document indicated that the Conference now had to elect eleven members to the Board from the seven categories listed.

58. He took it that the General Conference wished to elect Bolivia and Cuba to the two vacant seats for Latin America.

59. Bolivia and Cuba were duly elected.

60. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect Austria and Finland to the two vacant seats for Western Europe.

61. Austria and Finland were duly elected.

62. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect Belarus and Poland to the two vacant seats for Eastern Europe.

63. Belarus and Poland were duly elected.

64. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect Algeria and Nigeria to the two vacant seats for Africa.

65. Algeria and Nigeria were duly elected.

66. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect the Syrian Arab Republic to the vacant seat for the Middle East and South Asia.

67. The Syrian Arab Republic was duly elected.

68. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect the Republic of Korea to the vacant seat for the Far East.

69. The Republic of Korea was duly elected.

70. The PRESIDENT took it that the General Conference wished to elect Indonesia to the floating seat for MESA/SEAP/Far East, which it was the turn of a member from SEAP to fill.

71. Indonesia was duly elected.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.