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Plenary

Record of the Tenth Plenary Meeting

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President: Mr. TAKASU (Japan)

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[*] GC(47)/21.

The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(47)/INF/14/Rev.2.
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Abbreviations used in this record:

GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group
MESA	Middle East and South Asia
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review and Extension Conference	Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

- Oral Report by the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole (resumed)

1. The PRESIDENT invited the Conference to take up the agenda items regarding which the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole had reported to it at its previous meeting.

Measures to strengthen international co-operation in nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management (agenda item 13)

2. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the three draft resolutions contained in document GC(47)/L.7 were adopted.

Nuclear security – measures to protect against nuclear terrorism (agenda item 14)

3. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/L.8 was adopted.

Strengthening of the Agency's technical co-operation activities (agenda item 15)

4. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/L.9 was adopted.

Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications (agenda item 16)

5. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the five draft resolutions contained in document GC(47)/L.5 were adopted.

Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system and application of the Model Additional Protocol (agenda item 17)

6. The PRESIDENT said that he would invite the Conference to take up agenda item 17, on which there had been no recommendation from the Committee, at the end of its consideration of the report by the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole.

Personnel (agenda item 22)

7. As recommended by the Committee of the Whole, the two draft resolutions contained in document GC(47)/L.6 were adopted.

Amendment to Article VI of the Statute (agenda item 23)

8. The PRESIDENT said that the General Conference: recalled its resolution GC(43)/RES/19, by which it had approved the amendment to Article VI of the Agency's Statute and had urged all Member States to accept the amendment as soon as possible in accordance with their respective constitutional processes; took note of the report by the Director General contained in document GC(47)/INF/5; and requested the Director General to submit to the Conference at its forty-ninth regular session a report on the progress made towards the entry into force of the amendment and to include in the provisional agenda for that session an item entitled "Amendment to Article VI of the Statute".

9. Mr. Chang-beom CHO (Republic of Korea) said that his country had requested the inclusion of agenda item 23 in the General Conference's agenda because, in its view, the time had come to take

stock again of the progress being made towards the entry into force of the amendment to Article VI which the General Conference had approved in 1999 through the adoption of resolution GC(43)/RES/19.

10. Entry into force of the amendment would adjust the membership of the Board to today's realities. There had been a considerable increase in the number of Agency Member States during the previous three decades, and further Member States had become very advanced in the technology of atomic energy - States which had a legitimate right to demand that their voices be heard in the Board.

11. His delegation agreed with the Secretariat that entry into force of the amendment would – as stated in paragraph 4 of document GC(47)/INF/5 – be “an important contribution to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency”.

12. Unfortunately, although the General Conference had, in operative paragraph 3 of resolution GC(43)/RES/7, urged all Member States to accept the amendment as soon as possible in accordance with their respective constitutional processes, to date only 34 of the Agency's 137 Member States had accepted it.

13. In the view of his delegation, those Member States which had consented to the approval of the amendment by the General Conference should act in line with the spirit and the letter of resolution GC(43)/RES/19 within a reasonable time frame; they were under an obligation to follow through on their commitment without unnecessary delay.

14. His delegation therefore urged all Member States which had not yet accepted the amendment to accept it as soon as possible in accordance with their respective constitutional processes.

15. Ms. AL-MULLA (Kuwait) said that her delegation was grateful to the President of the Conference and the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole for having reached an agreement leading to what the President had just stated regarding agenda item 23.

16. Her delegation, which could not remain silent following sermons about the obligations of Member States, had often heard it said that the “spirit of Vienna” should permeate the work of the Board and the General Conference. It regretted that the “spirit of Vienna” had not been more in evidence with regard to agenda item 23. To its surprise, it had learned only two days earlier that General Conference action was going to be called for under that agenda item.

17. As everyone knew, resolution GC(43)/RES/19 had been adopted in 1999 only after laborious consultations and delicate compromises. Although the MESA Group had had great difficulties with the outcome, as far as she knew only one Member State belonging to the MESA Group had been consulted regarding the inclusion of item 23 in the Conference's agenda. In fact, she had the impression that only Member States having no difficulties with the inclusion of the item in the agenda had been consulted.

18. Her delegation continued to believe that the Article VI amendment issue should not have been addressed at the current session of the General Conference.

19. The PRESIDENT said that that concluded the Conference's consideration of agenda item 23 and invited the Conference to take up agenda item 17.

17. Strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system and application of the Model Additional Protocol

(GC(47)/8; GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Rev.1)

20. Mr. VACEK (Czech Republic), speaking as chairman of the working group on safeguards established by the Committee of the Whole and introducing the draft resolution which he personally had submitted in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Rev.1, said that the working group had spent three days exploring ways of arriving at a consensus on a draft resolution which the Committee could recommend to the Conference for adoption.

21. The draft resolution before the Conference drew heavily upon resolution GC(46)/RES/12 adopted in 2002, but it contained a number of new elements - particularly in preambular paragraph (g) and operative paragraph 5. Although the draft resolution enjoyed widespread support, three Member States were unable to accept operative paragraph 3, although they were prepared to accept the rest of the text. He understood that the delegations of those Member States would want a vote on operative paragraph 3.

22. Mr. MORENO (Italy) said that, in view of the submission of the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Rev.1 by the chairman of the working group on safeguards, the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.3 wished to withdraw it.

23. The PRESIDENT said that there had been a request for a separate vote on operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution and put paragraph 3 to a vote by show of hands.

24. There were 76 votes in favour of operative paragraph 3 and three against, with one abstention. Draft paragraph 3 was adopted.

25. Mr. SHAVIT (Israel) said that during the efforts to arrive at a consensus on a draft resolution his delegation had made a proposal and in addition had supported a proposal made by Ambassador Vacek that had received broad support in the working group, which had been very close to a consensus.

26. Unfortunately, certain delegations had not supported Ambassador Vacek's proposal, preferring to revert to wording used in resolution GC(46)/RES/12 that had not been acceptable to all Member States in 2002.

27. Israel had been unable to accept operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM5/L.17/Rev.1. However, it was in favour of strengthening the Agency's safeguards system and would join a consensus on the draft resolution as a whole.

28. Mr. SREENIVASAN (India) said that, as a founder member of the Agency, India had consistently attached great importance to the safeguards activities of the Agency and had participated constructively in meetings on strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system. However, the main purpose of additional protocols and strengthened safeguards was to enable the Agency to detect undeclared and clandestine nuclear activities and facilities in States that had concluded comprehensive safeguards agreements with the Agency - and comprehensive safeguards agreements flowed from the NPT.

29. His country believed that the value and success of the Agency were attributable to the meticulous way in which it had carried out its tasks in accordance with its mandate without getting bogged down in extraneous issues. The Agency had not been established in order to become the watchdog of nuclear non-proliferation or nuclear disarmament, nor was it the NPT secretariat.

30. It was in that context that India found most disturbing the practice of introducing into resolutions like the draft resolution which the Conference now had before it language which upset the delicate compromise worked out in 2000; the chapeau to the operative part of resolution GC(44)/RES/19, which had been the result of difficult negotiations, had enabled India to join the consensus on that resolution. In 2001, a paragraph contradicting the spirit of the chapeau had been added to the corresponding resolution, and that paragraph now appeared as operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution under consideration.

31. His delegation had made a sincere attempt to bring about a consensus on operative paragraph 3. For instance, it had proposed either the deletion of the phrase "Bearing in mind the importance of achieving the universal application of the Agency's safeguards system" or the insertion of "concerned" between "all" and "States", but its proposal had not been accepted.

32. As he had said at the Conference's 2002 session, the signing of treaties was a Member State's sovereign decision, and being a Member State of the Agency did not impose upon India any obligation beyond those contained in the Statute. Any resolution which in spirit ran counter to the Statute was unacceptable to India. Accordingly, his delegation had had no option but to vote against operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Rev.1. However, it would not object to the adoption of the draft resolution as a whole without a vote.

33. Mr. NAQVI (Pakistan) said that his country attached great importance to the Agency's safeguards system and his delegation therefore supported the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Rev.1 as a whole.

34. Unfortunately, despite his delegation's best efforts, consensus language had not been found for operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, and his delegation had therefore been unable to vote in favour of that paragraph.

35. It was to be hoped that a consensus would be reached on the matter in the future.

36. Mr. ZISCHG (Austria) said that the differences of opinion regarding a draft resolution to be recommended by the Committee of the Whole to the Conference for adoption had narrowed considerably during the previous three days. His delegation therefore deeply regretted the fact that, once again, no consensus had been reached. It hoped that one would be reached in 2004.

37. Austria, which, as a party to the NPT, would welcome the universal application of comprehensive safeguards, believed that the additional protocols to safeguards agreements were an integral part of those agreements. Unfortunately, the draft resolution before the Conference did not make it clear that they were.

38. The PRESIDENT said he took it that the Conference wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/COM.5/L.17/Add.1 as a whole.

39. It was so decided.

40. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt), having thanked Ambassador Vacek of the Czech Republic for his efforts in chairing the working group, said that Egypt was a supporter of the Agency's safeguards system and would like to see it made more effective and efficient, so as to provide the international community with the requisite assurances that nuclear material was not being used for non-peaceful purposes.

However, it did not consider the measures provided for in additional protocols to be the only way of enhancing the safeguards system's credibility.

41. Egypt had not yet concluded an additional protocol, but it was not opposed to the conclusion of additional protocols by other States. It believed that the implementation of measures provided for in additional protocols at Egyptian nuclear installations would serve no useful purpose, but it had decided not to conclude an additional protocol at present primarily in order to send a clear message to the world that it would not accept additional obligations while one country in the Middle East categorically refused to accede to the NPT.

42. Mr. Chung-ha SUH (Republic of Korea), having commended Ambassador Vacek of the Czech Republic on his efforts as chairman of the working group, said that the draft resolution just adopted was in line with his Government's strong commitment to strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the Agency's safeguard system.

43. In the Republic of Korea, which had a formal safeguards support programme, preparations for implementation of the additional protocol signed by it had been completed and parliamentary ratification of the additional protocol before the end of 2003 was expected.

25. Report on contributions pledged to the Technical Co-operation Fund for 2004

(GC(47)/20/Rev.4)

44. The PRESIDENT said that by 6 p.m. on 18 September 2003 the contributions pledged by Member States in the Technical Co-operation Fund had amounted to US \$9 359 483, or 12.52% of the target for 2004, which was 2.34% higher than the percentage of the target for 2003 pledged by the same point in the preceding year. Since then pledges made by Algeria (\$50 100), Namibia (\$5 232) and Slovakia (\$30 647) had brought the total to \$9 445 462, or 12.64% of the target.

45. He urged those Member States which had not yet done so to make their 2004 pledges and to pay their contributions in full at the earliest opportunity, so that the Secretariat could submit to the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Committee a proposed 2004 technical co-operation programme based on reasonably assured resources and subsequently implement the approved programme without hindrance or uncertainty.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 6.40 p.m.

20. Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East

(GC(47)/12 and Add.1; GC(47)/L.3)

46. The PRESIDENT, introducing the agenda item, said that the subject had been considered by the Board of Governors the previous week.

47. Mr. RAMZY (Egypt) said that, in spite of the consensus that had now existed for 12 years on the need for all countries in the Middle East to accept the application of comprehensive Agency

safeguards to all their nuclear activities, that objective had still not been reached. In his country's view, the issue of the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East had not been addressed by Member States in a resolute manner and, although more and more financial and human resources were being allocated to the nuclear non-proliferation effort, there was not a genuine desire to deal with certain known cases of nuclear proliferation.

48. In spite of an international commitment to nuclear non-proliferation, especially after the events of 11 September 2001, a number of Member States showed no interest in participating in the debate on the issue unless it focused on countries other than Israel. Moreover, some Member States had even expressed the wish that the item "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East" be excluded from General Conference agendas. Egypt would not allow that to happen, however, since it believed strongly in multilateral forums as a means of ensuring international stability and security and it had witnessed numerous instances where action taken outside a multilateral framework had been counterproductive.

49. As could be seen from Annex 1 to document GC(47)/12/Add.1, Egypt supported the convening of a forum on "Experience Relevant to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East", for which Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic had also expressed support. Clearly, however, Israel wanted the forum to be a mere academic exercise, thereby demonstrating its lack of interest in making the Middle East more stable and secure.

50. If the draft resolution before the Conference was adopted by consensus, Egypt would observe subsequent developments in order to determine whether its adoption was accompanied by a corresponding commitment to its implementation. If such a commitment was not forthcoming, Egypt would seek the support of other Member States for the submission of a substantively somewhat different draft resolution at the Conference's next session.

51. His country wished to see a nuclear-weapon-free zone established in the Middle East, with Israel acceding to the NPT and placing all its nuclear installations under comprehensive Agency safeguards. Also, it wished to see the Islamic Republic of Iran taking the steps necessary in order to reassure the international community that its nuclear programme was designed to achieve only peaceful aims.

52. Member States should renew their commitment to the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East, with a view to - for example - reaching agreement on the creation of a mechanism for considering, with Agency assistance, all constructive proposals for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region.

53. The PRESIDENT took it that the Conference was ready to adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/L.3 without a vote.

54. It was so decided.

55. Mr. FRANK (Israel) said that his country had joined the consensus on the draft resolution contained in document GC(47)/L.3 because it recognized that a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East could eventually serve as an important complement to overall peace, security and arms control in the region. However, his delegation had made no secret of its fundamental reservations about the language and current relevance of the draft resolution, and it had formally distanced itself from the associated modalities.

56. Experience in other regions had shown that a regional nuclear-weapon-free zone should emanate from within and be supported by all concerned States of the region. Such a zone could not be imposed on regional parties.

57. The basic premise of any regional security and arms control process was that the security margins of any participating State would offset its threat perception and not be reduced during the process. Consequently, any process demanding a reduction in security margins would have to be based on mutual steps to maintain security. The participation of all States in the region in such a process was an essential prerequisite for the simple reason that reciprocal relationships must prevail for all regional parties.

58. Recent events had highlighted the stark realities in the Middle East. Those realities meant that only a practical, step-by-step approach would be effective. The process should begin with confidence- and security-building measures, carefully selected so as not to reduce the security margins of any State. In Israel's view, after the building of trust, the achievement of reconciliation and the establishment of peace and good neighbourly relations among all Middle East parties the time would be ripe to move towards regional arms control and disarmament arrangements covering missiles and conventional, chemical and biological weapons, and Israel hoped that the establishment of a mutually verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zone would then follow. The wisdom of such a step-by-step approach had been demonstrated by the experience with similar processes conducted elsewhere. The way to achieve security was to aim high but start modestly and move ahead carefully; confidence-building took a lot of time.

59. The statements being made by the representatives of some of Israel's neighbours were not only at variance with the responsibilities and mission of the Agency, they also undermined confidence-building and might make the road ahead even more tortuous.

60. For his part, he hoped for reconciliation, security and peace in the Middle East.

61. Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had accepted the draft resolution because it had not wished to upset the consensus. However, the draft resolution did not refer to Israel by name, its operative paragraphs were vague and one operative paragraph referred to bilateral peace negotiations that had not existed for several years. It would be a source of embarrassment when future generations compared its contents with the circumstances in the Middle East at the time of its adoption.

62. Was it possible to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East when Israel had not acceded to the NPT and had never shown any interest in doing so, and how could one build trust among the States of the Middle East while Israel mounted daily attacks on the Palestinian people, bombed villages in southern Lebanon and built settlements on the occupied Golan Heights?

63. The Syrian Arab Republic was very concerned about the future of the Middle East, and he hoped that the international community understood the reasons for its concern.

64. Mr. DARYAEI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones was an important measure in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Nuclear-weapon-free zones had made a fundamental contribution to regional and international peace, security and stability.

65. Following an initiative taken by his country in 1974, the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East had been considered by the General Assembly and a number of other international fora, including the General Conference and successive NPT Review Conferences. In May 1995, the NPT Review and Extension Conference had, in a resolution on the Middle East, called upon all States in the Middle East that had not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the NPT as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope Agency safeguards, and the 2000 NPT Review Conference had reaffirmed the importance of that resolution and had stated that it would remain valid until its objectives were achieved. However, no meaningful steps had been taken to

achieve its objectives, despite the fact that it was a manifestation of the legitimate demands of States belonging to the region.

66. Israel was the sole country in the Middle East that was not a party to the NPT, and it was operating clandestine nuclear facilities that were the main obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone there. Ignoring the Israeli nuclear threat would only encourage Israel to continue as a source of instability in the Middle East.

67. The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believed that no country in the Middle East should develop, produce, test or acquire nuclear weapons or permit the stationing of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices within their territories or within the territories under their control, and that all countries in the Middle East should refrain from actions that ran counter to the NPT and to international efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Accordingly, his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution just adopted despite the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the ideas expressed in operative paragraph 4.

68. As regards operative paragraph 8, his country believed that all States had the same responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

69. Mr. TOUQ (Jordan) said that his country attached great importance to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East for the benefit of the present generation and of future generations. As proof of that, it had acceded to the NPT, had concluded an NPT safeguards agreement with the Agency and had an additional protocol in force.

70. Israel had not subjected all its nuclear activities to Agency safeguards, however, and consequently the draft resolution just adopted would not help in bringing peace to the Middle East. It conveyed the impression that double standards were being applied, with States whose nuclear programmes were not devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes receiving preferential treatment.

71. Being Israel's closest neighbour geographically, Jordan, which was also concerned about radiation hazards emanating from Israel, would like to see the Director General, supported by Member States with a special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, doing his utmost to persuade Israel to join the nuclear safeguards regime and submit all its nuclear installations to international inspections. It hoped that, at the very least, the draft resolution just adopted would be fully implemented.

72. Referring to document GC(47)/22/Rev.1, which contained a statement of Arab delegations concerning their reservations about the credentials of the delegate of Israel, he pointed out that his delegation had not signed the statement. However, his country's position regarding the illegal nature of Israel's annexation of the occupied city of Jerusalem, which constituted a violation of Security Council resolutions, remained unchanged, as did his country's view that all legislative and administrative measures relating to Jerusalem taken by Israel since it had occupied that city were null and void.

21. Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat (GC(47)/6)

73. The PRESIDENT said that it had been agreed in consultations that he should read out the following statement for endorsement by the Conference:

“The General Conference recalls the statement by the President of the 36th session, in 1992, concerning the agenda item “Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat”. That statement considered it desirable not to consider that agenda item at the 37th session.

“The General Conference also recalls the statement by the President of the 43rd session, in 1999, concerning the same agenda item. At the 44th, 45th, 46th and 47th sessions, this item was, at the request of certain Member States, re-inscribed on the agenda. The item was discussed.

“Several Member States requested that the item be included in the provisional agenda of the 48th regular session of the General Conference.”

74. He took it that the General Conference was ready to endorse the statement he had just read out.
75. It was so decided.
76. Ms. AL-MULLA (Kuwait) said that her delegation was grateful to all those who had enabled the deliberations regarding the agenda item under consideration to go as smoothly as possible given the circumstances.
77. While supporting the statement just read out by the President, her delegation would have liked it to contain a reference to the serious threat of nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East, a call to all countries in the region that had not yet done so to accede to the NPT and submit all their nuclear facilities to comprehensive safeguards, a reference to a commitment of the international community to the elimination of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, and a demonstration of that commitment in a credible and non-selective manner that would ensure the collective security of all the countries of the region.
78. Her country was among those Member States which wished the item “Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat” to be included in the provisional agenda for the Conference’s 2004 regular session.
79. Mr. TOUQ (Jordan) said that his delegation had accepted the statement despite the fact that it did not meet Jordan’s aspirations.
80. Israel should accede to the NPT and submit all its nuclear facilities to Agency safeguards. Only so could the Agency provide the international community with the assurance that Israel’s nuclear programme was devoted exclusively to peaceful purposes.
81. It was essential that the Middle East be free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The statement just read out by the President did not reflect that fact, nor would it help to bring about the universal application of Agency safeguards in the interests of international peace and security.
82. Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that Israel had refused to accede to the NPT and place all of its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards, and the international community had failed to subject Israel to the kind of pressure that other States in the Middle East had been subjected to.
83. Israel posed the real nuclear threat in what was one of the world’s most tense regions, and his country had therefore hoped that, in response to the concerns shared by the other States of the Middle East, the General Conference would adopt a resolution condemning Israel’s nuclear weapons development activities. If the international community wished to bring about stability in the Middle East, it would have to address the imbalance created by Israel’s possession of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

84. Some Arab states had been accused of seeking to obtain weapons of the kind already possessed by Israel - an example of double standards completely unacceptable in the twenty-first century.

85. Mr. YOUSSEF (Egypt) said that, while a threat to international peace and security was posed by the five nuclear Powers, the secret nuclear ambitions of certain other countries posed a serious threat at the regional level. The international community had resolutely addressed some cases of nuclear weapons proliferation, but it had been very lenient in addressing others - especially when Israel was involved.

86. Suspicions had grown in recent decades that Israel was conducting non-peaceful nuclear activities. Moreover, Israel had adopted an ambiguous position by refusing to confirm or deny possession of nuclear weapons. Israel's nuclear programme constituted an imminent threat regionally and beyond. Despite its purported desire for peace, by endeavouring not only to develop an offensive nuclear potential - in addition to its great conventional military capacity - but also to develop a second-strike nuclear capability, Israel had exacerbated the existing imbalance in the Middle East.

87. Israel had not undertaken any international legal obligations that would prevent it from developing a military nuclear capability, and that raised the question whether exceptions to compliance with the NPT should be allowed.

88. Also, there was the possibility of Israeli nuclear material falling into irresponsible hands.

89. Perhaps some members of the international community believed that Israel's nuclear capabilities were not a cause for concern as long as there were no other countries with nuclear weapons aspirations in the Middle East. At all events, one question which the international community should focus on was whether Israel's nuclear programme had been developed locally or with outside assistance, including assistance from countries prohibited by the NPT from providing any.

90. The continued existence of a nuclear programme that was not transparent or subject to safeguards posed a threat to the security of Egypt, which nevertheless remained firmly committed to peace in the Middle East and was continuing to explore all possible ways of achieving it by political means. However, apart from some encouraging statements, the response of the international community had failed to live up to Egypt's expectations; there was strong support for nuclear non-proliferation where Middle East countries other than Israel were concerned, but that support declined to unacceptable levels when Israel was the focus of attention.

91. Mr. ŞAHİNBAŞ (Turkey), commending the President on the compromise reached, said that Turkey, as a party to the NPT, attached great importance to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and would welcome universal adherence to the NPT.

92. Given the threat of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, it was in the interest of all Middle East countries to adhere to the NPT, thereby making an important contribution to confidence-building and international peace and security.

93. Mr. MORENO (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union, commended the delegations of member countries of the Arab League and also the Israeli delegation for the flexibility that they had demonstrated in accepting the statement read out by the President, which was in keeping with the "spirit of Vienna". He also commended the President for the way in which he had conducted the negotiations that had resulted in the statement.

94. Mr. BAHRAN (Yemen) said that Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT, accept full-scope Agency safeguards and conclude an additional protocol created a dangerous situation in the Middle East to which the international community had failed to respond.

95. The statement read out by the President did not diverge substantively from the statements read out in previous years, but the delegations of Arab Member States had demonstrated a flexibility which he would like Israel to match.

96. He believed that peace would ultimately come to the Middle East, but so far Israel had contributed only war and destruction. The international community should exert more pressure on Israel.

97. Mr. TAJOURI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation had accepted the statement read out by the President despite the fact that no reference was made in it to Israel's growing nuclear capacity, which posed a threat to stability and security both in the Middle East and beyond.

98. Israel had been called upon by the NPT Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 NPT Review Conference to accede to the NPT as soon as possible, but it had so far not responded positively. Double standards were being applied in the case of Israel, which was consequently pursuing policies that ran counter to the hopes for global peace and security. The international community should exert more pressure on Israel and force it to abandon those policies.

99. Mr. BRILL (United States of America) said that the President was to be commended on his performance in handling items 20 and 21 of the agenda. However, the United States delegation was disappointed that the Israeli issue had not been adequately addressed under those two agenda items. The strength of the Agency lay in its technical focus, and his delegation would therefore like to see Member States pursue the political issues of interest to them elsewhere - not in the Agency's General Conference. In his delegation's view, Agency activities designed to bring practical benefits to people in the Middle East through, for example, the use of the sterile insect technique against the Mediterranean fruit fly were more in line with the "spirit of Vienna" than was the discussion that had taken place during the previous few hours.

- Closing of the session

100. The PRESIDENT thanked delegations for their patience and understanding, particularly during the informal consultations which he had conducted.

101. The 2003 regular session of the General Conference had been particularly well attended, with over forty ministerial-level delegates - an indication of the great importance attached by many Member States to the Agency's work. There had been 98 speakers in the general debate, which had highlighted the dedication of Member States to promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. On the fiftieth anniversary of the "Atoms for Peace" initiative, the General Conference had been positive and constructive, and the outcome of the current session had reflected the spirit of co-operation and mutual respect which many had come to refer to as the "spirit of Vienna". The Agency was certain to benefit from that outcome, becoming stronger and more effective.

102. Mr. SRIWIDJAJA (Indonesia) commended the President for his able leadership in guiding the Conference's deliberations to a successful conclusion and for the hard work done by him in ensuring that a number of contentious issues were dealt with in a constructive and sensitive manner.

103. Mr. GONZÁLEZ ANINAT (Chile), speaking on behalf of GRULAC, commended the President on the way in which he had guided the Conference's deliberations.

104. GRULAC had agreed that Mexico and Peru should be elected to serve on the Board of Governors during the period 2003-2005 and also that Ecuador and Venezuela should be elected to serve during the period 2004-2006 - a demonstration of the solidarity of GRULAC in wishing to further strengthen the Agency.

105. Mr. OTHMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) thanked the President for his patience and the Secretariat for its support.

106. Several of the agenda items considered by the Conference had been of a technical nature, and in his view the Conference had made good use of its time.

107. Ms. AL-MULLA (Kuwait) associated herself with those who had commended the President on his performance.

108. The PRESIDENT thanked all Conference participants for their co-operation and expressed special thanks to: the Vice-Presidents of the Conference; Ambassador Garcia of the Philippines, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, and Ambassador Stokes of Australia and Ambassador Vacek of the Czech Republic, the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee. He also thanked the Director General and his staff for their support and the Austrian authorities and the City of Vienna for their hospitality.

109. Finally, in accordance with Rule 48 of the Rules of Procedure, he invited the Conference to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation.

All present rose and observed one minute of silence.

110. The PRESIDENT declared the forty-seventh regular session of the General Conference closed.

The meeting rose at 8.00 p.m.