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Plenary

Record of the Fifth Meeting

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President: Mr GHISI (Italy)
Later: Mr MWIRIA (Kenya)

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[1] GC(52)/21.

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(52)/INF/8/Rev.1.

Abbreviations used in this record:

ABACC	Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials
AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
AIPS	Agency-wide Information System for Programme Support
ALARA	as low as reasonably achievable
ARCAL	Cooperation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GNEP	Global Nuclear Energy Partnership
HEU	high-enriched uranium
INPRO	International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles
IRRS	Integrated Regulatory Review Service
ITER	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
Joint Division	Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture
LEU	low-enriched uranium
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NPCs	national participation costs

Abbreviations used in this record (continued):

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
NTI	Nuclear Threat Initiative
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OECD/NEA	Nuclear Energy Agency of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSART	Operational Safety Review Team
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
PET	positron emission tomography
PHWR	pressurized heavy water reactor
PSA	Probabilistic safety analysis/assessment
SIT	sterile insect technique
SQP	small quantities protocol
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2007 (continued) (GC(52)/9)

1. Mr ALOBIDI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) reaffirmed the right of all Member States without distinction to obtain nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. He warned against interpreting any provision of the NPT in a manner that adversely influenced the development, production and use of nuclear energy and against imposing restrictions on the export of nuclear material and technology for peaceful purposes.

2. Welcoming recent achievements under the technical cooperation programme in the areas of health and water resources management, he said that Libya had hosted a number of important activities such as the eighth meeting of national coordinators of AFRA projects, a quality control conference, three coordination meetings on quality assurance, three training courses in medicine, the healthcare industry and health physics, and a workshop for AFRA Member States on developing infrastructure for radioactive waste management. Libya had submitted five proposals for technical cooperation projects during the period 2009–2011 in the areas of health, water, environmental protection and energy planning. All five had been accepted as national projects.

3. Libya invariably paid its voluntary contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund. As part of its plan to use nuclear energy for electricity generation and water desalination, it had established a nuclear institution and invited specialized international companies to make relevant presentations of advanced nuclear technology, especially nuclear reactors. Libya had also entered into negotiations with a number of States that had led to the signing of agreements on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Thus, it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the French Atomic Energy Commission in 2006 and an agreement with the French Government in 2008; it had initialled an agreement with the Russian Federation which was likely to be signed before the end of the year; it had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Argentine Infab company in 2006 and had submitted a draft cooperation agreement with the Argentine Government, to which it was awaiting a response; it was studying a draft cooperation agreement between Libya and Ukraine; agreement had been reached on a draft memorandum of understanding between Libya and Canada which would shortly be signed; a memorandum of understanding had been signed with the Korean nuclear engineering and service company in 2005; and a science and technology cooperation agreement covering energy in general had been signed with the United States of America.

4. When providing technical and legal support to Member States, the Agency should refrain from imposing any political or economic conditions that were inconsistent with its Statute. Moreover, the developed countries had a responsibility to assist developing countries in using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes by facilitating access to nuclear technology and material and relevant scientific data.

5. Libya strongly supported the Agency's work in the area of nuclear and radiation safety. It had established a national monitoring office which would eventually become a fully fledged independent monitoring agency. Libya was a party to the CPPNM; it had signed the convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and it had taken steps to accede to the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident.

6. Libya had taken an historical and courageous step on 19 December 2003 when it had voluntarily renounced any programme that might lead to the development of internationally prohibited weapons.

In that context, he welcomed the finding by the Board of Governors at its latest meeting that Libya had been cooperating fully and transparently with the Agency in implementing its safeguards agreement.

7. Libya's recent cooperation with the United States would shortly result in the establishment of a regional centre for nuclear medicine in Libya. The Agency had helped experts from Libya and the United States to prepare the requisite technical document, and a strategic plan had been developed in Tripoli the previous month.

8. With regard to the nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya reiterated its position that threats and confrontation would lead nowhere, and that sanctions would never force any country to renounce its sovereign rights. Indeed they usually punished ordinary citizens rather than decision-makers. The use of force destroyed the relations between peoples and promoted extremism. He reaffirmed Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and called on Iran to increase its cooperation with the Agency in order to dispel any doubts regarding its nuclear programme.

9. Libya was extremely concerned about the threat to the Middle East from Israel's nuclear weapons, which were not subject to Agency's safeguards, and Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT, which undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime and promoted an arms race in the region. The decision by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference to support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East had encouraged the other States of the region to accede to the NPT, but the zone had not been established because of Israel's conduct. And yet certain countries refrained from demanding that Israel should accede to the NPT and all other relevant instruments, while calling for the imposition of sanctions on other countries solely on the suspicion that they might have a military nuclear programme.

10. He called on all nuclear weapon States to implement Article VI of the NPT and honour the commitments they had assumed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference by launching a programme to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

11. He further called on the Conference to discuss the agenda item on Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat in order to prevent a nuclear arms race in the region. The opposition during the two previous sessions to its inclusion on the agenda provided resounding proof of the application by some States of double standards to the countries of the region. He strongly urged all peace-loving States to provide an opportunity at the current session for an objective discussion of the agenda item.

12. Ms CRAXI (Italy) said that the NPT remained the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and the foundation for promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament. Italy hoped that significant progress would be achieved with regard to each of the three pillars of the Treaty: namely, in non-proliferation, by strengthening safeguards and the verification regime; in disarmament, with a renewed effort to meet NPT commitments; and in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, through recognition of responsibilities associated with using that resource. Italy believed that growth in the civil nuclear sector should be accompanied by a greater effort to prevent proliferation risks.

13. Her country supported Agency initiatives aimed at formulating multilateral solutions to the nuclear fuel cycle with a view to assuring all Member States, without discrimination, access to supplies of nuclear fuel, in conformity with the provisions of the NPT. Italy hoped that such efforts would improve the overall security of the system through a stable and balanced supply mechanism. The Agency's role was essential, and Italy welcomed the establishment of a fuel bank, under Agency auspices, initiated by the NTI.

14. Italy was starting to make use of nuclear power once again. In June 2008 a new nuclear law, the first since 1987, had been approved, providing for the establishment of new sites for nuclear power

production in the country. Other investments and initiatives were planned in the fields of research and the environment in order to equip the country with the technology required to meet its needs.

15. With the renaissance in civil nuclear power around the world, it was important to pursue an agenda for disarmament and non-proliferation. To that end, additional protocols should be universally applied in order to guarantee the Agency's highest verification standard, and the ban on nuclear tests should become an obligatory universal standard through the comprehensive ratification of the CTBT. The system already in place for monitoring the test ban was an important factor in the Treaty's credibility. Italy was contributing to the system by certifying a laboratory and through a new monitoring station.

16. The next NPT Review Conference in 2010 would provide an important opportunity to strengthen the comprehensive safeguards system, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and disarmament. Italy supported the opening of negotiations, within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

17. The present risks of nuclear terrorism should not be underestimated, and he called for the strengthening of prevention measures and support for the Agency. Other forms of international cooperation, such as the G8's Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, GNEP and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, also had a role to play in the global non-proliferation regime.

18. Italy was convinced that the comprehensive safeguards system was the most effective instrument for preventing and combating the proliferation of nuclear weapons. She commended the Agency's verification activities in Iran in particular, and in the DPRK. It was regrettable that the most recent report by the Director General on the application of safeguards in Iran had confirmed Iran's failure to comply with the resolutions of the Security Council and the Board, and the absence of cooperation with Agency inspectors in order to demonstrate the peaceful nature of the nuclear programme. Furthermore, Iran had continued to refuse to apply the modified text of the Subsidiary Arrangements, which provided for prior notification of nuclear facility projects. Italy encouraged Iran to implement the resolutions of the Security Council and the Board, and to apply its additional protocol in order to enable full cooperation with the Agency.

19. Italy hoped that the process of dismantling nuclear facilities in the DPRK could recommence in a verifiable and irreversible manner in order to consolidate the progress achieved through the six-party talks. The DPRK should implement Security Council resolutions and comply fully with its obligations under the NPT. Italy supported the Agency's fundamental role in verifying compliance with such international obligations.

20. Having noted that Syria should provide the Agency with full and sincere collaboration in order to enable the investigation process begun in June 2008 to be concluded, she said that Italy welcomed Libya's cooperation with the Agency following its historic decision to renounce weapons of mass destruction. Libya provided another example of collaboration with the application of the additional protocol.

21. Every country with a nuclear programme should give absolute priority to the nuclear safety and security of the public and of workers at nuclear sites. The global nuclear safety and security standards drawn up by the Agency were essential tools, as were the conventions concluded with numerous Member States, and the assistance, support and consultation services provided by the Agency. Italy welcomed the ongoing efforts to revise safety and security standards, and emphasized the importance of Member States' contributions in that regard. Italy was party to all safety and security conventions under the Agency's auspices and gave its full support to the strengthening of the whole system.

22. Italy encouraged international cooperation and participation in new European and international projects in the nuclear technology field. Italy's national research agencies, universities and industries were taking part in numerous European projects relating to nuclear safety and security, innovative nuclear systems and advanced fuel cycles.

23. Italy had been involved in the Agency's technical cooperation activities for a long time, and regularly provided financial support in that regard. Italy's universities and health institutions ran collaboration programmes, particularly in nuclear medicine, which involved a large number of scientific visits and fellowships. A project of such broad scope demonstrated Italy's commitment to the Agency's technical cooperation activities.

24. Through UNESCO, Italy contributed 85% of the budget of the Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, which worked under Agency supervision to promote international cooperation among scientists from all countries of the world. The Centre was pursuing achievement of the MDGs and had trained more than 100 000 scientists from 100 countries, especially developing countries, over its 40 years of activity.

25. Italy attached great importance to nuclear applications developed by the Agency which offered benefits for health, agriculture and development. It was grateful for the Agency's activities in combating cancer, and its efforts to eradicate harmful insects and to improve access to drinking water in many regions of the world.

26. Italy was conscious of the importance of cooperation with the Agency in order to relaunch its nuclear programme in the best way possible while ensuring the highest levels of safety and security. Italy would continue to support fully the Agency's programmes and activities in achieving those goals.

27. Mr DAINIUS (Lithuania) expressed his country's full support for the Agency, which remained the world's focal point for peaceful nuclear cooperation and nuclear safety and played an indispensable global role in preventing the diversion of nuclear material and equipment to nuclear weapons-related programmes and countering new threats of nuclear terrorism. The Agency's safeguards system was essential for the credible verification of nuclear non-proliferation, and comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols should constitute the verification standard. Lithuania called upon States that had not yet done so to reaffirm their commitment to the NPT by concluding comprehensive safeguards agreements and additional protocols with the Agency, and congratulated Qatar for signing a safeguards agreement and the Kingdom of Lesotho and Iraq for concluding additional protocols. He welcomed the fact that the Agency had been able to draw a safeguards conclusion for 47 States, including his own, and noted that as from 1 January 2008, the trilateral safeguards agreement and additional protocol among Lithuania and other non-nuclear European Union States, Euratom and the Agency had superseded the bilateral ones between Lithuania and the Agency.

28. A growing number of countries had expressed interest in nuclear power as a way to meet their increasing energy needs, but there were also concerns over future interruptions in nuclear fuel supply. Lithuania therefore welcomed Member States' initiatives on credible and robust international assurances of access to enriched uranium or enrichment services. In particular, the proposed fuel bank under the auspices of the Agency would enhance international non-proliferation efforts and contribute to disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

29. Lithuania strongly supported global efforts to strengthen international and national nuclear security regimes. The Agency played a key role in assisting Member States to develop and implement national and regional nuclear security frameworks. In May 2008, the Lithuanian Parliament had ratified the amendments to the CPPNM, and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority had drafted new requirements for the physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities. Recalling the Code

of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and supplementary Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources, he said that Lithuania was seeking ways to improve its regulatory infrastructure for the control of ionizing radiation sources, exposure to ionizing radiation and prevention of radiological emergencies. It called on countries that had not yet done so to adhere to and fully implement the Code of Conduct and other international instruments such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the CPPNM.

30. Safety was a precondition for the sustainable use of nuclear technology. It was therefore highly important to build capacities at institutional, national and regional level, share knowledge and experiences, provide training and assistance to Member States to identify gaps in knowledge, and to develop sustainable national programmes to train specialists. Particular attention should be paid to building competence and training personnel at regulatory authorities and supporting organizations. Lithuania fully supported the Agency's efforts to establish a network for the exchange of regulatory experiences and practices to improve global safety, and looked forward to participating in activities in that regard.

31. Lithuania dedicated considerable resources to maintaining a high level of safety at Unit 2 of the Ignalina nuclear power plant prior to its decommissioning. Some improvements had already been made and others would be introduced in accordance with the safety improvement programme, which was updated and reviewed each year. The follow-up OSART mission to the plant, completed in April 2008, had achieved positive results. All outstanding issues from the 2006 mission had been either been successfully resolved or were progressing satisfactorily, and a number of good practices which would be shared with other Member States, had been noted. Lithuania was also making arrangements for the decommissioning of Unit 1 of the plant.

32. In view of the growing global energy demand, the contribution of nuclear power would increase significantly in the future. Lithuania's National Energy Strategy envisioned rapid economic growth, which would have a direct impact on energy consumption and electricity demand. Nuclear power was the main energy source in the country, accounting for around 70% of the electricity generated. Lithuania intended to expand its capacities by building a new nuclear power plant jointly with Estonia, Latvia and Poland. Construction of the Visaginas nuclear power plant was planned for 2016–2018 and the plant was intended to supply energy to the entire Baltic region. Despite the complexity of the project and the high level of coordination required among participating parties, some steps had already been accomplished. An environmental impact assessment had been approved by the Lithuanian Ministry of Environment in November 2007 to evaluate the construction and operation of the new nuclear power plant in Lithuania with an approximate capacity of 3400 MW. The assessment report had been prepared and was presented to the public in August 2008; it would be submitted for assessment to the Agency expert mission to Lithuania in December 2008. The final decision on the acceptability of the plant would be taken by the Ministry of Environment, taking into consideration all comments received from various authorities and the public in Lithuania and abroad, as well as the results of the expert mission. In 2007, Lithuania had established a national investor company, LEO LT, which was responsible for the implementation and development of the project. A subsidiary company had been established in August 2008 to coordinate all preparatory activities. The timely preparation of specialists for the licensing, construction and operation of the new nuclear power plant was a national priority, and Lithuania had developed a national programme for the training of nuclear energy specialists for the years 2008–2015. New courses on nuclear physics and nuclear engineering had been launched at the country's main universities, and there was a plan to establish a regional centre to train nuclear energy specialists and carry out research.

33. Radioactive waste management required utmost attention so that future generations were not affected by radioactive waste generated by nuclear power facilities and other peaceful applications. Long-term safety assessments were a key element in that process. Lithuania's radioactive waste

management strategy identified tasks that had to be implemented to ensure the safety of radioactive waste. The country had already taken a decision to dispose of short-lived very low level waste in a landfill-type repository, and short-lived low and intermediate level waste in a near-surface repository with reinforced concrete vaults. Projects related to the construction of new radioactive waste management facilities and repositories for radioactive waste from the Ignalina nuclear power plant were ongoing. A contractor had been chosen to build the landfill-type repository and technical preparations were under way. As regards the near-surface repository, the pre-qualification procedure was complete and tender was set to be announced. Both repositories would be constructed with the financial assistance of the EU.

34. Radiation protection was a complex, multifunctional and dynamically developing infrastructure that had to adapt to ever-changing technologies, and Lithuania's own radiation protection infrastructure was constantly being strengthened. The country played an active role in the Regional European and Central Asian ALARA Network, appreciating its usefulness and supporting its goal to maintain and improve radiation protection in those regions. As a member of the network of Analytical Laboratories for the Measurement of Environmental Radioactivity, the Radiation Protection Centre regularly passed the relevant proficiency tests. Lithuania devoted considerable attention to developing its medical radiation protection system, and was implementing activities under a national project to monitor patient doses. Doses in interventional radiology were measured and the quality of mammography images was assessed under the regional project to strengthen the radiological protection of patients and medical exposure control. Specialists from the Radiation Protection Centre participated in various training courses, seminars, workshops and visits with a view to building their competence to perform functions in various areas where radiation sources were used. Considerable effort was being invested in developing a complete set of measures to ensure the radiation protection of workers at facilities using radiation sources and of the public. The establishment of a training centre in Lithuania was a very promising step that enabled specialists to expand their radiation protection capacities.

35. Proper funding of technical cooperation activities was of great importance, which was why Lithuania paid its TCF contributions in full and on time. Throughout the country's history of technical cooperation with the Agency, Lithuanian organizations had been actively involved in various activities to build a nuclear energy infrastructure, increase the level of professional expertise and ensure the safe operation of nuclear facilities. Lithuania was about to undertake challenging tasks related to nuclear power expansion, which would require the strengthening of the national institutions involved. A technical cooperation project on enhancing capabilities in the State Nuclear Power Safety Inspectorate (VATESI) and other institutions in the licensing of a new nuclear power plant, launched in early 2008, helped institutions to enhance their capabilities, and consequently ensured proper regulatory and authorization processes during construction and operation of the new plant.

36. Mr KAKODKAR (India) said that 2008 had been a remarkable one for his country in the field of nuclear energy. The Board's approval by consensus of the Agreement with the Government of India for the Application of Safeguards to Civilian Nuclear Facilities in August 2008 and the Statement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation with India issued by the Nuclear Suppliers Group in September had created the conditions for India to make an even bigger contribution to the growth of international civil nuclear cooperation. He acknowledged the contribution and assistance of India's close friends in the international community who had made that possible. While the development of such cooperation would help to strengthen the country's energy security, India also looked forward to enhancing its assistance to friendly countries. India's reactor system was based on 220 MW(e) PHWRs, which was competitive in terms of capital costs, safety performance and energy cost, making it well suited to the needs of countries with small electricity grids, especially those in the developing world.

37. A critical point, marked by a huge increase in the energy requirements of emerging economies, unfulfilled development aspirations of a vast majority of the global population and the serious threat of climate change, had been reached in global development efforts. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the warming of the climate system was unequivocal, as shown by increases in the global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising of the global average sea level. It was clear that efforts to meet enhanced energy requirements would have to rely more on non-fossil energy sources in order to mitigate climate change and ensure the sustainability of available energy resources. By 2031–32, India's use of the world's supply of fossil fuels could be anywhere between 13% in the most energy efficient scenario, and 21% in a coal-dominant scenario. His country had therefore accorded high priority to increasing the contribution of nuclear power to its overall electricity generation. Nuclear energy had the potential to meet energy demands for sustainable development throughout the world.

38. India's comprehensive atomic energy programme covered the entire fuel cycle for uranium, plutonium and thorium based fuels and was governed by the long-term objective of energy independence using the country's vast thorium resources. There were several benefits to the use of thorium, particularly in heavy water reactors, including proliferation-resistant nuclear energy production and efficient fissile plutonium disposal, which might be of interest to other countries.

39. India welcomed the progress made with regard to INPRO in recent years. It was participating in eight of the twelve collaborative projects under Phase II, which offered a unique opportunity for Member States to work together to advance technological approaches, fulfil future energy needs and increase the volume, reach and range of uses of nuclear energy in the world. It was ironic that such an important activity, which was at the core of a holistic solution to ensuring safe, secure and sustainable global access to nuclear energy, was still not a part of the Agency's Regular Budget. Full budgetary support should be given to INPRO activities, as an efficient and sustainable way for the Agency to meet its statutory objectives.

40. The vast energy potential of the atom could prevent the widening of disparities, but fears arising from its destructive power were preventing wider access to nuclear energy. There were several proposed solutions, but those based on science and technology were likely to be the most successful. The Agency was unique in its ability to implement such solutions as it was an international organization with the necessary science and technology resources.

41. While recognizing the importance of nuclear power development worldwide, the factors limiting its growth also had to be taken into account. The number of countries to begin constructing a new power reactor had remained stagnant since 1985 at 33. However, there were ambitious plans to expand the nuclear power generating capacity of many countries, and several countries were intending to build their first nuclear plant in the near future. The necessary infrastructure, including the availability of trained human resources, had to be in place to support such a nuclear renaissance. India had been implementing a robust staff training programme for over five decades, and offered to train young foreign scientists at its nuclear training school, which conducted a one-year orientation course for engineering graduates and science postgraduates on mutually agreed terms.

42. It was important to understand the issues that inhibited access to nuclear power, including human resources, necessary infrastructures, safety regulations and security, and find ways to resolve them. A balanced approach that maximized development and minimized risk was required. Through over five decades of scientific and professional work, the Agency had established itself as a credible organization that fulfilled its mandate. With its strong science base and rich experience, the Agency was in a unique position to identify and promote optimal holistic technological solutions that minimized constraints and were accessible to all.

43. The Director General's bold initiative to establish a Commission of Eminent Persons to examine the nature and scope of the Agency's programme until 2020 and beyond was highly commendable. The Commission had highlighted the need for the Agency to play a greater role in steering global development through the use of atomic energy. Although the report covered all the relevant areas, especially the need for enhanced resources through the Regular Budget, it could have been more balanced. It did not provide many practical ideas and strategies to enable interested countries to access the benefits of nuclear energy, or focus on other related aspects within the scope of the Agency Statute, and could therefore not stand alone as the basis for Agency's future. However, India welcomed the opportunity provided by the release of the report to generate constructive and practical ideas as to how the renaissance of the nuclear industry could benefit everyone, in particular developing countries.

44. To mark 100 years since the birth of Homi Bhabha, the founder of India's atomic energy programme, and the silver jubilee of the Indian Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, India would be hosting the International Conference on Topical Issues in Nuclear Installation Safety: Ensuring Safety for Sustainable Nuclear Development in Mumbai from 17 to 21 November 2008. As part of a year-long Homi Bhabha centenary programme, India was planning to organize an international conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy, hopefully in cooperation with the Agency. Homi Bhabha had helped to shape the Agency and had been instrumental in the decision to locate the headquarters in Vienna. He had also been President of the first Geneva Conference on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy.

45. Throughout human civilization, every era had been defined by a significant achievement, for example the use of fire, the invention of the wheel, locomotion through steam, the realization of the power of the atom and the Internet. The world was now at the threshold of the most exciting of possibilities — the power to understand and manipulate matter in the service of mankind. But that possibility could only become a reality if the nations of the world, in particular the scientific community, came together as never before. India was hopeful that the international nuclear community, working together as one family within the framework of the Agency, would not let such an opportunity pass and would take giant leaps towards harnessing nuclear power for the benefit of humanity as a whole.

46. Mr MITEVSKI (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that his country had joined the crucial instruments marking the milestones of international efforts to strengthen the physical protection of nuclear material and facilities, and was committed to further strengthening its national security system and international cooperation. His country paid particular attention to strengthening institutional capacities to combat illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials; appropriate equipment had been installed at all border crossings and an efficient reporting and enforcement system was in place. The country was about to hold a sub-regional training course on radiation safety for customs and regulatory authorities.

47. With the assistance of the Agency, his country had made significant steps towards compliance with international safety standards, including the establishment of an independent Radiation Safety Directorate. Further assistance would be focused on drafting the remaining regulations and setting up a central storage facility for low and medium level radioactive waste. He expressed thanks to the staff of the Department of Technical Cooperation's Division for Europe for their assistance in the implementation of the national technical cooperation programme. The programme for the subsequent cycle was focused on upgrading diagnostic procedures in nuclear medicine, implementing food standards and strengthening the capabilities of the radiation safety services. In view of the importance of medical applications of nuclear technology in improving human health, the Macedonian Government had decided to support a project to establish a PET centre, providing a national

contribution of €4 million. The Agency's support for that model project in the form of expert services and staff training was of crucial importance.

48. With the cooperation of the Agency, certain Macedonian institutions had been upgraded to centres of excellence where regional experts could receive training. The country looked forward to hosting more foreign participants in such training programmes in the future, with a view to strengthening regional cooperation.

49. Despite national budgetary restrictions, his country had always paid in full its contributions to the TCF and the Regular Budget. It had also made several extrabudgetary contributions to the technical cooperation programme.

50. Ms FUNES-NOPPEN (Belgium) said that her country produced more than half of its electricity using nuclear power, and was in the process of reviewing the future of its energy policy. The special commission established for that purpose would produce its report in 2009.

51. Her country attached particular importance to research, development and training in the nuclear field. It worked closely in the development of the ITER programme, and a concept developed by the Belgian Laboratory for Plasma Physics of the Royal Military Academy involving the ion cyclotron resonance heating of plasma had been adopted by ITER. Belgium was continuing its efforts to contribute to the development of new nuclear technologies, including through membership of the INPRO Steering Committee and participation in several specific projects.

52. With regard to the MYRRHA project to develop an accelerator-driven subcritical reactor, an international consortium had been established under the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre to develop plans for the infrastructure with the support of the European Commission.

53. At national level, the Nuclear Research Centre in Mol was continuing its research and training activities, with particular focus on the sustainable use of nuclear energy, the environment and societal aspects related to the use of nuclear energy. The Centre had strengthened its role as a training centre for professionals in the nuclear industry. It also played an important role in European projects such as the European Nuclear Education Network and the European Network on Education and Training in Radiological Protection, which aimed to facilitate the mobility of undergraduate and postgraduate students and promote recognition of nuclear science and technology qualifications across Europe. As part of the cooperation between the Nuclear Research Centre and the Belgian Agency for Radioactive Waste and Enriched Fissile Materials concerning the European Underground Research Infrastructure for Disposal of nuclear waste In Clay Environment (EURIDICE), the research programme on the disposal of long-lived high activity radioactive waste in clay deposits had been extended and the High Activity Disposal Experimental Site underground facilities in Mol had been expanded. There were plans to perform an experiment to simulate thermal impact on high activity waste in underground facilities. The Nuclear Research Centre had strengthened its relations with international partners in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, signing agreements with Egypt, Estonia and the Republic of Korea. It also regularly received experts under training programmes.

54. Belgium attached particular importance to nuclear safety, as a means of raising public confidence. Following an irradiation localization error during the treatment of patients in a Belgian hospital, and similar accidents in other countries, the Belgian authorities had taken a number of control and prevention measures. Two roundtables comprising all Belgian radiotherapy stakeholders had been organized by the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control, in collaboration with the French competent authorities. The objective had been to explore additional measures that could further increase the safety and security of radiotherapy treatments and, consequently, the confidence of patients and their families. The roundtables had been successful, providing for the establishment of a mechanism that involved declaring significant events concerning radiation protection in order to ensure that the

necessary measures were taken locally, prevent the occurrence of similar incidents or accidents, and promote an exchange of experience. Initiatives to improve quality and assist radiophysicists in their work had also been developed.

55. In August 2008, there had been an accidental release of radioactive iodine at the Institute for Radioisotopes in Fleurus. Production had been stopped immediately, and would not be resumed until the precise causes had been identified and treated, and the ventilation and alarm systems had been improved. Temporary precautionary measures had been taken to protect the public, even though the levels of radioactivity had been below the WHO admissible dose for children under five. Those measures had later been lifted, but an enquiry into the causes of the release was still under way.

56. A law to approve the amendment to the CPPNM had been sanctioned and promulgated in Belgium in July 2008. Her country urged all Member States to ratify the amendment, as the Convention was the only legally binding instrument concerning physical protection. Belgium was also in the process of ratifying the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and was constantly adapting its policy to protect nuclear facilities against malevolent acts, in order to keep up with new international challenges.

57. Noting that the NPT had to remain at the heart of the non-proliferation regime, she said that the Agency played a crucial role in increasing the contribution of nuclear energy to peace, health and prosperity, ensuring that nuclear activities were not diverted to non-peaceful purposes, promoting a rigorous safety culture and standards and combating the risks of nuclear terrorism. Belgium welcomed consideration of the Agency's future, and stressed that the process had to be carried out transparently, with intergovernmental dialogue to allow Member States to analyse the various aspects and take decisions.

58. On account of the importance it attached to the efficient functioning of the Agency, Belgium was, exceptionally, allowing the Agency to use its budgetary surplus to launch AIPS.

59. An effective multilateral approach should be taken in addressing threats to international peace and security. Belgium unreservedly supported the Agency's excellent work on the difficult Iranian issue. It called on Iran to collaborate fully and transparently with the Agency and resolve any outstanding issues to guarantee the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. Iran should also implement Board and Security Council resolutions.

60. Her country welcomed the success of the Agency's missions to the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. It appreciated Libya's transparency and encouraged further cooperation in that regard.

61. Belgium noted with concern the worrying developments in the DPRK's and drew attention to the need for the Agency to fulfil its verification role in North Korea. The DPRK needed to implement the decisions of the Security Council, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear facilities, abandon its weapons-grade fissile material and adhere to the NPT. Belgium also called on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully and transparently with the Agency, so that the Agency could conduct any necessary additional investigations.

62. Belgium was pleased that the Agency and India had signed a safeguards agreement, which was a step in the right direction. It hoped that India would also adhere to an additional protocol without delay. Belgium congratulated Lesotho and Iraq for signing additional protocols, and Qatar for signing a safeguards agreement.

63. Belgium hoped that, as in other years, the General Conference would be able to pass a single resolution on safeguards in the Middle East.

64. Mr SHAHBAZ (Pakistan) said that the Agency's role as the world's focal point for promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy was assuming greater significance in view of the rapidly growing global energy demand and the shortage of fossil fuel reserves, alongside diverse environmental and proliferation challenges. The Agency could make a significant contribution to meeting the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century by ensuring equitable access to nuclear materials, technology and equipment for peaceful purposes.

65. To ensure the realization of every State's right to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, there was a need to develop universal and non-discriminatory criteria for international cooperation in the relevant fields, including nuclear power generation. In that process, principles should be placed above expediency and commercial and strategic interests. Such an approach would help to reinforce confidence in the Agency's safeguards system and to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

66. He recalled that President Eisenhower, in his 1953 address to the General Assembly, had stated that it was not enough to take nuclear weapons out of the hands of soldiers — they had to be put in the hands of those who would know how to strip their military casing and adapt them to the arts of peace. Pakistan believed that the principle of 'Atoms for Peace' had to be at the centre of any future vision for the Agency. That could only be ensured by maintaining balance between the Agency's promotional activities and its work on verification and nuclear safety and security. It was essential that the Agency, as one of the most efficient technical organizations in the United Nations system, maintain focus on its technical and promotional character. In recent years, political issues had taken up much of the attention of the Secretariat and the policy-making organs. The Agency's priorities had been tilted more towards verification activities. It was necessary to check such trends, which ran the risk of reducing the promotional dimension to a residual issue.

67. The Agency's technical cooperation programme was the best reflection of its promotional activities, having brought about tangible benefits to developing Member States. Pakistan would continue to contribute to the programme by sharing its experience, offering training placements and providing the services of experts. His country had been one of the major beneficiaries of the Agency's technical cooperation programme, which had made a valuable contribution to the development of its peaceful nuclear programme. He expressed his country's deep appreciation to the Secretariat for achieving a high rate of implementation and excellent programme delivery, and noted that an extensive programme to apply nuclear technology and radioisotopes in agriculture, hydrology, medicine and industry was under way in Pakistan.

68. As one of the earliest Member States of the Agency, Pakistan had long been a strong advocate of promoting and harnessing nuclear technology for the peace, progress and prosperity of all. It had developed the entire range of nuclear fuel cycle facilities and now had two nuclear power plants in operation, with a third under construction. Pakistan planned to establish a uranium conversion and enrichment facility, which would be placed under Agency safeguards, to cater to the needs of those nuclear power plants. Pakistan looked forward to Agency assistance in the completion of its nuclear power generation plan, including uranium exploration and prospecting, so that that clean source of power production could be exploited to the fullest possible extent to avoid a reliance on fossil fuels.

69. Since the inception of its atomic energy development programme, Pakistan had always recognized that nuclear safety and security in the national and international context was a vital objective. In the area of nuclear security, Pakistan had always strived to follow existing international standards; Agency guidance documents on the physical protection of facilities and materials, and on the safety and security of radioactive sources, had been used as a basis for inspection and enforcement. The country also participated in the Illicit Trafficking Database. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority was mandated to ensure that appropriate measures for the physical protection of nuclear installations and materials were taken by all licensees. It was also required to ensure enforcement of

regulations prohibiting unauthorized access to, possession of or use of nuclear and radioactive material and facilities containing such materials. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority had adopted a body of regulations and upgraded those that already existed to regulate nuclear installations and facilities. It was also implementing Pakistan's nuclear security action plan. While Pakistan deeply appreciated the valuable assistance that had been provided, it urged the Agency to develop ways and means to facilitate transfers of safety-related technology. It also called upon States with advanced nuclear technology to move beyond emphasizing the significance of nuclear safety and security and take steps to remove unjustified restrictions on transfers of related technology and equipment in order to promote nuclear safety and security worldwide.

70. His country's track record on Agency safeguards had been immaculate. Pakistan had in place effective controls over the export of goods, technologies and facilities related to nuclear weapons and their delivery system. Pakistan believed that the global non-proliferation regime had to be strengthened on the basis of moral and political commitment to its objectives, as well as by the application of norms on a non-selective, non-discriminatory and equitable manner.

71. Mr NIEWODNICZANSKI (Poland) said that several very important tasks had been accomplished in the preceding year. However, multilateral non-proliferation instruments still required further strengthening, and universal adherence to such instruments had to be promoted to ensure their effective implementation. His country had a safeguards agreement and additional protocol in force, and called upon other States to fulfil their obligations in that regard. States with SQPs should also conclude an exchange of letters with the Director General to reinforce the safeguards system. Poland hoped that further progress could be made and expected the 2010 NPT Review Conference to be highly successful. His country fully supported the Final Declaration of the 2007 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, and hoped that proper steps would be taken as early as possible in order to make significant progress towards bringing the CTBT into force.

72. Poland fully supported the Agency's work in the field of nuclear security to protect the world from nuclear terrorism, and recognized the importance of the amended CPPNM. His country had deposited the relevant ratification instruments for approval in 2008, and hoped that other States Parties would do likewise in a timely manner.

73. Poland had been involved in the Global Threat Reduction Initiative since its inception. All unirradiated nuclear material of Russian origin had been returned to the Russian Federation, and Poland was in the process of converting its nuclear research reactor core to LEU fuel. Poland was confident that the administrative difficulties being encountered with regard to the repatriation of spent nuclear fuel of Russian origin would be overcome shortly, so that the repatriation could be completed successfully.

74. The Agency played a leading role in elaborating and implementing legal instruments related to nuclear and radiation safety and radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel management. Legally binding conventions and internationally agreed safety standards had always been key elements of the global nuclear safety regime. As a party to all the relevant conventions in that regard, his country appreciated the actions taken by the Agency in response to the resolution passed in 2007 on that subject. Polish representatives had participated actively in the Fourth Review Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and looked forward to the Third Review Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management in May 2009. Both conventions contributed significantly to strengthening the world's safety. The Agency's role in ensuring nuclear peace on a global scale could not be overestimated.

75. A cooperation agreement between the Agency and ITER International Fusion Energy Organization would help to promote fusion energy for peaceful purposes and would benefit both parties. The Agency had traditionally been a source of new ideas and initiatives in various applications of nuclear technologies, not only in the nuclear power sector, but also in non-power fields such as medicine, human nutrition, agriculture, hydrology, and even pure science. Poland hoped that the Agency would continue to promote nuclear technologies, which were particularly important for less developed Member States. Poland strongly supported the continuation of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture, which was the only unit dealing with nuclear techniques in agriculture. It was also essential to maintain the scope of activity of the three Agency laboratories in Seibersdorf, Monaco and Vienna which, given their leading positions and scientific excellence, could not be replaced by any other centre in the world.

76. Given the recent worldwide trends in nuclear science, improved nuclear knowledge management was required to maintain the highest standards in all aspects of nuclear safety and security. The Agency had a very important role to play in ensuring the availability of qualified human resources to fill scientific and engineering posts in the field of nuclear technology. Poland fully endorsed any initiative proposing solutions to that problem, especially as it planned to develop its own nuclear power capacities in the future. In that connection, Poland commended the Agency for its IRRS missions to Member States and would like to receive a mission to conduct a review of regulatory, technical and policy issues and to identify possible areas for improvement.

77. Bearing in mind the renaissance of nuclear energy and the right of Member States to choose that option, it was important to remember that the use of nuclear fuel entailed certain security problems. As a GNEP partner, Poland was aware of the various options for formulating multilateral conditions for access to nuclear fuel-related activities.

78. The Agency's technical cooperation programme was an integral component of its statutory mandate. Poland was a good example of a country whose position with regard to the programme had changed from recipient to donor. Poland and other new EU Member States contributed significantly to technical cooperation among developing countries, and Polish institutions also participated actively in regional projects, sharing their knowledge and competence with other Member States. He expressed his country's full support for the common position defining the expectations and proposed principles to be followed to make regional cooperation more efficient and profitable to all the countries of the region, as formulated during the technical cooperation regional meeting of European Member States earlier in the year.

79. Technical cooperation activities had to receive adequate funding, and donors and recipients had to demonstrate their commitment to the programme by pledging and paying their TCF contributions and NPCs on time and in full. Poland therefore strongly supported the due account mechanism. The country was prepared to pledge and pay its calculated contribution to the TCF, although given the recent fluctuations in the dollar exchange rate, it felt that certain financial mechanisms should be established to protect such contributions.

80. While highly appreciative of the hard work of the Commission of Eminent Persons, Poland was concerned that the report indicated that the Agency could become a purely political body with limited or no competence to develop nuclear science and preserve nuclear knowledge. That would not satisfy the expectations of its Member States, and Poland believed that disarmament and verification tasks should be given the same attention as the development of nuclear energy. Moreover, Poland believed that the Agency's work should not depend so heavily on extrabudgetary funds, and that any new statutory tasks imposed on the Agency should be accompanied by an increase in the Regular Budget.

Mr Mwiria (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

81. Mr CURIA (Argentina) said that as part of the policy established by his Government in August 2006, his country had continued to develop its nuclear activities through a nuclear programme based on two main issues: mass nuclear power generation with a heavy emphasis on developing autonomous capacities in the supply of nuclear products and services, and nuclear technology applications in public health and industry. Over the preceding year, an increasing number of measures had been taken to implement the programme.

82. The Atucha II nuclear power plant was expected to be concluded by the end of 2010. Completion of the plant would not only contribute significantly to electricity generation, but would also restart a whole range of nuclear science, technology and industry related activities requiring the training of highly specialized human resources. Preliminary studies and activities were under way relating to the life extension of the Embalse nuclear power plant and construction of new nuclear power plants in the subsequent decade. A project to construct a prototype low-power, nationally designed CAREM innovative reactor was ongoing.

83. His country continued to participate actively in joint efforts to develop next generation reactors and fuel cycles that offered a higher level of operational safety, substantially reduced radioactive waste generation and eliminated proliferation risks. In particular, it supported INPRO through the provision of experts and extrabudgetary funding.

84. Measures had been taken to strengthen nuclear fuel cycle activities, and the Pilcaniyeu Technological Complex had resumed its uranium enrichment activities, continuing the evaluation of an innovative technology developed in the country to improve performance. Such activities were intended to meet demand for LEU used in the fuel elements of nuclear power reactors. Activities had been carried out successfully since 2001 at Atucha I, resulting in a significant improvement in burnup to make savings in fuel costs. The subsequent step would be to meet the demand for low enriched fuel for national research and production reactors and experimental reactors exported to other countries and, in the medium term, for CAREM reactors.

85. Uranium mining and prospecting activities had been intensified and the environmental restoration of deposits previously affected by such mining was continuing. Industrial level heavy water production continued at the Arroyito plant, in order to provide the 600 tonnes needed for the initial inventory of the Atucha II plant.

86. The conversion of the RA-6 research and training reactor to use of LEU had been completed in 2007. That had been the last reactor in the country that used HEU, and subsequently almost all HEU had been repatriated, thus reducing the national inventory to a minimum, for use in laboratories.

87. Argentina remained at the forefront of activities to develop research and radioisotope production reactors and their fuel. The Centre for Nuclear Diagnostics, which had been inaugurated in May 2007, had a high level of excellence, and the latest diagnosis equipment for oncology, cardiology and neurology. It also performed tasks related to public services, medical scientific research and the training of highly specialized human resources. The Nuclear Medicine School Foundation in Mendoza was upgrading its nuclear medicine equipment for the training of postgraduates. Argentina was expanding its manufacture of radioisotopes in laboratories to meet the needs for high-tech nuclear medicine equipment.

88. The National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) had divided its science and technology activities into four main areas: nuclear energy, nuclear technology applications, safety and the environment, and non-nuclear applications and research, which covered activities related to the technological development of nuclear power and research reactors, the fuel cycle, spent fuel and radioactive waste management and nuclear energy applications, as well as basic scientific research into nuclear activity and the development of nuclear-related technologies.

89. Argentina had intensified its training of highly specialized human resources through the creation of its third university-level institute specializing in nuclear disciplines, the Dan Beninson Institute for Nuclear Technology, with particular emphasis on nuclear reactors, fuel cycles and radiochemistry. The Sábato Institute and Balseiro Institute were offering more extensive training, and the CNEA was in the final stage of negotiations with the Agency to make the Balseiro Institute a regional collaborating centre for the training of human resources in nuclear technology and its applications.

90. Argentina was continuing to establish and improve cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as shown by its ongoing technical cooperation and assistance work on a multilateral level, through active participation in the Agency's technical cooperation programme and ARCAL, and on a bilateral level, through specific cooperation agreements with around 30 States. It would continue its cooperation with the Agency through the provision of experts and training. The Director General's visit to Argentina and cooperation activities related to PACT demonstrated the importance that the country attached to collaboration with the Agency.

91. Argentina highly valued efforts to strengthen international cooperation on nuclear, radiation and transport safety and waste management. The existence of solid, effective and sustainable infrastructures in that regard was crucial to ensure the expansion of nuclear energy. Safety and security had to be tackled together, not separately. Argentina also gave special attention to training in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, and had signed a long-term agreement with the Agency to become a regional training centre in that regard. That was a key milestone, since it was the first agreement between a Member State and the Agency in response to General Conference resolution GC(51)/RES/11. Another relevant milestone had been the successful Fourth Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety, as so much progress had been made since the previous meeting.

92. The 12th International Congress of the International Radiation Protection Association, which dealt with the establishment and application of standards for protection against the harmful effects of exposure to radiation, would be held in Buenos Aires in October 2008. Over 1500 communications had been received from 82 countries in 5 continents, thus making the mission to strengthen radiation protection throughout the world a reality. That would have been impossible without the extraordinary support of the Secretariat, which had ensured the broad participation of developing countries.

93. Argentina was pleased to note that the Annual Report referred to activities carried out by the Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies under an extrabudgetary programme. Chile had recently joined the Forum, bringing the number of members to seven. The Report had also noted important progress in the fields of radiation protection of patients, the application of PSA in radiotherapy, and the work of the Ibero-American Radiation Safety Network.

94. International safeguards were especially important for facilitating nuclear expansion and allowing the Agency to carry out its statutory function to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. The Agency implemented an effective verification system to assure the international community of the peaceful purposes of nuclear programmes. Such guarantees had to be achieved through cooperation and dialogue between the Agency and Member States, guided by the principles of non-discrimination, quality, technical excellence and objectivity of criteria and expert opinion, without which their credibility would be affected. Argentina highlighted the importance of the Common System of Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials and the cooperation between ABACC and the Agency. Such cooperation should be extended and intensified to ensure an effective and more efficient application of safeguards under the Quadripartite Agreement, particularly in view of the contribution that ABACC and the bilateral system made to non-proliferation efforts.

95. As regards nuclear material accounting and control, the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, an independent control body, was continuing its work, giving priority to tasks related to the licensing of Atucha II and nuclear safety in extending the life of the Embalse and Atucha I nuclear power plants.

96. There had been a new push towards nuclear energy in the region and a decision had been taken by the Presidents of Argentina and Brazil in February 2008 to intensify cooperation, with the creation of the Binational Nuclear Energy Commission and the subsequent approval of numerous ambitious joint projects related to nuclear reactors and waste, the fuel cycle and nuclear applications, including relevant regulatory aspects.

97. Argentina believed that nuclear energy had an important role to play in the future; its multiple applications to alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life of millions would give the Agency a unique opportunity to carry out its statutory mission. The Agency had to strengthen its work in all countries that were considering, or had taken decisions, to develop nuclear power.

98. Argentina continued to support the principles for the establishment of the Agency, and strongly believed in the right of countries to develop the peaceful uses of nuclear energy at any level, in compliance with their international obligations. His country looked forward to participating actively in the debate on the Agency's activities and future direction.

99. Mr ZNIBER (Morocco) said that the global demand for energy was growing apace and rising energy prices on international markets were undermining security and stability and placing a heavy burden on developing countries. The phenomenon of climate change also made it necessary to diversify energy sources. If countries chose under those circumstances to exploit the enormous potential of nuclear energy, they would have to take action to meet the challenges associated with it. Hence the growing importance of the Agency's role as it entered its sixth decade.

100. At the same time, the world was witnessing the growth of organized terrorist networks with sufficient funds and know-how to use nuclear weapons to achieve their aims. Every effort should be made through the Agency to frustrate their plans. As a party to the NPT, Morocco was concerned about the failure to make any progress towards universalizing the non-proliferation regime, a fact that was undermining its credibility. He hoped that all parties to the Treaty would support the efforts of the Arab States to promote, through the Agency, the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. It was a goal that could not be achieved unless all States in the region, including Israel, acceded to the NPT and placed their nuclear facilities and activities under Agency safeguards. The time had come for the international community to pay serious attention to a situation that posed a threat to peace and stability in the Middle East. The General Conference had an important role to play in that regard. Morocco also placed great hopes on the outcome of the NPT review conference to be held in 2010.

101. Morocco gave high priority to the development of its nuclear science and technology sector. It had been one of the first developing countries to use peaceful applications of nuclear energy to promote sustainable development. With the Agency's assistance, it had extended its technical cooperation programme to cover a wide range of vital activities. During the current year it was pursuing 15 projects in the areas of health, food, environmental protection, water resources and radioactive safety. It was also participating in a number of regional projects under the AFRA Agreement. He urged the Agency to continue providing AFRA with financial and logistical support. He emphasized the importance of the results achieved at the AFRA ministerial meeting held in Aswan, Egypt, which had agreed on far-reaching reforms aimed at promoting cooperation among African countries in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. He called on international institutions and donor countries to provide financial support for AFRA through the fund to be established for that purpose.

102. Morocco had begun operating its first research reactor in 2007. He thanked the Agency for its support for the project from the outset.

103. In keeping with a basic principle of its foreign policy, Morocco strongly supported South-South technological cooperation in a wide range of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It had hosted high-level training courses organized by the Agency in radiation prevention and the safety of radioactive sources. In the context of its preparations for the sixth training course, Morocco welcomed the valuable findings of the training assessment mission that had visited the country in June 2007. It hoped to play an increasingly important role in regional training in radioactive safety by placing its human resources and expertise at the service of African researchers and experts.

104. Morocco attached great importance to the fight against cancer. It was building the necessary infrastructure and promoting awareness through public information campaigns. Princess Lalla Salma, the wife of King Mohammed VI, oversaw the work of the King Mohammed V Anti-Cancer Association. Morocco commended the Agency's achievements under the PACT programme and hoped to play an effective regional role in that field in cooperation with the Agency.

105. Morocco welcomed the increase in the Agency's membership, which would strengthen cooperation and exchanges of expertise among Member States in the Agency's fields of competence.

106. Mr ZOGRAFOS (Greece) said that his country fully supported the Agency's efforts to promote nuclear safety and security. Although individual Member States bore ultimate responsibility for the safe operation of their nuclear facilities, the Agency's independent professional opinion set the norms of a global safety culture. Greece had participated in the Fourth Review Meeting of the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and also intended to participate actively in the Review Meeting of the Joint Convention.

107. Experts from the Greek Atomic Energy Commission participated actively in Agency activities. Greece followed the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources, which it had implemented together with the corresponding EU directive. His country continued to use installed border equipment and to share the experience gained with other countries by offering training and organizing seminars on relevant issues. Greece was extending its cooperation with the Agency on nuclear security by providing technical support services to the region with regard to sustainability and maintenance of border radiation detection equipment.

108. Greece supported every effort made to establish an effective global security regime and had provided both financial and in-kind contributions in that connection. It welcomed the Director General's report on the measures taken against nuclear terrorism and on the Agency's activities, particularly the Nuclear Security Plan for 2006–2009. Greece looked forward to the Agency's continuing efforts in relation to the forthcoming Nuclear Security Plan for 2010–2013.

109. The Greek Atomic Energy Commission was a recognized Agency regional training centre in radiation protection and nuclear security, having hosted an upgraded postgraduate course. In addition, since 2007, nearly 50 participants from 23 countries had attended seminars concerning the assessment of occupational exposure owing to radionuclide intake and remote monitoring and sustainability of border radiation detection equipment.

110. Greece had been one of the first members of the Agency's illicit trafficking information system, established in 1995. His country participated in the activities of the Proliferation Security Initiative and was a member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. It had also signed the amendment to the CPPNM and had ratified the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

111. The continuing success of international safeguards relied on political support at international and regional levels, and on the political and technical cooperation of inspected States. Greece supported every effort to continue to strengthen the safeguards system as technology developed so that the system could be made as credible as possible. Broader implementation of additional protocols, which enhanced the safeguards system and improved its efficiency, was the most effective measure in response to security and proliferation threats.

112. Greece welcomed the Director General's efforts concerning the Iranian nuclear programme, and reaffirmed its support for a negotiated long-term solution to the issue. However, he noted with grave concern that the Agency's most recent report indicated that no substantive progress had been made on the alleged studies and other associated remaining key issues. Iran's compliance with resolutions of the Security Council and Board requirements was essential, and Greece urged Iran to cooperate fully with the Agency, including making full disclosure of any work related to nuclear weapons and facilitating Agency verification. Greece hoped that Iran would demonstrate good faith, full transparency and good cooperation, paving the way for the suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and the adoption of an additional protocol.

113. Libya's decision to adopt a policy of providing every access to safeguards inspectors, even beyond that required under its safeguards agreement and additional protocol had been universally welcomed. He hoped that it was an example that could be followed by others.

114. The nuclear community had always faced obstacles that did not exist in any other trading activity. Credibility and assurance of supply were vital to trade negotiations. Early proposals on assurance of supply and the role of the Agency had been lost amid lengthy discussions and a lack of political will. The clear need for reconsideration and the relentless efforts of the Director General had brought closer the idea of the establishment of an assurance of supply mechanism to strengthen non-proliferation and meet growing demands. The basis of such a mechanism in the short term would be a fuel bank of last resort under Agency auspices, operating in a non-political and non-discriminatory way, in accordance with non-proliferation and other criteria. Such a bank would not be used in a non-compliance case, nor to solve commercial issues. Greece supported such a plan fully and, as an EU Member State, was ready to contribute towards its early implementation.

115. Greece contributed 100% of its voluntary obligations – approximately US$500 000 per year – to the TCF. In recognition of the fact that there were now other countries with priority needs to benefit from the technical cooperation, Greece had made no claims for national programmes for the next cycle. On the other hand, its participation in regional programmes was increasing, since the impact of such programmes was considered valuable for collaboration and harmonization. Greece was now returning the Agency's investment in it, by hosting ever more scientists from around the world free of charge. Technical cooperation programmes should be designed well in advance and implemented in the context of a network of partnerships with participant States. The Director General's 'one house' approach was an important element in the planning and execution of technical cooperation. The use of isotopes was very important in the fields of agriculture, industry and health, particularly in the developing world, where millions of people were suffering from cancer. He highlighted the relevance of the PACT programme in that regard.

116. Thanks to years of investment, the Greek Atomic Energy Commission had grown as a unique authority within the Government's organizations. The Commission represented Greece in 26 EU committees, 12 OECD/NEA committees and 21 Agency committees. It also participated in 11 regional programmes, organized training seminars for various institutions and prepared responses to questions raised in Parliament related to nuclear matters.

117. Greece was contributing in full its share of the Regular Budget. In recognition of the Agency's need for increased efficiency and effectiveness in programme delivery — to be achieved through AIPS — his country had made part of its share of the 2006 budget surplus available to the Agency.

118. He praised the work of the Commission of Eminent Persons in making an assessment of the challenges the Agency would have to face up to the year 2020 and beyond. The Commission's report addressed many challenges and opportunities and set out very useful recommendations. His country congratulated the members of the Commission and of the Secretariat for their vision as to the Agency's future role in the difficult times ahead.

119. Mr MONAWAR (Afghanistan) said that the preceding year had been one of great hopes and grave fears. The world had witnessed the hope-inspiring glory of human accomplishment at the Olympic Games in Beijing, but also the loss of life from natural disasters; there was a growing global understanding of climate change issues, but millions of lives were threatened every day by food shortages; the world had also seen with disbelief the brutal slaughter of innocent people at the hands of terrorists in Afghanistan, Algeria, India, Lebanon, Pakistan and Syria. Terrorism could not be ended until the elaborate institutional support enjoyed by perpetrators in the Middle East was dismantled, and their secure sanctuaries eliminated. Dedicated regional and international cooperation could make that possible.

120. His country supported the Agency as the world's most effective enforcer of nuclear safeguards. Afghanistan was a country that faced geographical challenges as well as added internal dangers owing to the control of weapons by terrorists, and thorough monitoring and regulation of nuclear and radioactive material was therefore critical to its security.

121. A new generation of nuclear power reactors could solve the problem of global energy shortages and greenhouse gas emissions, but the security of medium and small reactors would have to be made compatible with small grids. The Agency had to continue to take the lead in instituting protective measures so that such technologies could be used safely. The Agency had an opportunity to push forward with its innovation work. The application of nuclear energy in areas including medicine, agriculture and industry could be instrumental in facilitating rapid progress in international development. Nuclear power could not be seriously considered as a potential sustainable energy source unless active measures were taken to ensure its safety and security. However, with the Agency's capabilities in that regard, a cleaner, safer and more efficient future might be anticipated.

122. Safe, peaceful nuclear technologies needed to be developed in Afghanistan. His country was in a period of recovery, at a pivotal time in the nation's history. The development of sustainable industries was essential, particularly in the areas of agriculture, food security, health and water management, where peaceful nuclear technologies held great potential.

123. Industrial applications of nuclear technology could be used in gas exploration, road construction and imaging technologies to solve medical problems. Nuclear technologies could improve the safety and quality of food and improve control of food production. Ionizing radiation could be used to destroy various contaminants that caused illness or rendered food shipments inedible. Such techniques could also help to regulate food quantity and quality, and to prevent uncertainty in agricultural production that could lead to food crises.

124. If Afghanistan could develop an adequate nuclear power infrastructure, it would not have to be dependent on oil in the future, which was particularly important to its growth as an autonomous, sovereign nation. Additionally, the environmental solution presented by nuclear power was beneficial to the world. Given the environmental impact of fossil fuels, it was essential to find alternatives.

125. Progress in nuclear technology and research gave Afghanistan a unique opportunity for growth and development. With the oversight of the Agency, it could use peaceful nuclear technologies to develop its own industries, tackle food crises and prevent climate change, thus assisting the country's development as a functioning, stable nation. Initiatives like the technical cooperation programme could open the door for nations such as his own to make significant developmental advances. However, it was important to remember that any breakthroughs should be for the advancement and improvement of society and not for destructive ends.

126. Afghanistan strongly supported the inalienable right of all Member States to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards regime. Mutual trust between nuclear and non-nuclear States had to be strengthened in order to achieve the goal of a global non-proliferation regime. Afghanistan took a strong, unwavering stand against nuclear proliferation for military purposes, and wholeheartedly supported the universalization of the NPT and additional protocol to ensure that parties adhere to the highest standards of practice. Member States' actions had to be transparent to strengthen the trust required for achieving international cooperation and safety goals. Afghanistan called upon Member States that had not done so to join, ratify and implement the NPT, and conclude safeguards agreements with the Agency. It was regrettable that the CTBT was still waiting for ratification by the States listed in Annex 2 before it could enter into force.

127. Afghanistan was extremely concerned about the military testing of WMDs throughout the world, especially in its own region. If and when an incident of nuclear terrorism took place, the responsibility would have to be borne by those States possessing nuclear weapons and technology.

128. The A.Q. Khan network was a clear violation of international norms, including the NPT. The confession made clearly indicated the willingness of the Pakistani Government to participate in such acts. The Agency needed to discuss the matter with serious consideration and hold accountable those regimes that supported or advocated such dangerous and irresponsible acts.

129. In view of its serious concerns about regional proliferation, especially in South Asia, Afghanistan firmly supported the disarmament of the Korean Peninsula and appreciated China's leadership in the six-party talks. His country urged all Member States to place their nuclear installations and materials under the Agency's safeguards regime.

130. The creation of NWFZs was a logical way to achieve collective safety. Governments and the military controlled WMDs, yet innocent civilians would be the ones to suffer from rogue proliferation. Afghanistan welcomed the establishment of NWFZs in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the South Pacific. It firmly supported and encouraged the creation of a NWFZ in the Middle East.

131. Diplomacy was the only way to resolve security concerns worldwide, and Afghanistan required the Agency's assistance while it tried to move forwards. The world recognized that it should not turn its back on Afghanistan and that the country needed to succeed in its efforts to stabilize and modernize. He hoped that joint efforts could be made to ensure his country's stability, advancement and success.

132. Mr QUIÑONES (Dominican Republic) said that more than half a century after the advent of the nuclear era, nuclear technologies — which had originally primarily been directed towards military purposes — were providing solutions to problems associated with human development and welfare, and were being used in practically all spheres of human activity. His country attached particular importance to the Agency's work on promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and recognized its contribution in meeting the challenges facing the international community. It welcomed the report of the Commission of Eminent Persons on the Agency's future function, challenges and opportunities, which would be a basis for consideration by Member States.

133. The undertaking to achieve the MDGs was perhaps one of the most significant commitments the international community had ever made. As such it put great responsibility on States and required a great deal of political will, the planning of actions to meet the targets set, a reordering of budgetary priorities and a major flow of resources to assist and support development. Thanks to the work of the Agency to strengthen nuclear science and technology applications and make them available to developing countries through its technical cooperation programme, atomic energy was making a valuable contribution towards the achievement of the MDGs, particularly in priority areas of human development such as health, food, agriculture, the environment and energy supply.

134. In the current context of rising prices for basic food products, the issue of ensuring food security was one that deserved the fullest attention of the international community. The Dominican Republic joined others in calling for concrete and forceful measures to resolve the issue of food security, which had exacerbated poverty in many countries. In his country's region, the devastating effects of atmospheric phenomena on agriculture had made the situation even worse. The Dominican Republic recognized the contributions that nuclear technology had made to food security; isotopic techniques played an important role in increasing food production, controlling pests using the SIT, and improving the management of soil and of water resources. His country was pleased that the Agency had redoubled its efforts to increase its support for agricultural development in the light of the current food crisis, and was confident that the Agency would continue to strengthen those efforts through the Joint Division, which had provided so much assistance to developing countries.

135. The contribution of nuclear medicine in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases such as cancer was essential for preserving human life. The Agency's support in the adoption of national cancer control plans through the framework of PACT was particularly welcome. He hoped that PACT could contribute to the efforts to combat cancer in the whole Caribbean region.

136. Ensuring energy security, while facing issues such as global warming, increasing fossil fuel prices and growing energy demand, was a challenge for all Member States, but one that was most serious for developing countries that also had to address the food crisis. The renewed interest in nuclear power reflected countries' need to diversify their energy mix, reduce their dependence on oil and decrease emissions of pollutants into the atmosphere. The Agency's assistance was indispensable in providing developing countries with access to the training and other elements needed to consider the nuclear power option. The Dominican Republic recognized and welcomed the Agency's efforts to increase its activities in the energy sector, as they were of great importance to the study of all power generation options. The Dominican Republic had drawn up an integrated plan for promoting investment in alternative energy sources through the adoption of a legal framework of financial incentives. Numerous wind, solar, biodiesel, ethanol, and hydroelectric energy projects were currently being studied or implemented. In addition, in order to find viable solutions of low environmental impact to energy problems at the national, regional and international level, the country had hosted the first International Energy Week in January 2008, bringing together representatives of governments, international organizations, consultants and private companies to discuss the world's energy situation. He thanked the Agency for its participation in the event.

137. The Agency's technical cooperation programme was crucial for transferring nuclear knowledge and techniques to developing countries. Thanks to Agency support, personnel had received training in nuclear techniques in health, agriculture, water resources, the environment and radiation protection. The Agency had also played a vital role in setting up cancer diagnosis and treatment facilities, establishing dosimetry laboratories and adopting radiation protection regulations. For the Dominican Republic, the priority was to promote the development of nuclear science in general and to participate in international cooperation on the transfer of nuclear technologies. The country was working to strengthen its technical cooperation with the Agency in order to make further use of nuclear energy for sustainable development. In the next technical cooperation cycle, Agency assistance would contribute

towards establishing a nuclear research and applications centre, improving the radiotherapy service at the new national cancer hospital, assessing sedimentation in reservoirs and dams, studying the ecological requirements of protected areas and developing human resources in general. In addition, the Dominican Republic intended to complete the review of its CPF shortly, which would focus on areas where nuclear technology could contribute to the Government's development priorities.

138. With regard to regional cooperation, the Dominican Republic had ratified the ARCAL Agreement in July 2008 and had also signed an inter-institutional agreement with Cuba's Agency for Nuclear Energy and Advanced Technologies, with the aim of promoting cooperation in the training of human resources in the peaceful use of atomic energy. An expert from Argentina had also visited the Dominican Republic to take the first steps for collaboration between the two countries on training.

139. Preventing the use of nuclear materials in the construction of weapons of mass destruction, or in terrorist acts, in addition to protecting the public and the environment from the dangers posed by radiation, was fundamental. The Agency's work on nuclear safety and security was key in minimizing risks associated with the use of atomic energy. In that context, the Dominican Republic would hold a regional seminar in October 2008 on nuclear safety and security and safeguards, which was to be attended by senior representatives of ministries of foreign affairs and the environment, regulatory authorities, police forces, intelligence services, customs services and other authorities from the 22 countries of the Caribbean region.

140. The Dominican Republic welcomed the measures taken by the Agency to promote safe transport of nuclear materials, since the country lay on a maritime transit route for such shipments and was greatly concerned that they should be carried out in the safest manner possible. It supported the establishment of a regime concerning civil liability for nuclear damage, welcomed the process of dialogue between coastal and shipping States, and reiterated the importance of coastal States being provided with full information in relation to such shipments.

141. The Dominican Republic had made efforts to improve its radiation safety and protection infrastructure, both in institutional and regulatory terms, so that the country could benefit from nuclear applications in the safest and most effective way possible, and could contribute to the international community's efforts to ensure safety and security by addressing the threats of nuclear terrorism and illicit trafficking of nuclear materials. His country appreciated the support received from the Agency in those areas, particularly in the management of radioactive sources, the final disposal of disused sources, response to radiation incidents and emergencies, and control of illicit trafficking. Agency training courses and workshops on such subjects, with broad participation from Latin American and Caribbean countries, had enabled the development of a wide range of important capacities.

142. His country recognized the importance of the Agency's strengthened safeguards and verification system. Its own safeguards agreement with the Agency had been in force since 1973, and it had already signed an additional protocol. It had also agreed to modifications to its SQP in 2005. The Dominican Republic had hosted a regional seminar on application of the strengthened safeguards system in July 2008, with the aim of raising awareness of the measures the system in the region and assisting States that held a limited quantity of nuclear materials in applying those measures.

143. Mr ALBUSAIDI (Oman) thanked Member States for approving Oman's application for membership of the Agency. He assured them of his country's strong support for the Agency's role in promoting international peace and security and in enabling States to benefit from peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Oman looked forward to cooperating with the Agency and its Member States in areas such as electricity generation and water desalination, and hoped to benefit from applications of nuclear energy in medicine, health, the environment, water resources management and agriculture.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.