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Chair: Mr STALDER (Switzerland)

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¹ GC(61)/25.

Abbreviations used in this record:

G-77	Group of Seventy-Seven
USA	United States of America

17. Strengthening of the Agency's technical cooperation activities (continued)

(GC(61)/INF/7 and Supplement; GC(61)/COM.5/L.11/Rev.1)

1. The representative of BRAZIL, introducing a revised version of the draft resolution on technical cooperation, contained in document GC(61)/COM.5/L.11/Rev.1, said that, in addition to the changes agreed in the informal consultations, a technical update had been made to section A.3, preambular paragraph (c): in consultation with the Secretariat, "2017–2018" had been altered to "2018–2019". Agreement had been reached on all items of contention except section A.1, preambular paragraph (e). The various options, some of which were mutually exclusive, were shown in paragraphs (e), (e) bis and (e) ter of the revised draft, with some text in square brackets. He thanked those involved in the informal consultations for their flexibility and understanding and for maintaining a positive atmosphere, despite the complexity of the discussions.

2. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, referring to section A.1, paragraph (e), proposed that the words "including all relevant documents, and" and paragraphs (e) bis and ter should all be deleted, as none of the options were acceptable to all delegations.

3. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that, although he was pleased to see that progress had been made, he could not understand why the various options were all unacceptable. An explicit reference to the Agency's Medium Term Strategy should be kept, as reference to it had been made in the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11, using almost identical wording. In addition, the Board of Governors had discussed and, in November 2016, taken note of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023. Responding to questions raised regarding the status of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, he said that it had been prepared through a joint consultation process in which Member States and the Secretariat had participated, as stated in the Strategy itself. Given that it had been published, it could not be considered merely an internal document; paragraph (e) bis was therefore not an acceptable option.

4. During preparatory discussions, the delegation of the Russian Federation had objected to the wording of paragraph (e) of the version of the draft resolution contained in document GC(61)/COM.5/L.11, on the grounds that the Medium Term Strategy was not a directive from either the General Conference or the Board and should not be referred to as such. The USA had agreed on that point. Paragraph (e) ter had been proposed so as to refer to the Medium Term Strategy in a separate paragraph, using the operative verb "noting", which was more neutral than "recalling" and did not imply official recognition. Explicit reference to the dates of the Medium Term Strategy had not been included in paragraph (e) ter, in an effort to achieve consensus; as that had not been successful, he was in favour of inserting them.

5. The representative of SWEDEN agreed that an explicit reference to the Medium Term Strategy should be retained. His country supported the Medium Term Strategy as a strategic document that identified priorities within the Agency's major programmes and provided a general framework for the preparation of the programme and budget. The Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 had been prepared in consultation with Member States and the Secretariat and had been taken note of by the Board.

6. The representative of the NETHERLANDS expressed support for the statements made by the representatives of the USA and Sweden. He welcomed the willingness to compromise shown by numerous delegations and encouraged further flexibility in all quarters.

7. The representative of the UNITED KINGDOM expressed appreciation to the Chair for allowing the informal discussions to continue and to the representative of Brazil for his able leadership. Echoing the remarks made by the representatives of the USA, Sweden and the Netherlands, she suggested that using the words “taking note of” in reference to the Medium Term Strategy would be a reasonable compromise.
8. The representative of FRANCE expressed disappointment that the Committee had reached an impasse on a matter on which consensus had been achieved in the past. Compared with the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11, the wording used in the earlier version of the draft resolution contained in document GC(61)/COM.5/L.11 had incorporated only a technical update: the dates of the Medium Term Strategy had been altered from 2012–2017 to 2018–2023. In his view, the most likely basis for consensus on the revised text would be paragraph (e) ter, with the insertion of the dates 2018–2023, as suggested by the representative of the USA.
9. The representative of LATVIA said that the wording of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 made it clear that the Strategy served to give strategic direction to the work of the Secretariat, in line with the Statute, and could be updated by the Board. Referring to it specifically in the draft resolution was merely a technical update. As the Board had already taken note of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, there was no reason why the General Conference should not do likewise.
10. The representative of ITALY expressed a preference for including a mention of the Medium Term Strategy along the lines suggested by the representative of the USA.
11. The representative of GUATEMALA said that she could accept the suggestion made by the representative of the Russian Federation.
12. The representative of CANADA, echoing the appreciation expressed for the constructive atmosphere in which the informal consultations had been conducted, said that the Medium Term Strategy set out important strategic directions of particular relevance to technical cooperation and should be referred to explicitly in the draft resolution.
13. The representative of CUBA said that the wording “including all relevant documents” in paragraph (e) should be sufficiently broad in scope to accommodate the views and concerns of all delegations.
14. The representative of EGYPT, commending the progress made in the informal consultations and welcoming the flexibility shown, said that paragraph (e) bis, the wording of which had been suggested by the representative of Pakistan during the informal consultations, might satisfy both points of view on whether to include a reference to the Medium Term Strategy.
15. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that he could accept the wording “including all relevant documents” in paragraph (e), in which case paragraphs (e) bis and ter would be superfluous.
16. The representative of PAKISTAN, welcoming the progress made, recalled that a similar problem had arisen during the 60th regular session of the General Conference, as the Medium Term Strategy was not a directive produced by the Agency’s policy-making organs, but rather a document of which the Board could take note. He therefore proposed replacing the words “including all relevant documents, and” in paragraph (e) with “and other relevant documents which are taken note of by the Board of Governors” and deleting paragraphs (e) bis and ter.
17. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that he could not accept that proposal. Given that the Board had already taken note of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, there was no reason why explicit reference should not be made to it in the draft resolution, particularly as

such a reference was included in section A.1, on non-power nuclear applications, of resolution GC(61)/RES/11, which had already been adopted. Furthermore, the wording proposed for the draft resolution under discussion was less specific than that of resolution GC(61)/RES/11.

18. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that he could not agree to include an explicit reference to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 in the draft resolution. In due course, his delegation would also seek to have that reference removed from future resolutions on non-power nuclear applications.

19. The representative of BRAZIL, speaking in his capacity as coordinator of the informal consultations, said that, given the progress made, it was regrettable that the Committee had reached a stumbling block on paragraph (e). Although it was an important paragraph, it was not a central element of the draft resolution, which dealt with an issue of the utmost importance to the G-77 and China. As referring to the dates of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 appeared to be problematic for certain delegations, he suggested that the wording used in the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11 might be acceptable instead, as the reference to the Medium Term Strategy 2012–2017 could be interpreted as applying to the current year. Alternatively, the Medium Term Strategy could be referred to in a separate paragraph.

20. The representative of FRANCE, welcoming efforts to find a compromise, said that he could not understand the objection to referring to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 in the draft resolution, as it represented a purely technical update to the previous year's text. Furthermore, by adopting resolution GC(61)/RES/11, the General Conference had already recognized the validity of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023. It would be inconsistent to refer in one resolution to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 and in another to the Medium Term Strategy 2012–2017.

21. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that, while he would prefer the wording “Noting the Agency's Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023”, as in paragraph (e) ter, he was willing to use the wording of the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11, on the proviso that a technical update was made to change the dates from 2012–2017 to 2018–2023 or that the dates were deleted altogether.

22. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that, for many years, analogous paragraphs in previous resolutions on strengthening the Agency's technical cooperation activities had contained a mistake, in that they had referred inappropriately to the Medium Term Strategy. It was unclear why that mistake had repeatedly been made, but his delegation was keen to ensure that it was not perpetuated.

23. The Medium Term Strategy 2012–2017 and the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 were completely different documents. The latter had many shortcomings, first and foremost among which was that it unjustly reduced the scope of nuclear power in the Agency's programme activities. He could not agree to include a reference to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 in the draft resolution, as it was a purely internal document which had been submitted to the Board as a report and of which the Board had simply taken note.

24. The Medium Term Strategy as a concept had originated from arduous debates in the 1990s on the Agency's technical cooperation programme, as a result of which Member States had chosen to curtail the activities of the Secretariat and, in an effort to promote greater transparency, to request it to submit a list of technical cooperation projects for consideration by the Board. The Medium Term Strategy served only to guide the Secretariat in the management of its lower level staff; it was not designed to act as guidance for Member States.

25. He would be willing to use the wording of the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11, provided that the dates were not altered, as that would be a substantive — rather than technical — change that would have implications for the status of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023. He recalled that, in accepted United Nations parlance, “noting” implied neither approval nor disapproval.

26. The representative of SWEDEN, endorsing the importance of technical cooperation, said that the Medium Term Strategy was not a legally binding document and could be updated if Member States chose to do so. In that context, it was to be hoped that consensus could be reached on a purely technical update to the text.

27. The representative of PAKISTAN said that some members had pointed out that the Medium Term Strategy was not a purely internal document, given that Member States had taken part in the consultation process, the Board had taken note of the Strategy and it had been published. Deleting the words “including all relevant documents, and” from paragraph (e), altering paragraph (e) bis to read “Also recalling the Agency’s documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors,” and deleting paragraph (e) ter might allay their concern by removing the word “internal”.

28. The representative of SPAIN, thanking the representative of Brazil for his work as coordinator of the informal consultations and welcoming the flexibility displayed, expressed surprise that discussions on such an important draft resolution had become bogged down over a reference to a document that had already been taken note of by the Board. Member States had been involved in the preparation of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 through a lengthy consultation process. In the interests of consensus, he had been prepared to accept the reference to the Medium Term Strategy being separated out from the reference to other documents in paragraph (e). In view of the concerns voiced by the representative of the Russian Federation, he suggested that the separate reference should be limited specifically to section D of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, thereby noting only that part of the Strategy which covered technical cooperation. Accordingly, he proposed the following wording for paragraph (e) ter: “Noting section D of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023”.

29. The representative of CUBA said that she could agree to the reference to “all relevant documents” or to the most recent proposal by the representative of Pakistan.

30. The representative of MOROCCO, underscoring the importance of the draft resolution for the G-77 and China, in particular, called for flexibility so that consensus could be reached as soon as possible. The latest proposal made by the representative of Pakistan might offer a way forward.

31. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that he could not support that proposal. The Medium Term Strategy must be referred to explicitly in the draft resolution, although specific dates could be omitted if a certain ambiguity would facilitate consensus.

32. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, noting that consensus had not been reached despite numerous proposals, said that the only acceptable possibilities were to use the wording of the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11 or to proceed along the lines suggested by the representative of Pakistan.

33. The representative of SWEDEN said that the suggestion made by the representative of Spain merited further consideration.

34. The representative of FRANCE, expressing support for that remark, suggested that the proposal made by the representative of Spain might meet with approval if the dates of the Medium Term Strategy were not mentioned.

35. The representative of the UNITED KINGDOM expressed the view that the proposal made by the representative of Spain, as amended by the representative of France, should address the concerns of the representative of the Russian Federation.
36. The representative of PAKISTAN proposed amending his suggested wording for paragraph (e) bis to read: “Also recalling the Agency’s strategy documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.
37. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that such a proposal might be acceptable if it referred to “medium term strategy documents”.
38. The representative of SWEDEN said that a direct reference to the Medium Term Strategy should be retained. He sought the views of others on the proposal made by the representative of Spain and amended by the representative of France, which, while not ideal, represented an acceptable compromise.
39. The representative of BELGIUM said that he supported that proposal, which was eminently reasonable, and urged others to do the same.
40. The representative of CANADA suggested that amending the proposal of the representative of Pakistan along the lines suggested by the representative of the USA, to read “Also recalling the Agency’s medium term strategy documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”, might address the concerns of the representative of the Russian Federation.
41. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested the following alternative wording, which would avoid any mention of the words “medium term”: “Also recalling the Agency’s strategy and planning documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.
42. The representatives of GERMANY and the NETHERLANDS said that they supported the proposal made by the representative of Spain, as amended by the representative of France.
43. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA suggested amending that proposal to read: “Noting section D of the Medium Term Strategy, in particular with reference to technical cooperation”.
44. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION reiterated his position: any explicit reference to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 was unacceptable. The most promising basis for consensus seemed to be the wording “Also recalling the Agency’s strategy documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”, proposed by the representative of Pakistan.
45. The representative of GERMANY suggested that, instead of referring to the Medium Term Strategy by name, its document symbol could be used.
46. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION pointed out that, as the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 was an internal Secretariat document, its symbol would have ceased to be valid once the document had been taken note of by the Board. In any case, referring to it by symbol rather than by name would not address the underlying issue.
47. The representative of SINGAPORE suggested rewording the proposal made by the representative of Pakistan to read: “Recalling the Agency’s planning and strategy documents for the medium term, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.
48. The representative of BRAZIL suggested that the wording “Noting the Agency’s relevant medium term strategy” might be vague enough to accommodate the opposing views expressed.

49. The representative of FRANCE said that, in a spirit of compromise, the proposals made by the representatives of Singapore and Brazil could be explored further.

50. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that it might be possible to reach agreement on the basis of the proposal made by the representative of Singapore. In order to avoid any mention of the medium term, he suggested amending it along the following lines: “Also recalling the Agency’s planning and strategy documents for the coming years, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.

51. The representative of CANADA suggested that the text could specify the number of years covered by the documents in question.

52. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA asked which documents would be covered by the latest proposal.

53. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION replied that he envisaged it covering any documents that the Board might consider it necessary to note.

54. The representative of BRAZIL, speaking in his national capacity, said that, as it was unclear to which documents the proposed text referred, a slightly different version would be preferable. He suggested: “Also noting the Agency’s relevant planning and strategic documents for the coming years, which are taken note of by the Board”.

55. The representative of CANADA suggested a further possibility, with a view to making the proposed text less ambiguous: “Also noting the Agency’s six-year strategy documents, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.

56. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION suggested the words “for upcoming budget cycles” in place of “for the coming years”.

57. The representative of FRANCE expressed a preference for the wording “for the coming years” over the other options suggested, as it was unnecessary to specify that the documents in question covered a six-year period.

58. The CHAIR asked whether the Committee could agree to the following wording: “Also noting the Agency’s relevant planning and strategic documents for the coming years, which are taken note of by the Board of Governors”.

59. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that the words “strategy documents” would be more acceptable than “strategic documents” and asked whether the documents referred to included the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023.

60. The representative of PAKISTAN suggested including the words “regarding providing effective technical cooperation” after “strategy documents”, thereby making a direct reference to the title of section D of the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 without mentioning the Strategy itself.

61. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA said that such an approach would only be acceptable if the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023 were referred to explicitly, either by symbol or name.

62. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION pointed out that the various proposals made along those lines had failed to gain support.

63. The representative of PAKISTAN proposed the following wording, which would refer to a single but unspecified document: “Taking note of the Agency’s planning and strategy document

relating to providing effective technical cooperation, which is taken note of by the Board of Governors”.

64. The representative of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, while recognizing that the latest proposal made by the representative of Pakistan clearly referred to one specific document, nevertheless called for the inclusion of that document’s symbol or name. If the reference to multiple documents were retained, it would be necessary to establish which documents were considered relevant and to add the words “including the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023”.

65. The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION said that the initial proposal made by the representative of Pakistan had been complicated by suggestion upon suggestion until the debate had been brought full circle. As he was still unable to accept any explicit reference to the Medium Term Strategy 2018–2023, it would be easier to revert to the wording of the analogous paragraph of resolution GC(60)/RES/11.

66. The representative of AFGHANISTAN suggested amending the latest proposal from the representative of Pakistan to read: “Also noting the Agency’s relevant planning and strategy documents for the coming years, which have been taken note of by the Board of Governors and have been prepared through a joint consultation process among Member States and the Secretariat”.

67. The CHAIR invited interested delegations to hold informal consultations with a view to reaching agreement on paragraphs (e), (e) bis and (e) ter.

The meeting was suspended at 8 p.m. and resumed at 9 p.m.

68. The CHAIR reported that the informal consultations had resulted in a compromise proposal to delete the words “including all relevant documents, and” from paragraph (e), delete paragraph (e) ter, and amend paragraph (e) bis to read: “Recalling the Agency’s relevant strategy for the coming years relating, inter alia, to providing effective technical cooperation, which was taken note of by the Board of Governors”. He took it that the Committee agreed to that proposal.

69. It was so agreed.

70. The representative of MOROCCO drew attention to an editorial error in the preamble of section A.1 of the draft resolution, which should be corrected.

71. There being no further comments on the text, the CHAIR took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(61)/COM.5/L.11/Rev.1, as amended.

72. It was so decided.

73. The CHAIR, thanking those who had coordinated work on the various draft resolutions and welcoming the cooperative spirit and flexibility shown, said that he would report orally to the General Conference on the outcome of the Committee’s deliberations.

The meeting rose at 9.05 p.m.