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President: Mr SOLANO ORTIZ (Costa Rica)

Later: Ms BUENROSTRO MASSIEU (Mexico)

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Abbreviations used in this record

AFRA	African Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARASIA	Co-operative Agreement for Arab States in Asia for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology
ARCAL	Co-operation Agreement for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean
ARTEMIS	Integrated Review Service for Radioactive Waste and Spent Fuel Management, Decommissioning and Remediation
Assistance Convention	Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency
Bangkok Treaty	Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
CNS	Convention on Nuclear Safety
ConvEx	Convention Exercise
CPF	Country Programme Framework
CPPNM	Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material
CSA	comprehensive safeguards agreement
CTBT	Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Early Notification Convention	Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FORO	Ibero-American Forum of Radiological and Nuclear Regulatory Agencies
ICERR	IAEA-designated International Centre based on Research Reactor
imPACT	integrated missions of PACT
INIR	Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review
INSSP	Integrated Nuclear Security Support Plan
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IPPAS	International Physical Protection Advisory Service
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

Abbreviations used in this record (continued)

JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
Joint Convention	Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management
MeV	megaelectronvolt
NPP	nuclear power plant
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NPT Review Conference	Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NWFZ	nuclear-weapon-free zone
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PACT	Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy
Pelindaba Treaty	African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty
PET	positron emission tomography
R&D	research and development
SALTO	Safety Aspects of Long Term Operation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIT	sterile insect technique
SLA	State-level safeguards approach
SQP	small quantities protocol
TC	technical cooperation
TCF	Technical Cooperation Fund
Tlatelolco Treaty	Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
Transport Regulations	Regulations for the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
Vienna Convention	Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage
WHO	World Health Organization
WMDs	weapons of mass destruction

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2018 (continued) (GC(63)/5 and additional information)

1. Ms AL-KHALIFA (Bahrain) offered her country's sincere condolences on the passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, praising his diligent efforts as Director General to strengthen the Agency.
2. Thanks to the progress made towards meeting its obligations under the CPF signed in 2018, Bahrain had boosted its international position in areas related to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Her country was grateful for cooperation with the Agency, especially in the areas of TC and capacity building, and for the highly professional manner in which the Agency had carried out joint projects. Bahrain looked forward to further expansion of the TC programme and capacity building, and of the scope of advanced scientific applications in nuclear energy through country and regional programmes. In 2020, in addition to a regional meeting of Arab States on nuclear safety, Bahrain would be hosting various TC workshops organized jointly with the Agency.
3. Between 2009 and 2018, Bahrain had submitted annual reports to the Agency on its safeguards agreement, additional protocol and SQP. Reports on the additional protocol had been submitted for the fourth quarter of 2018 and the first and second quarters of 2019.
4. The right to produce, develop and use nuclear energy had to be exercised within the framework of the NPT. Concerned that the Islamic Republic of Iran had exceeded the enriched uranium stockpile limit permitted under the JCPOA, Bahrain called on Iran to cooperate fully and transparently with the Agency, submit all its nuclear activities and facilities to Agency monitoring and commit to applying nuclear safeguards. That would reassure Member States and allay the misgivings of Arab Gulf States, in particular, as to the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, the operating conditions of the Bushehr reactor and Iran's full compliance with nuclear safety requirements.
5. Noting the importance of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, Bahrain called for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs. It was particularly urgent for the Arabian Gulf, on account of its strategic importance. Her country renewed its call to the international community to adopt a harmonized global strategy, with a view to developing an effective disarmament mechanism, to combat the proliferation of such weapons both regionally and globally, in particular in the Middle East. In that connection, Bahrain condemned the recent terror attacks on Saudi Arabian Oil Company facilities and stood shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia in that regard.
6. Mr NYIRISHEMA (Rwanda) paid tribute to Mr Amano, honouring him for his integrity, diligence and dedication to peaceful nuclear programmes during his tenure as Director General. In addition, he extended his country's sincere condolences to the Government of South Africa and the family of Ms Hlongwa, the late Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, who had been due to attend the session.
7. Rwanda appreciated the assistance it had received from the Agency, between 2017 and 2021, in implementing its CPF with a view to leveraging nuclear technologies for development in areas such as agriculture and health.
8. Prevention of the unauthorized use of nuclear material and technology was paramount. As a newcomer country, Rwanda valued the Agency's continued support with regard to its INSSP, including efforts to strengthen its infrastructure and build human capacity.

9. Rwanda looked forward to incorporating provisions on nuclear safety and security, safeguards and nuclear liability into its legal and regulatory framework. It had already acceded to a number of international nuclear instruments, including the Vienna Convention, having just deposited its instrument of accession. Regional and international cooperation in regulatory control was important for radiation protection and nuclear security and safety.

10. Rwanda had begun planning to establish a centre for nuclear science and technology as part of its five-year National Strategy for Transformation and had sought technical support from the Agency to ensure the application of the highest nuclear safety standards and best practices in using nuclear technology for development.

11. Mr UNG (Cambodia), expressing his country's deepest condolences on the death of Mr Amano, said that the late Director General had been a true visionary and inspiration. He had tirelessly devoted himself to the promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Cambodia was grateful to Mr Amano for having advanced its relations with the Agency, overseen the first stage of its cooperation with the Agency and lent unwavering support in the promotion and regulation of peaceful uses.

12. Fully committed to nuclear non-proliferation and to ensuring nuclear safety, security and safeguards at the national, regional and global levels, Cambodia was party to numerous international agreements, conventions and protocols, including the NPT and the Bangkok Treaty, and had concluded a CSA in 1999.

13. Under the 1993 constitution and its subsequent amendments, Cambodia had prohibited the manufacture, use and storage of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, while activities involving nuclear and radioactive materials were regulated by law. His country was preparing comprehensive legislation on nuclear safety and security, safeguards and civil liability in line with international standards.

14. Cambodia had established numerous competent authorities for nuclear safety, security and safeguards. In addition to the Agency, it was working closely with the Joint Research Centre, the US Department of Energy and the Japan Atomic Energy Agency on legislation and the application of nuclear science and technology in health, industry and agriculture. With regard to safety and security activities, its partners included the US Nuclear Security Administration.

15. Since returning to the Agency in 2009, Cambodia had received significant support in achieving the SDGs. To that end, many TC projects on the peaceful uses of nuclear technology in soil fertility, crop management and livestock production had been successfully implemented. In addition, the Agency had helped Cambodia to establish a national cancer centre, inaugurated in January 2018, with the aim of improving cancer treatment and nuclear medicine. Although the centre had been financed by his Government, it was thanks to the Agency's provision of technical support in design, equipment, installation and capacity building that improvement had been possible. Cambodia had also received instrumental support for establishing a regulatory authority, which would begin work once the legislation had been enacted.

16. In closing, noting the contribution of cooperation to the peaceful uses of nuclear technology and the promotion of Cambodia's development, he appealed for more programmes to be set up.

17. Mr NTAHIRAJA (Burundi) said that the news of Mr Amano's untimely death had greatly saddened his country. He offered Burundi's condolences to the people of Japan and to the family of Mr Amano, who as Director General had been committed to promoting nuclear science and technology.

18. The Agency continued to cater for the specific needs of Member States through capacity building and efforts to foster partnerships. Welcoming the momentum gained in Burundi's collaboration with the

Agency, he said his country was committed to strengthening that bond to ensure that a measurable impact could be felt in the lives of Burundians.

19. Following the imPACT review mission conducted in 2017 at his country's request, Burundi was committed to implementing a cancer control programme and, to that end, was requesting further comprehensive assistance from the Agency and the WHO.

20. The national projects currently under way were aimed at: using nuclear techniques to improve cassava yields and water and nutrient management practices, and to improve animal production; assisting the establishment of cancer treatment services; and establishing a legislative and regulatory infrastructure for the monitoring of sources of ionizing radiation. Burundi intended to establish a legal framework governing nuclear science and techniques as a solid base for implementing TC programmes and protecting patients, users and the general public.

21. With regard to the programme for 2020–2021, the priority areas under the ten-year national development plan were: nuclear security and safety, food safety and the quality of local produce, the radioactive source inventory, and training in nuclear science and technology. They would be included in the CPF 2021–2025, about to be developed and adopted by the Agency and his country, to serve as a roadmap for the implementation of TC projects. Burundi was seeking assistance for building the capacities of personnel working in cancer diagnosis and treatment.

22. Committed to actively promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and strengthening the non-proliferation regime and the Agency's verification activities, Burundi was pleased to announce that, in Bujumbura, from 23 to 27 September 2019, the Institute of Agronomic Sciences would be hosting a scientific visit for experts from the Central African Republic focusing on the use of nuclear techniques to improve cassava yields.

23. Lastly, Burundi called on its partners to support its national development plan, inspired by the African Union's Vision 2025 and Agenda 2063 and designed to lead Burundi towards sustainable development by 2030.

24. Mr MARAFI (Kuwait) said that his country strongly condemned the recent attacks on Saudi Arabian oil facilities and assured Saudi Arabia of its full support for any action to preserve its security and territorial integrity.

25. Extending his country's sincere condolences on the sudden passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, he said that Kuwait welcomed the General Conference resolution to name the new Flexible Modular Laboratory building 'The Yukiya Amano Laboratories'.

26. A Member State for 55 years, Kuwait was working closely—and hoped to work ever more closely—with the Agency to develop the nuclear energy capabilities and facilities it needed to carry out vital socioeconomic development projects.

27. The previous day, Kuwait had signed its CPF for 2020–2025 covering nuclear safety and security, food and agriculture, health and nutrition, environmental and water resources, and energy and industry. Practical Arrangements had been concluded to bolster the country's institutional and technical capacities in marine environmental protection and monitoring. In addition, Practical Arrangements for cooperation in nuclear molecular medicine with the Jaber Al-Ahmad Center for Molecular Medicine had been renewed to make it a regional training hub for nuclear medicine.

28. Kuwait appreciated the Agency's monitoring of the JCPOA, in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), and the publication of reports on the matter. Paying close attention to developments, in particular the recent news confirming the failure of the Islamic Republic of Iran to comply with the provisions of the JCPOA, Kuwait called on Iran to cooperate fully and

transparently with the Agency and return to full compliance with the agreement. It looked forward to the conclusion and implementation of an additional protocol by Iran.

29. In view of the need to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMDs, in the interests of regional stability and international peace and security, Kuwait called on Israel – the only State in the region not to have done so – to accede to the NPT, and to place all its facilities under the Agency’s comprehensive safeguards. Kuwait welcomed the Agency’s participation in the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, to be held in New York in November 2019. All interested Member States should participate, in accordance with the international resolutions on the subject and the outcomes of previous NPT Review Conferences.

30. Kuwait reiterated its support for the leading role that the Agency played and the effective contributions that it made to sustainable development and to addressing economic, financial and food emergencies in many countries around the world.

31. Mr FARHANE (Morocco) said that Mr Yukiya Amano had been an outstanding leader committed to multilateralism and the promotion of a safe world free of nuclear weapons by putting the atom to the service of peace and sustainable development.

32. Morocco supported the efforts invested in the TC programme, through which the Agency played a central role in human development, the acquisition of know-how and technology transfer in support of developing countries, in particular those in Africa.

33. Morocco contributed regularly to the TCF and met all its commitments. It had just signed a CPF for 2018–2023, which would enhance the institutional framework for triangular cooperation in aid of developing countries. To help implement TC programmes, Agency-affiliated technical institutions in his country annually hosted around 100 scientific internships and visits, organized 20 scientific and technical events and deployed 30 or so expert missions in the region.

34. With Agency support, Morocco had developed national expertise in the areas of health, water, agriculture, industry, education and training, safety and security, and nuclear safeguards. Noting the Agency’s remarkable contribution to improving global cancer control, he said that Morocco welcomed the choice of topic for the Scientific Forum, at which his country would share its experience of using related nuclear techniques.

35. Morocco had made significant progress in developing its national nuclear safety and security infrastructure. Prioritizing Agency activities in support of Africa, it was keen to boost regional cooperation at its own centres of excellence through knowledge sharing and the exchange of experience and expertise in the areas of nutrition, water, radiation protection and industrial applications. As a member of the AFRA Programme Management Committee for 2018–2021, Morocco had signed several triangular and bilateral agreements relating to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

36. In 2018, the Moroccan Centre for Nuclear Energy, Science and Techniques had acquired the status of a regional centre for education and virtual training. Moreover, his country’s Nuclear and Radiation Safety and Security Agency, which was actively contributing to the development of regional South-South cooperation, had been designated as the first Capacity-Building Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Africa. In July 2019, Morocco had been selected to chair the International Network for Education and Research for Emergency Preparedness and Response.

37. To coordinate nuclear safety and security-related matters regionally and globally, the international community should develop proactive activities and seek innovative solutions. In that regard, Morocco had scaled up its partnership with the Agency, among other things by developing an INNSP. In late 2018, his country had hosted the School of Radiation Emergency Management for the African Region.

As part of its multidimensional contribution to global nuclear security efforts, in early October 2019 Morocco would be hosting the 3rd International Regulators Conference on Nuclear Security, jointly organized with the Agency, which would be attended by over 300 representatives from more than 85 countries to discuss the framework for international nuclear law, the safety and security interface, and emergency response.

38. In closing, he reiterated Morocco's view that, unless all States in the Middle East acceded to the NPT, there could be no hope of lasting peace in the region.

39. Mr ASSAF (Lebanon) expressed his country's sorrow at the death of Mr Amano. In the spirit of the organizational changes that Mr Amano had spearheaded in the Agency, Lebanon called for a new Director General to be elected as soon as possible.

40. Acknowledging the Agency's statutory role to facilitate access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, contribute to sustainable development and improve human well-being, Lebanon continued to contribute to the TCF and, through the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission, was working with the Agency to conduct workshops and capacity building programmes on improving nuclear medicine services, analysing national cultural heritage and identifying document and currency forgeries. In addition, as the current chair of the ARASIA Board of Representatives, Lebanon called for the ARASIA framework to be further developed.

41. As the role played by peaceful nuclear energy grew, so did the threats to nuclear safety. All NPPs must therefore comply with the Agency's safety guidance. The Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission was working with the Agency to provide training for professionals and repatriate hazardous disused sources. Lebanon set great store by its cooperation with the Agency in that regard and hoped that it would continue.

42. Turning to international nuclear security, he said that the Lebanese Atomic Energy Commission was working with the Agency on ways of improving the physical protection of its national infrastructure and stores of orphan sources, and building human capacities. In addition, members of the Secretariat had participated in the IPPAS and INSSP meetings held in Beirut in February 2019 to build capacity in the Lebanese security agencies responsible for monitoring nuclear sources and responding to nuclear terrorism threats.

43. As the application of nuclear safeguards was of utmost importance to the Middle East, Lebanon regretted that the Acting Director General had been unable to make progress in the execution of the mandate assigned to him in resolution GC(62)/RES/12 on the application of safeguards in the Middle East. All States in the region except Israel were parties to the NPT, and Lebanon called on the international community to exert pressure on Israel to place all its nuclear facilities under Agency safeguards.

44. Lebanon welcomed the adoption by the UN General Assembly of decision 73/546 on convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Noting that preparations had begun, Lebanon called on the international community to ensure that the conference took place and urged the Agency to participate at the highest level.

45. Mr MEZGHANI (Tunisia) offered his country's condolences to the friends and family of Mr Amano, and recalled his laudable efforts as Director General to fulfil the Agency's mandate and protect the independence, neutrality and professionalism of the Secretariat.

46. The promotion of nuclear applications and attainment of the SDGs should be one of the Agency's priorities. While the motto of 'Atoms for Peace and Development' should guide the Agency's daily activities, new concepts of cooperation and assistance needed to be developed so that the Agency could contribute effectively to countries' development. Providing employment, in particular for young

persons, and supporting new businesses were two of the greatest challenges that Tunisia faced. It hoped that Agency projects would generate work for the young and foster a culture of employment.

47. Tunisia had worked with the Agency since its inception to develop a sustainable cooperative relationship in various fields. It had signed an agreement with the Agency on the repatriation of disused Category 1 sources and had worked with it to carry out numerous national, regional and interregional projects. Tunisia had participated in a number of meetings aimed at helping Mediterranean countries develop regional preparedness and response plans for nuclear and radiological emergencies. Tunisia encouraged all States in the region to adopt the plans, which served as a framework for cooperation.

48. As it accorded special importance to nuclear security, Tunisia was currently focusing on developing operating frameworks, building its capacities and obtaining the necessary equipment. It had established teams within the customs control forces at all border checkpoints to prevent illicit trade in radioactive substances and to guard against nuclear terrorism. Tunisia, with the help of international cooperation programmes, was also working to provide those forces with the necessary equipment. It called on the Agency to provide further training and equipment through its TC programme.

49. Keen to fulfil its financial obligations to the Agency, through contributions to the Regular Budget, to the TCF and to national TC projects — in the hope of benefiting from the cooperation on offer — Tunisia was committed to paying its assessed contribution to the TCF.

50. Tunisia was taking constitutional steps to enact a framework law to provide for the establishment of a national regulatory authority to oversee all activities relating to nuclear safety and security and safeguards, in compliance with international norms and conventions, especially the CNS.

51. Given the importance of nuclear safety, Tunisia was convinced that the international community should not become complacent regarding the measures taken in response to the Fukushima Daiichi accident, in particular at the IAEA Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety in 2011. Tunisia therefore called for another conference to be held in 2021 to review the practical experiences gained following the accident and the lessons learned from the implementation of the IAEA Action Plan on Nuclear Safety.

52. The Agency's safeguards system was the only way of monitoring nuclear diversion and preventing nuclear proliferation. Tunisia appealed for the immediate establishment of a Middle East zone free from all WMDs, including nuclear weapons.

53. Mr ELGHODBAN (Libya) offered his country's sincere condolences on the passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, expressing Libya's immense gratitude for his tireless efforts as Director General to promote the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

54. In many international forums, Libya had continually called for multinational efforts to be stepped up to prevent the production of nuclear weapons, in view of the risk to international peace and security, and to develop a schedule and verifiable mechanism for their complete elimination. Libya supported the establishment of NWFZs, having acceded to the NPT, the Pelindaba Treaty and the CTBT. His country also endorsed the 1995 NPT Review Conference Resolution on the Middle East, had concluded a safeguards agreement and actively participated in meetings and training on how to eliminate WMDs.

55. Nuclear-weapon States should assume their responsibilities and discourage the use, or threat of use, of those weapons against other States. Libya urged the international community to provide the necessary guarantees for the security of non-nuclear-weapon States. That was particularly important for his country, given its geographical proximity to the fraught situation in the Middle East and the fact that it had complied with its nuclear and chemical obligations under various international treaties. All nuclear activities in the region must be subject to effective and reliable international safeguards to prevent the production of nuclear weapons and avert the risks posed by radioactive materials.

56. Libya shared the deep and widespread concern regarding the danger of the introduction and use of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, in view of the existing arms race and political tension in the region. Successive General Assembly resolutions adopted since 1974 with the support of Middle Eastern States urged all parties in the region to consider taking practical steps to establish an NWFZ in the region, observe the NPT and subject all nuclear activities to Agency safeguards. The international community had a duty to exert pressure on certain States to accede to the NPT and comply with other relevant treaties and agreements. That would allow States in the region to direct their capacities towards economic development and the promotion of the peaceful use of atomic energy, in accordance with the Agency's Statute.

57. Libya attached great importance to cooperating with the Agency and other Member States in nuclear science and technology, recognizing the direct benefits to citizens in terms of socioeconomic development and health. His country highly valued the TC it had been benefitting from and hoped for increased cooperation in the light of the challenges that it was facing. The Agency and its Member States should increase cooperation to develop solutions to facilitate the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Libya hoped that the Agency would play a greater role in introducing nuclear power programmes and help to improve the quality of services offered by the Tajoura research reactor, above all in the production and uses of radioisotopes.

58. All States had a right to the peaceful use of atomic energy and developed States must not hamper the transfer of knowledge and technology for peaceful uses, as long as the receiving States were subject to Agency safeguards, had an additional protocol, had acceded to the various treaties and agreements related to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and had made a commitment not to use that knowledge and technology for military purposes.

Ms BUENROSTRO MASSIEU (Mexico), President, took the Chair.

59. Ms VICTORIA-KRUSE (Dominican Republic) reiterated her country's sadness at the loss of Yukiya Amano, who as Director General had fought for the safe use and development of nuclear science and technology, with a view to a more prosperous world.

60. The Dominican Republic had signed most of the nuclear agreements and treaties adopted by the international community. Its Ministry of Energy and Mines was currently working with the Agency to strengthen the country's legal framework governing the peaceful and safe use of nuclear energy. Moreover, the Dominican Republic had been cultivating an alliance with universities, public institutions, health centres and the economic sectors benefitting from nuclear technology to promote sustainability and create networks of national institutions.

61. As a nuclear-weapon-free State, the Dominican Republic had signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and was compliant with Security Council resolution 1540 (2004). In that connection her country had carried out a peer evaluation with Panama, in which national implementation had been reviewed.

62. The Dominican Republic appreciated and looked forward to implementing Agency TC projects that were aligned with its national development strategy and was currently in the final revision process of its next CPF. Her country was reaping greater benefits than ever from its cooperation with the Agency. It had carried out scientific and technical projects with ARCAL, followed up on the suitability and accomplishments of project counterparts, and established strategic alliances with ministries and institutions for those projects.

63. With international support, her country's Mediterranean fruit fly eradication programme had led to the establishment of a National Commission for the Application of the Sterile Insect Technique for

the planning, development and execution of the SIT in national programmes for combating the insect pests that did so much harm in her country.

64. In the field of health, the Dominican Republic had three cyclotrons. One had been installed earlier in 2019 at the National Cancer Institute, one of the most modern in the region thanks to its radiopharmaceutical and quality control laboratories. The institute was working to reduce the cost of testing for catastrophic illnesses and to guarantee universal access to such testing. The newest cyclotron, installed at the privately funded Ciclolab Dominicana, was helping to meet local needs for clinical and research procedures. Her country had also opened eight nuclear medicine centres for cancer diagnosis and treatment, four diagnostic centres using positron emission tomography and a number of other radiotherapy treatment centres.

65. In relation to agriculture and livestock, the Dominican Republic had cooperated with the Agency to advance the application of the induced mutation technique and to improve the yield and economic potential of priority crops.

66. As the Dominican Republic was among the States most vulnerable to climate change, many of its national and cooperation projects were using stable isotopes to identify more efficient crop varieties in terms of nutrient absorption and to simulate cultivation cycles that would optimize water consumption and soil conservation.

67. As a coastal country located near a shipping lane for nuclear materials, the Dominican Republic was participating in the Dialogue between Coastal and Shipping States. In the interest of making maritime transport as safe as possible, it was also working to comply with the Transport Regulations.

68. The Dominican Republic requested special cooperation from the Agency for implementing the SIT and control methods, as it would help reduce the prevalence of vectors such as *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*, two generators of tropical diseases, including dengue, which was at near-epidemic levels in her country and the rest of the region.

69. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates) paid tribute on his country's behalf to the outstanding achievements of Mr Amano, who had shown dedication as Director General in pursuit of the Agency's mandate.

70. The UAE was in the final stage of construction of the 4-unit Barakah NPP, with the first unit completed and the rest nearing completion. The process had been carried out in full accordance with the Agency's Milestone Approach, ensuring that the NPP met the highest standards of safety, security, transparency and non-proliferation. In line with its commitment to those standards, the UAE had hosted 12 major Agency peer review missions, including INIR Phase 3. It encouraged other Member States with existing or future plans for nuclear power to host such missions.

71. The UAE had received significant assistance through the Agency's TC programme, which had supported its nuclear infrastructure development and capacity building for nuclear power and applications in health, agriculture and the environment.

72. As a party to all international nuclear safety conventions, the UAE reported on safety matters in a timely and comprehensive manner, participating actively in the review process of the CNS and of the Joint Convention. In the interest of universalization, his delegation urged Iran, and other countries with significant nuclear activities that had yet to join the CNS, to accede at the earliest opportunity.

73. In the area of nuclear security, the UAE complied with all its obligations under international conventions and supported the Agency's efforts to achieve the universalization of the CPPNM. The Convention and its Amendment were crucial to the establishment of a global mechanism to ensure the

physical protection of nuclear material. Moreover, full compliance with the CSA and additional protocol allowed for global confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear programmes in other States.

74. The UAE called on Iran to honour its obligations under the Agency's safeguards agreements, the NPT and the JCPOA, to fully cooperate with the Agency to address outstanding concerns about its nuclear activities and to refrain from any actions that could undermine the non-proliferation regime. The current situation regarding the JCPOA might be an opportunity to devise a new approach to address the threats posed by Iran's activities in the region and concerns about its nuclear programme.

75. In the same vein, there was an urgent need to strengthen the NPT and achieve its universalization, which would be facilitated by the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and WMDs in the Middle East. The UAE hoped that during the current NPT Review Cycle further progress would be made in the implementation of the 2010 action plan.

76. The UAE remained committed to a strong partnership with the Agency as part of a responsible approach to its national nuclear power programme and the use of nuclear applications. It looked forward to further collaboration with other Member States, which were also striving to ensure nuclear security and implement safeguards nationally and internationally.

77. Ms ACCILI SABBATINI (Italy) said that the legacy of the late Director General, whose professionalism, commitment and leadership had been appreciated by all, should be honoured through further progress towards applying the 'Atoms for Peace and Development' motto in all areas under the Agency's mandate.

78. Italy called for the CSA and additional protocol to be universally concluded. Moreover, the effectiveness of the safeguards system should be strengthened further through the consistent and universal application of State-level approaches. Italy was deeply concerned by the severe difficulties facing the JCPOA, a key element of the global non-proliferation architecture. As its implementation was crucial for regional and international security, Italy urged Iran to return to full compliance without delay and to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the Agency regarding all of the country's safeguard-related commitments. Italy stood ready to support initiatives to restore the integrity of the JCPOA.

79. Italy urged the DPRK to take steps towards complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization by engaging in credible negotiations, returning to the NPT, signing and ratifying the CTBT and resuming its collaboration with the Agency. International sanctions should continue to be fully applied until that goal had been achieved.

80. Italy continued to implement its national policy for the decommissioning and safe management of spent fuel and radioactive waste, in close cooperation with the Agency. ARTEMIS missions in 2017 and 2018 had reviewed its national programme and the specific strategies for the Trino and Garigliano NPPs identified by SOGIN, the state-owned company responsible for decommissioning and waste management. In June 2019, SOGIN had held the Agency's first international workshop on the application of sustainability and circular economy principles to nuclear decommissioning, in Rome, and was about to become an Agency Collaborating Centre.

81. Following reforms approved in 2017, the National Inspectorate for Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection had become fully operational as the national regulatory authority. As a party to most nuclear safety-related international conventions, Italy supported the Agency's efforts to develop nuclear safety standards and remained committed to the implementation of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources. The National Inspectorate had chaired the Fifth European Nuclear Safety Conference held by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group in June 2019. Italy looked forward to the 8th Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety in 2020.

82. A strong supporter of the Agency's central role in the global nuclear security framework, Italy encouraged all States to fulfil their responsibilities. Ensuring the highest levels of nuclear security was in the interest of the international community and contributed to the development of nuclear technologies and applications for peaceful purposes. Accordingly, Italy had ratified the Amendment to the CPPNM and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and participated actively in the Nuclear Security Contact Group, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and other international and European initiatives.

83. A dedicated laboratory for isotopic and radiometric studies of food and agriculture products had been established by the National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development at the Centro Agricoltura Ambiente, Bologna, a Collaborating Centre for the development and implementation of a SIT package with a view to suppressing the *Aedes* mosquito. The same Agency, in collaboration with European and international partners, had begun construction of the Divertor Tokamak Test Facility to support advanced research into fusion and innovative nuclear systems.

84. In September 2019, the Italian Society for Non-Destructive Testing Monitoring Diagnostics had signed Practical Arrangements for cooperation with the Agency. Acknowledging non-destructive testing as a key tool for quality control, Italy was convinced that any project involving nuclear energy, or any technology or application using radioactive materials, should include elements of safeguards, safety and security, and emergency preparedness and response.

85. Mr GIERVELD (Netherlands), expressing his country's deepest condolences to the late Director General's family and to the Agency staff, said that the Netherlands greatly valued the personal and professional contribution to the peaceful use of atomic energy made by Yukiya Amano, and trusted that his legacy would be honoured. Following the untimely death of Ms Hlongwa, he also extended his country's condolences to her family and the people of South Africa.

86. The continued growth in the civil use of nuclear material worldwide, with 450 NPPs operational and some 50 more under construction, had yielded great benefits in health, food and agriculture, and water management. The Agency's TC programme played a key role in the further development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy and in helping Member States to apply those techniques. Accordingly, the Netherlands always paid its share of the TCF on time and in full and was considering making an extrabudgetary contribution to the Agency in relation to peaceful uses.

87. His Government fully supported the inalienable right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy enshrined in the NPT, which had been of crucial importance in fostering the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes worldwide. It attached the highest priority to implementing and strengthening the regime, which was vital to international peace and security. The Netherlands called on all Member States to take the spirit of Vienna to the deliberations of the 2020 NPT Review Conference in New York in May 2020.

88. Global growth in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes ensured an ever-increasing workload for the Agency, not only with regard to safeguards but also in helping Member States to uphold the highest safety standards and implement all necessary security measures. As the number of facilities around the world grew, so did the amounts of nuclear material, making it crucial that everything possible was done to mitigate the risk of accident, theft or malicious acts involving nuclear radioactive material.

89. The Netherlands looked forward to the International Conference on Nuclear Security in February 2020 and the Conference of the Parties to the Amendment to the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2021. Parties to the Convention should inform the depositary — namely, the Director General — of domestic laws and regulations that gave effect to the Convention. For its part, the Netherlands would soon be providing an update of its national report.

90. Given the Agency's crucial role in the robust, modern and effective system of verification on which the functioning of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime relied, Member States must ensure that the Agency had the means and tools necessary to carry out that task effectively and efficiently. Member States that had not yet done so should sign and ratify a CSA and an additional protocol, which constituted the current standard of verification under the NPT.

91. Ensuring that the Agency had the capacity to address the steady growth of safeguards tasks with a budget that was not increasing at a similar pace would also be important. To that end, the Netherlands supported the adoption and further development of State-level approaches as a reflection of the need for a safeguards system that was responsive to change. He commended the Agency on its demonstrated ability to adapt in a timely fashion to changing circumstances.

92. He expressed his country's full support for the Agency's role in verifying Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA and expressed deep regret at the USA's withdrawal and its re-introduction of sanctions. The Netherlands urged Iran to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the Agency on JCPOA and other safeguards matters.

93. Lastly, the Netherlands commended the Agency on standing ready to send inspectors to the DPRK at short notice, conditions permitting.

94. Mr RUIZ BLANCO (Colombia) paid tribute to Mr Yukiya Amano, highlighting his promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for global development, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the successful conclusion of the JCPOA as defining aspects of his legacy as Director General.

95. In his country's opinion, the search for unilateral solutions to universal challenges increasingly led to isolation and confrontation. As the world's nuclear watchdog, the Agency had a major role to play, above all in view of the current outlook on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Colombia was in full agreement with the UN Secretary General's disarmament agenda, 'Securing Our Common Future', above all the need to forge a closer link between development and disarmament.

96. Colombia recognized the Agency as the main intergovernmental forum for TC in the nuclear field and appreciated its contribution to international peace and security and the achievement of the SDGs. Colombia had conducted water management projects with the support of the TC programme, which demonstrated the many peaceful uses of nuclear energy in areas such as the environment, health, and food and energy security.

97. As President of FORO, Colombia remained committed to supporting the maintenance of the highest standards of nuclear and radiological security and safety in its member States and, by extension, the entire Ibero-American region. FORO had finalized its stress tests of NPPs in the region, carried out as part of a transparent joint review process. The results had been acknowledged in the declaration issued at the 22nd Ibero-American Summit and also at the Extraordinary Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

98. Colombia — a non-nuclear-weapon State — had participated in the three Preparatory Committee meetings for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. As a State party to the Tlatelolco Treaty it had also advocated general and complete disarmament and the creation of NWFZs in the interests of international peace and security. The experience and good practices of the Latin American and Caribbean region, the world's first NWFZ, were a political, legal and institutional reference for the creation of such zones. Electing a Latin American as the next Director General would be highly significant in that regard.

99. In closing, he stressed the importance Colombia attached to holding a ministerial meeting on TC and nuclear applications in 2023 and repeating the practice in the future.

100. Mr AL JABRI (Oman) offered his country's sincere condolences to the family of Mr Yukiya Amano and to the Agency's staff. The late Director General's service to all Member States and his efforts to harness the atom for peace and development were greatly appreciated.

101. Noting that the new accelerator at the Seibersdorf Dosimetry Laboratory would increase the Agency's capacity to support Member States in the areas of dosimetry and accelerator use for radiation therapy, he announced that, as part of a TC project with the Agency, the Radiotherapy Department of Oman's National Oncology Centre had recently brought into operation two new radiotherapy accelerators that enabled imaging during treatment and more precise radiation dosimetry.

102. Oman attached importance to the conclusions of the Scientific Forum on A Decade of Action on Cancer Control and the Way Forward, which would allow countries to share their experiences and gave an overview of the Agency's capacity-building services and the latest developments in nuclear and radiation medicine.

103. At the 2019 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Oman had submitted its first voluntary national review. It described the country's major achievements in sustainable development, its use of nuclear applications in health, agriculture, water resources management and environmental protection in support of the achievement of the SDGs, and its national strategy 'Oman Vision 2040' incorporating the 17 SDGs. His country had also taken part in the 2018 Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology, where discussions had been held on the pivotal role of nuclear science and technology in climate change, food security and health.

104. With respect to regional TC, the Oman Marine Science and Fisheries Centre was participating in a project for 2019–2020 between the Agency and the Gulf Cooperation Council on monitoring ocean acidification and the effects of greenhouse gases on seas and oceans. Oman had also trained 31 secondary school teachers in innovative methods for teaching nuclear science and technology as part of a regional project.

105. The Agency continued to assist with the strengthening of Oman's nuclear and radiation safety infrastructure and technical capacities. A national plan for nuclear and radiation emergencies and an implementation strategy were being developed, and first responders and medical personnel were being trained.

106. Oman had taken part in the exercises organized by the Agency's Incident and Emergency Centre, in accordance with the Early Notification and Assistance Conventions, and would be participating in the full-scale ConvEx-3 exercise to be hosted in the UAE in 2021.

107. The crises and tensions in the Middle East needed to be resolved urgently so that the people of the region could peacefully and securely achieve development and prosperity. The only way to prevent the use, or threatened use, of nuclear weapons was to abandon them definitively. It was disappointing that all the efforts to make the Middle East a WMD-free zone since the 2010 NPT Review Conference had failed.

108. The recent UN General Assembly decision 73/546 on holding a conference on establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in support of the outcomes of previous NPT Reviews, was a fresh opportunity to revive international efforts in that regard. It was important for all States to take part in the conference, to be held at the UN Headquarters in New York in November 2019; no preconditions, restrictions or exclusions would be imposed on the participation of any State in the Middle East region. Optimistic that the international community could solve the critical issues confronting the world, especially in the Middle East, Oman would do its utmost to support the conference and called on the Agency to take all necessary preparatory measures.

109. Mr HOUNKPATIN (Benin), extending his country's condolences to the family of Mr Amano and to the Agency, paid warm tribute to the late Director General, who had been dedicated to the use of the atom for peace and development and to the improvement of living and working conditions worldwide, in particular in the fight against cancer. The great man's relentless ambitions would be kept alive through the efforts and initiatives of Member States.

110. The report on the Agency's activities for 2018 covered important achievements in the areas of TC and capacity building in Member States in promoting civil nuclear applications and nuclear safeguards. At a national level, the Government of Benin was grateful to the Agency for its support in framing and implementing the projects and programmes contained in its CPF for 2017–2021. In that context, it wished to note significant achievements: the approval of the Statutes for the National Authority for Radiological Safety and Radiation Protection by the Council of Ministers in September 2019; the application of the additional protocol and the SQP; the accession to 13 legal instruments related to agreements, conventions and protocols on nuclear safeguards; the confirmation of 3 new national projects for the 2020–2021 TC programme cycle; and the decision to hold the 31st AFRA Technical Working Group Meeting in Cotonou, in July 2020.

111. Benin was planning to construct a radiotherapy and nuclear medicine hospital equipped with PET and cyclotron facilities, its first nuclear medicine service. It also intended to strengthen the technical capacity of its Central Laboratory for the Control of Food Safety to better monitor food contaminants.

112. Benin wished to thank all the partners who had lent technical and financial assistance to its efforts towards socioeconomic development, most recently in programmes to build capacity in the 2020–2021 TC programme cycle and the current CPF. In particular, it was grateful to the US Department for Nuclear Security for its support over the previous year. Every institution in the country would continue to work actively with the Agency to realize the full potential and enjoy the benefits of civil applications.

113. Mr PLACHKOV (Ukraine) paid tribute to Mr Amano's wisdom and talent and to his efforts as Director General to advocate and strengthen nuclear and radiation safety and nuclear security worldwide.

114. The aggression faced by Ukraine from the Russian Federation since 2014 had significantly undermined international efforts to bring about the non-proliferation of WMDs. The Russian Federation's invasion and occupation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol had led to the rapid transformation of the area into a huge military base, threatening the security and stability of the Black Sea region and beyond. Despite continued military aggression from a nuclear-weapon State, Ukraine remained fully committed to its obligations under the NPT, and its CSA in particular. The Russian Federation should understand that no international organization governed by the rule of law would recognize any change in the Crimea's status.

115. Considerable progress had been made in changing the overall approach to safeguards implementation from a system focused on verifying declared nuclear material and drawing relevant safeguards conclusions to one that assessed the consistency of all information about a State's nuclear programme and drew safeguards conclusions for the State as a whole. The Agency — whose independence Ukraine fully supported in that regard — must remain the sole authority to draw such conclusions on the basis of information collected from a wide range of technically credible sources. His country had been encouraged by the success of the Symposium on International Safeguards: Building Future Safeguards Capabilities, held by the Agency in November 2018.

116. Ukraine recognized the Agency's central role in strengthening the global nuclear security framework, in particular by providing assistance to States upon request and coordinating international activities, including information exchange, in the area of nuclear security. Ukraine commended the Agency on its continued work on the Incident and Trafficking Database, an important information

source, and encouraged Member States to participate actively. Ukraine would remain active with regard to the security of radioactive sources.

117. Ukraine was looking forward to the 3rd International Regulators Conference on Nuclear Security, organized jointly with the Agency, to be held in Morocco in October 2019, and to the International Conference on Nuclear Security: Sustaining and Strengthening Efforts, in February 2020.

118. As nuclear and radiation safety remained a priority, Ukraine appreciated the Agency's sustained efforts to assist Member States in maintaining and improving their national standards. Activities under the CNS, Joint Convention and other legal instruments provided a strong framework for enhancing the safety of peaceful uses of nuclear energy worldwide.

119. Ukraine noted with concern the lack of credible information regarding the most recent radioactive incidents with transboundary implications. The incident involving ruthenium-106 and the related explosion that had occurred near the city of Arkhangelsk in the Russian Federation in August 2019 highlighted the issue of one State's lack of compliance with international nuclear safety obligations. The international community should draw its conclusions from the events.

120. The TC programme was the main mechanism through which the Agency helped States to build, strengthen and maintain capacities for the safe, peaceful and secure use of nuclear technology in support of sustainable socioeconomic development. Ukraine therefore welcomed the focus in TC programme activities on supporting and developing the application of nuclear techniques in human health, a key focus area for achieving the SDGs.

121. Ukraine backed the Agency's efforts to respond to the growing global cancer crisis by developing PACT and looked forward to fruitful cooperation with the Agency in the diagnosis and treatment of the most common cancers and in radiotherapy and nuclear medicine services.

122. Ukraine appreciated the Agency's support — and looked forward to continuing its constructive cooperation — in the decommissioning of the Chornobyl NPP, the remediation of territories affected by the Chornobyl accident and the management of accident-generated radioactive waste.

123. As nuclear power would remain an important option in achieving the SDGs and energy security in the 21st century, Ukraine supported the decision of States to develop or further expand their civil nuclear power programmes. The main prerequisite for peaceful use was a State's commitment to the non-proliferation regime and to the highest standards of nuclear and radiation safety and security.

124. Mr ALMANSOURI (Qatar) offered his country's sincere condolences on the passing of Mr Yukiya Amano, commending his efforts as Director General to harness nuclear energy for peace and development.

125. Qatar fully supported the growing role played by the Agency in the use of safe, modern nuclear technologies to improve energy generation, disease treatment and prevention, and food and water provision. It also appreciated the capital made by the Agency out of the peaceful applications of nuclear technologies to safety and security, and its assistance to developing States so they could benefit from nuclear energy and achieve the SDGs.

126. Qatar attached importance to the Agency's TC programme and to capacity building in peaceful nuclear technology through infrastructure development, human resource training and legislation. Having passed a law in 2018 on the containment and monitoring of nuclear materials, an executive order for which was in preparation, Qatar hoped to expand its scope of TC and partnership with the Agency.

127. Qatar shared the legitimate concern of many States in the Middle East regarding the safety and security of reactors in the region and was investigating the likely consequences of an accident caused

by a natural disaster, human error or terrorist activity. According to the Agency's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, responsibility for ensuring the application of the highest standards of nuclear safety lay with each Member State operating nuclear facilities on its territory. Qatar was therefore devising emergency plans for handling a potential nuclear accident and protecting plant workers, civilians and the environment, and hoped for the Agency's assistance in that regard. States operating nuclear installations under international agreements, in particular the Convention on Nuclear Safety, had a responsibility to cooperate and consult with States in the vicinity of the installation, insofar as they were likely to be affected by that installation, and provide them with the necessary information to assess the likely impact.

128. With respect to the establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East, it was disappointing that the international community's lack of political will to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East had hampered efforts, although the resolution had been fundamental to the indefinite extension of the NPT. All NPT States Parties, especially the three depositary States, had an obligation to implement the resolution: neglecting to do so undermined not only the NPT but the non-proliferation regime as a whole.

129. In view of regional and global tensions, the international community urgently needed to reactivate efforts to implement the 1995 Resolution. Dealing with States individually had proven selective and discriminatory and created a regional power imbalance. The establishment of an NWFZ in the Middle East would be a comprehensive regional approach to addressing the nuclear proliferation issue as a necessary step towards NPT universalization.

130. Mr HANNEY (Ireland), recalling the late Director General's visit to his country in May 2018, offered Ireland's deepest condolences to the family of Yukiya Amano. His wise leadership of the Agency had always been impressive.

131. The last General Conference before the NPT Review Conference, in May 2020, was a time to reflect on the Agency's indispensable contribution to the effective implementation of the objectives of the NPT across all three pillars. The Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Science and Technology in November 2018 reflected the international community's consensus view of the scope and relevance to sustainable development of the Agency's work on nuclear applications and peaceful uses. The International Conference on Nuclear Security, to be held in February 2020, should issue a declaration that built upon the 2016 Declaration to further strengthen nuclear security globally. That Declaration had drawn attention to the link between nuclear security and multilateral nuclear disarmament and stressed that the latter was critically needed. The fact that a mere 17% of fissionable material worldwide was earmarked for civil use spoke for itself.

132. The Agency's safeguards system, which had developed significantly since the entry into force of the NPT, went to the very heart of the global non-proliferation regime. CSAs plus additional protocols were the current verification gold standard and should be universalized without delay. Ireland also supported application of the State-level approach in the interest of improved efficiency and effectiveness of safeguards implementation.

133. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a ground-breaking agreement, supported by 122 UN Member States. Since it had opened for signature two years previously, it had been signed by 70 States and ratified by 26, more than halfway to the 50 ratifications needed for it to enter into force. Having signed the Treaty on 20 September 2017, Ireland was currently passing priority legislation to enable swift ratification. Given that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation were inextricably linked, as the NPT made clear, progress in nuclear disarmament was highly relevant to the Vienna-based international organizations. The new instrument strengthened the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including the NPT and Agency safeguards, the treaties establishing NWFZs and the CTBT.

134. Acknowledging the JCPOA as a major achievement of multilateral diplomacy, Ireland regretted the continued incremental breaches by Iran, including the recently announced expansion of prohibited centrifuge R&D activities, and urged Iran to return to immediate full compliance.

135. Ireland welcomed the progress made with regard to the DPRK nuclear issue over the preceding two years, but it was not sufficient. The DPRK should comply fully with all of its international obligations, cease all nuclear testing and re-engage with the Six-Party Talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula immediately and without preconditions. The international community might question how convincing its calls were on the DPRK to cease nuclear testing in the absence of progress towards bringing the CTBT into force. Ireland called on the eight States that were preventing it from coming into force to sign or ratify the CTBT as soon as possible.

136. Turning to the Dialogue between Coastal and Shipping States, he said that his country had succeeded Portugal as coordinator of the Coastal States in 2018. He thanked all colleagues for their fruitful cooperation and looked forward to working with the new coordinator, France. A workshop had been organized in Dublin in May 2019 to draw lessons from the useful table-top exercise organized by Portugal in 2017. The Dialogue was open to all Agency Members and he commended the Agency on its support.

137. Following the Secretariat's implementation of measures to tackle the shortcomings in the PACT identified by the OIOS, his country was considering a fresh contribution to the programme.

138. Attaching importance to the promotion of gender equality within the UN system, Ireland welcomed the late Director General's undertaking in 2017 to reach gender parity in his senior management team by 2021. He expressed hope that implementation of that commitment would continue under the new Director General. The proportion of women in the Agency's professional and higher grades had increased from 23% to 30.2% in recent years but Ireland wished to see that progress accelerate.

139. Mr D'HOOP (Belgium), paying sincere tribute on his country's behalf to Mr Amano, said that, under his leadership and thanks to his astute political awareness, the Agency's credibility had been enhanced.

140. For Belgium, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy had always gone hand in hand with establishing high levels of nuclear safety that were continuously improved. Consequently, his country made systematic use of the Agency's safety instruments, such as the Integrated Regulatory Review Service and SALTO. In June 2019, the Agency had conducted a SALTO follow-up mission in Belgium, reaching the conclusion that the recommendations and suggestions from the 2017 mission report had been given due consideration.

141. The new trends in international terrorism meant that the nuclear sector in particular bore special responsibility. As part of the Belgian authorities' efforts in that regard, specially trained armed police units were replacing military personnel at nuclear sites.

142. As the depositary of the CPPNM, the Agency should play a crucial role in its implementation. In June 2019, Belgium had hosted an IPPAS follow-up mission, which had given its regulatory authority an opportunity to test its nuclear security-related practices. The conclusion had been that Belgium had successfully implemented the recommendations from the 2014 IPPAS mission. The 2019 mission had also allowed Belgium to assess the national measures it had adopted and developed in the interim at its nuclear facilities.

143. In 2016, the USA had proposed a Joint Statement on Mitigating Insider Threats, which Belgium had supported along with 28 other countries and INTERPOL. Subsequently, Belgium's Federal Agency for Nuclear Control and the US National Nuclear Security Administration had jointly held an

international symposium on that topic in March 2019. Around 200 people from 50 countries had exchanged expertise and best practice, illustrating the importance of raising awareness of insider threats.

144. Belgium appreciated the Agency's commitment to updating its verification instruments. His country was pleased that the new SLAs had been implemented in States with integrated safeguards, representing a step forward in what should be an ongoing optimization process. The Agency should continue to systematically increase its efficiency and effectiveness on the basis of a thorough risk assessment. Such efficiency gains were important to the sustainability of the Agency's verification missions.

145. With regard to the JCPOA, Belgium was deeply concerned about Iran's non-compliance with some of its commitments, as confirmed by the Agency. A 'less for less' approach in that regard could only serve to escalate tensions with unforeseeable consequences. From the outset, the JCPOA — a triumph of nuclear non-proliferation, dialogue and diplomacy — had guaranteed the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. Belgium regretted the US decision to withdraw from the agreement, along with its re-imposition of unilateral sanctions on Iran and the recent lifting of nuclear-related waivers. As Security Council Facilitator of resolution 2231 (2015), Belgium would make every effort to preserve the JCPOA, for which there was no alternative. In that regard, it had voluntarily contributed some €700 000 to the Agency's verification activities in Iran, and a further contribution was planned.

146. With the necessary expertise and experience to attain its enhanced readiness objectives, the Agency could play an essential role in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme, at short notice if necessary. Belgium had helped to train an Agency inspection team, with a special focus on areas including the management and measurement of plutonium.

147. In recognition of the importance of TC, Belgium paid its TCF share in full. Moreover, in 2018 it had contributed some €600 000 in extrabudgetary funds in support of radiotherapy programmes, nuclear medicine and an agricultural project to be run by joint FAO/Agency laboratories. For the year ahead, it hoped to contribute a similar amount to nuclear safety and security under the TC programme.

148. Belgium took part globally in key areas of nuclear medicine and radioisotope production, research on new materials, particle accelerators and radioactive high-level waste transmutation. His Government had decided to build a Multipurpose Hybrid Research Reactor for High-tech Applications, the first phase of which was the construction of MINERVA, a 100 MeV accelerator, to be operational by 2026. His country would be contributing €558 million for the project from 2019 to 2038 to cover investments in MINERVA, R&D for the facility and operating costs after 2027. The Belgian Network for Radiation Applications in Healthcare was testament to his country's expertise in nuclear medicine.

149. Belgium hoped that the Agency would meet the expectations of its Member States, in particular through verification of safeguards implementation, which remained a very high priority, along with prudent management of its funds. Faced with a changing global environment, it must be ready to respond to challenges by ensuring modern and inclusive leadership, including in human resources, and by strengthening the consistency and scope of its work across its various departments.

150. Ms ŽVOKELJ (Slovenia) recalled the cooperation her country had enjoyed with the late Director General, highlighting his official visit in 2015 and his participation in the Bled Strategic Forum in 2017.

151. The election of a female President of the Conference suggested that the Agency's efforts to strengthen gender equality were starting to show results. Her country remained a strong partner in the Agency's efforts to increase the proportion of women on its staff.

152. Calling on the DPRK to engage constructively in a meaningful dialogue with all parties with a view to achieving complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization, Slovenia urged it to ratify the

CTBT and return to the Agency's safeguards inspections system. Moreover, Slovenia welcomed the Agency's continued readiness to play its essential part in verifying the DPRK's nuclear programme.

153. Having reaffirmed her country's continued support for the JCPOA and for the Agency's impartial work in verifying and monitoring its implementation in Iran, she expressed its deep regret at the withdrawal of the USA and its re-imposition of sanctions. Slovenia was deeply concerned that Iran, as confirmed by the Agency, had recently exceeded the JCPOA stockpile limit of enriched uranium and was enriching uranium above the levels allowed. Furthermore, Slovenia was worried by Iran's recent expansion of its centrifuge R&D activities. Iran must reverse all those steps and return to full compliance.

154. The TC programme must be open to all Member States and cover a diverse range of TC projects. Slovenia supported implementation of the TC programme by holding annual workshops, training fellows and involving its experts in Agency activities in support of Member States.

155. Following the adoption of the Ionizing Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act, in December 2017, her Government had successfully brought into force two additional government decrees to fully align Slovenia's radiation and nuclear safety legislation with the EU legal system. That had required coordination among different authorities to ensure the transposition of EU requirements.

156. In the light of the melting of polar ice and thawing of the permafrost, nuclear energy, as an important component of the global supply of clean energy, deserved serious consideration in the fight against climate change. Variable renewable technologies could not be efficient without a stable baseload power supply, which was where nuclear energy entered the equation.

157. Slovenia's commitment to nuclear safety was clearly visible in the implementation of the on-going post-Fukushima upgrade programme to be completed by the end of 2019. It had made additional steps towards the realization of two important projects: the Krško NPP spent fuel dry storage and the low and intermediate level waste repository.

158. The first national exercise on cybersecurity at nuclear facilities staged by the Slovenian Nuclear Safety Administration earlier in 2019 had demonstrated an improvement in communication flows nationally and internationally, the harmonization of the response arrangements and an increase in cyberattack awareness.

159. The year 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the Jožef Stefan Institute, the largest research establishment in Slovenia, operating the country's first and only research reactor. Its main focus was on training and research in reactor physics and nuclear engineering in collaboration with foreign research institutions. Slovenia welcomed its participation in the ICERR initiative.

1. Election of officers and appointment of the General Committee (resumed)

160. The PRESIDENT proposed that the delegate of the Republic of Moldova be elected as a Vice-President of the General Committee and that the delegates of the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation be elected as additional members.

161. The President's proposals were accepted.

7. General debate and Annual Report for 2018 (resumed) (GC(63)/5 and additional information)

162. Mr ASHJAZADEH (Islamic Republic of Iran), exercising his right of reply, said that his country attached great importance to nuclear safety and recognized that the primary responsibility lay with each State. Iran upheld the highest safety standards in the construction and operation of its nuclear facilities. The development of national technical capabilities and a safety culture were essential to meet those standards, which could not be achieved simply through the purchase or import of materials.

163. Iran had clearly demonstrated that it was a unique source of stability and security in the region, by its success in combating ISIL, among other things. Conversely, certain States — both in the region and further afield — had created, trained and equipped al-Qaeda and ISIL and had repeatedly demonstrated their unhesitating willingness to invade other countries, engage in destructive wars and use internationally recognized terrorist organizations for their own gain.

164. All States had the inalienable right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Iran, which had a well-established, transparent nuclear programme, recommended that newcomer countries in the region, such as the UAE, exercise maximum transparency and refrain from deviating from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

165. Mr BULYCHEV (Russian Federation), exercising his right of reply, said that the incident in Arkhangelsk Oblast on 8 August 2019 was not connected to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Its effects had not spread beyond the borders of the Russian Federation or posed a threat to human safety and, therefore, did not fall within the mandate of the Agency or other international organizations. Furthermore, the exaggerated concerns that certain States persisted in raising at the meetings of the Policy-Making Organs regarding the traces of ruthenium-106 detected in the atmosphere of various European countries in late 2017 were puzzling. The Agency had carefully followed its internal procedures by collecting all necessary information from Member States and circulating it to interested parties. At no point had the traces reached levels that were dangerous to health, and the fact that they had been detected was simply testament to the highly sensitive nature of modern radiation monitoring technology.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.